



“Back to the Basics: Faith, Hope and Love in Action”

Acts 1

September 20, 2009

Rev. Dennis Marasco

I am looking at the elemental aspects of how we live out our Christian faith. The core concept is that while faith is individually established in God through Christ, it is fleshed out in person-to-person relationships in the here-and-now. Without relationship, without love expressed in the context of relationships of people, God has nothing (of us) to work with. Where there is no love, there is no view (even glimpse) of God among people. Love expressed to others brings God visibly into our lives. And relationships are the building blocks of small groups. Jesus lived out His faith in His Father in the context of the most influential LifeGroup of all time. Let's do the same.

Bangor Daily News had an article about two men who happened to be working in the same delivery truck for several months and then found out they are brothers. See bangordailynews.com on 9-19-09 “Co-workers at Waldoboro store discover they are brothers” by Kevin Miller. Christianity is similar. We are all brothers and sisters. We can learn this in the connections with each other, right here in this church. Find a LifeGroup and get connected.

Jesus was in a group of 12. It was the most influential LifeGroup of all time.

If we look at the end of Jesus' life, his resurrection, the 40 days among the disciples after his resurrection and His departure—He left us with the GIFT of the Holy Spirit. He left us this: ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. "He left us with the Holy Spirit, and when that happens, we receive power! Power to live the way we can best show Christ to others.

Notice the flow of Peter's sermon in chapter 2:14-41: First he challenged the people to realize that what they thought, that the disciples were drunk, was wrong. Then he used biblical proof that they would have trusted to point to Jesus. Then he helped them see that he and the other disciples as eye witnesses were personally pointing to Jesus as the Messiah. They responded by asking: What do we do? V. 38 Repent and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of you sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and fo all who are far off....” So then, those who had received his word were baptized and that day there were added about 3,000 souls.

Here is the key point for today. They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. We should do the same.

Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles...Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved. LifeGroup is a key context!!! Your LifeGroup can be influential, like Jesus'. In fact, because it can influence you, it will be the most influential group for you. If you change, others change!!!

I must have a group in which to define myself, especially to learn my role as son, brother—relational definitions. I don't know who I am as a brother till I am in relationship.

LifeGroups are contexts, communities where we pray, study, read the Bible, meditate, serve. Get together in LifeGroups and find your connection with others who are “relatives” in Christ. It is not too dissimilar from brother finding brother as they work together.



NOTES & QUOTES

- ▶ “The best mirror is an old friend.”
– George Herbert
- ▶ “A real friend is one who walks in when the rest of the world walks out.”
– Walter Winchell
- ▶ “Integrity is telling myself the truth. And honesty is telling the truth to other people.”
– Spencer Johnson
- ▶ “Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of the overcoming of it.”
– Helen Keller
- ▶ The average American worker spends 25 minutes a day commuting back and forth to work. Residents of New York state have the longest commute: 30.0 minutes.
(Source: [census.gov](https://www.census.gov))