7 - DISCIPLESHIP

When the New Testament church is born in Acts 2, the first thing we see (the birth cries, if you will, of these new born believers) are Acts 2:42 "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." In private and in public, in personal and corporate worship, Luke notes their devotion to these spiritual disciplines.

Despite the enormous amount of spiritual growth books being churned out today, we are convinced that God's picture of spiritual health and his plan for the spiritual growth of his disciples *today* is the same as his plan for his disciples *then*: devotion to the Word, fellowship, the sacraments and prayer.

For this reason among others, we encourage people to make corporate worship the one non-negotiable part of their

walk with Christ. In corporate worship you are reading the Word, hearing the Word read and preached, singing the Word, praying the Word, seeing the Word (the Lord's Supper and baptism). In corporate worship we are gathered as a picture of what we will one day be — an international bride of Christ in union and communion with Christ and with one another. Corporate worship is a massive dose of what we call "the means of grace." We don't call them that because they save, but because God has promised in his word to especially bless and use his Word, sacraments and prayer to build up his people and make us more like Christ.

If corporate worship on Sunday is our highest priority as disciples, then it makes a difference in our day to day schedules. We encourage students, for example, to get their work done ahead of time so they can actually devote themselves to worship and rest. We encourage employees to ask their employers to be able to make worship a priority on Sunday. We encourage parents and their youth to draw a hard line against playing sports during corporate worship or whatever else would conflict with that time. Very practically, we encourage everyone to prepare themselves for worship by things as simple as praying for the service, getting as good a night sleep as possible the night before, and so on.

You'll also find, in addition to corporate worship, there are a number of different kinds of discipleship groups that meet

Notes / Questions	

throughout the week, each with their own ratio (if you will) of the Word, fellowship, and prayer. Small Groups are a vital means of growth for many during the week. Worship is our primary means of shepherding, and small groups are secondary as they not only provide more of the Word, fellowship, and prayer, but a place to be known and know others. The groups range in their emphasis from being more care and prayer oriented to being more mission oriented to being more study oriented, but all of them are great opportunities to develop deeper relationships with believers. While there's no Biblical command saying, "you shall join a small group," it will be hard to feel connected to the body, and hard for us to be a vital part of your life, without a connection to one of these groups.

What about prayer? While we pray in every group, we take time to focus on prayer especially during our Wed morning prayer meeting that goes from 9:30-11 (come and go as you need to!). We are a praying church and we are confident that, in addition to the Word and worship, prayer is mightily used by the Lord to advance his purposes and his kingdom.