

**Continued Obedient Faith as Holy Witness
Through Participation in Small Groups
[aka Wesley's "Class Meetings"]**

*(Presented by Lt. Col. Janet Munn at the "Holiness Ablaze" conference
in Boston, Massachusetts at the 125 anniversary
of the Brengle's sanctification on Boston Common)*

In John Ortberg's, *The Life You've Always Wanted*, is the following description:

Hank – long-time church member, regular church-goer – could not effectively love his wife or his children or people outside his family. He was easily irritated. He had little use for the poor, and a casual contempt for those whose accents or skin pigment differed from his own. Whatever capacity he once might have had for joy or wonder or gratitude atrophied. He critiqued and judged and complained, and his soul got a little smaller each year.

Hank was not changing. He was once a cranky young guy, and he grew up to be a cranky old man. But even more troubling than his lack of change was the fact that *nobody was surprised by it*. It was as if everyone simply expected that his soul would remain withered and sour year after year, decade after decade. No one seemed bothered by the condition.

The church staff did have some expectations . . . that Hank would affirm certain religious beliefs . . . that he would attend services, read the Bible, support the church financially, pray regularly, and avoid certain sins. But here's what the church leadership did not expect – *We did not expect that Hank would progressively become the way Jesus would be if he were in Hank's place.* (Ortberg, p.29)

This is called by some "Pseudo-transformation"

- Stories like Hank's and countless others raises the question – Are we after MEMBERS/SOLDIERS OR DISCIPLES? ENROLLMENTS OR ENGAGEMENT IN APPRENTICESHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST?
 - Gallup polls re premarital sex, adultery, divorce, bigotry, domestic violence – that there is no statistically significant difference between Christians and non-Christians in these areas of attitude and conduct.
 - John Green, an evangelical pollster, says that about a third of all evangelicals say that premarital sex is okay. And about 15 percent say that adultery is okay.
 - A large study of the Christian Reformed Church, a member of the National Association of Evangelicals, discovered that the frequency of physical and sexual abuse in this evangelical denomination was about the same as in the general population.
 - Six percent of the "born-again" people tithe; nine percent of evangelicals do.

(This data taken from an interview with Ron Sider in Christianity Today April 2005).

Is this what disciples of Jesus Christ look and act like? Is this holiness

Membership or Discipleship

Yet church attendance in US is very high relative to most western nations. The SA nationally is in the midst of a membership campaign – "Come Join Our Army".

Dr. Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission*, introduction p.x

There is an obvious Great Disparity between, in the one hand, the hope for life expressed in Jesus – found real in the Bible and in many shining examples from among his followers – and on the hand, the actual day-to-day behaviour, inner life, and social presence of most of those who now profess adherence to him.

If the new birth and the power of the Holy Spirit do not result in transformed living by transformed people there are basically 2 possible reasons:

1. God's provision is inadequate – including perhaps the possibility that what God promised and commanded is completely unrealistic and even impossible, thereby making the Lord out to be a cosmic despot.

Or --

2. We (most Christians) do not give ourselves to [our walk with Christ] in a way that allows our lives to be taken over by it. (Willard. p.x)

Willard adds the following:

- Eternal life . . . is interactive relationship with God and with his special Son, Jesus, within the abiding ambience of the Holy Spirit. p. xiv.
- The Church (the gathered disciples) needs the quality of life [Christ] makes real in the life of his disciples – in order to fulfil Christ's purposes on the earth for the church.
- Will those who by profession or culture, are identified as Christians (including us) become disciples – students, apprentices, practitioners – of Jesus Christ, steadily learning from him how to life the life of the Kingdom of the Heavens into every corner of human existence.

We are faced with a challenge here.

Colonel Damon Rader (Order of the Founder) – in speaking of the nature of the relationship between the Lord and human beings, said simply:

We can't do God's part. He won't do ours.

There are both divine and human elements of the new birth and the life of holiness, and our doctrines so indicate.

Doctrine 10

We believe it is the privilege of all believers to be wholly sanctified and that their whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God's part – giving to us the Sanctifier. Wooing us, calling us, drawing us more deeply into Himself. Creating within the believer a spiritual hunger for more. A longing for a clean heart as well as the provision His divine power to bring it to pass.

²³ *May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

²⁴ *The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it. 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24.*

³ *His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.* ⁴ *Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. 2 Peter 2: 3-4.*

Gilbert Thompson, pastor of thriving church in Boston, taught on spiritual warfare at Vision New England a number of year ago, at which I was present. He described his visit to a church as a guest preacher, when he was a young pastor. As he got up to preach he began to cough and was unable to speak. The “mothers” in the congregation began to rebuke and take authority over the unclean spirits behind the cough. In the meantime the elderly senior pastor brought him a cup of water. As the older man gave young pastor Thompson the drink he leaned in said, “Help the prayers son, help the prayers.”

“help the prayers” . . .

We too are responsible to “help the prayers” – to do what we can do to cooperate in the life of holiness.

Doctrine 9

We believe that continuance in a state of salvation depends upon continued obedient faith in Christ.

Colonel Damon Rader (O.F.) – We can't do God's part . . . **He won't do ours.**

Our Part – continued obedient faith.

¹² *Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—**continue to work out your salvation** with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is **God who works in you** to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose. *Philippians 2: 12-13 (TNIV)**

Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. ¹³ For **God is working in you**, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him. *Philippians 2: 12-13 (NLT)*

My purposes in sharing this paper are:

- To intentionally link Salvation Army doctrines 9 and 10 – (doctrine 9) the need for human cooperation with and responsiveness to (doctrine 10) the

sanctifying grace of God, in order to strengthen and maintain powerful holy witness to this grace, as a Salvationist people.

- To highlight the significance of John Wesley's class meetings (or small group structure) in sustaining lives of continued obedience in the converts of his day.
- To heighten awareness of the contemporary move toward and need of a class meeting structure or method.
- To expose and contradict the "individualistic heresy" of privatized Christianity, so prevalent in the western church – namely that my faith is just between me and God and that it is not your business – that it is *private* rather than *personal*.
- To motivate Salvationists to intentionally seek out relationships, contexts and opportunities with others, (be they small groups, accountability partnerships, discipleship meetings, etc.) that will demonstrate a whole-hearted responsiveness to and cooperation with the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in the individual and in the community.

I want to emphasize the synergy between divine initiative and human response – to commend to you the need for human cooperation in the divine calling to holy living.

Continued Obedient Faith vs. "Disorderly Walkers"

John Wesley, in describing those Christian converts who failed to live a credible holy life, who fell into sin and compromise, or failed to mature, called such "disorderly walkers".

There are many means to help believers continue in obedient faith.

The focus of this paper will be:

THE COMMUNAL ASPECTS OF CONTINUED OBEDIENT FAITH using the template of the Wesleyan quadrilateral – Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience – the view by which Wesley believed sound doctrine could be discerned.

SCRIPTURE

- TRINITY – "LET US . . ." from the earliest chapters of Scripture, where God is revealing Himself to humankind, we read that the very essence of God is community – in the godhead, Father, Son and Spirit share in a perfect, unbroken, self-surrendering community of oneness. This is the very thing Jesus prays for us also (John 17). It's not lonely at the top, within the godhead, and it's not meant to be lonely at the top, so to speak, in Christian leadership! The very nature of the godhead demonstrates this. Christian leaders of any sort – take our example from God in whose image we are made – no matter what our responsibilities or status – God the Most High reveals Himself as living and loving in community.
- IT IS NOT GOOD FOR HUMANS TO BE ALONE – the writer of the creation account in the first chapter of Genesis, punctuates each aspect of God's creation, day by day, with "and God saw that it was good". Light from darkness = good. Land separated from water = good. Sun and moon = good. All various animals, birds, fish = good. Creation of the human, a-dam = good. All that God saw is described as "good". 10 times – God saw that it was

good. Only one exception. The creation of the human as solitary, as alone = **NOT GOOD!** (Genesis 2:18).

- Donahue and Russell describe human beings as having an inbuilt “relational DNA” or a God-given “community gene” that is an essential part of what it is to be human and made in the image of God. Additionally they state that “humans are ravenously relational (24).
- JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES – Jesus’ primary model for disciple-making was that of a small group, the 12. That was the context he used for investing deeply in developing the first generation of Christian disciples. Jesus also brought into his closest confidence the 3 – the INNER CIRCLE, PETER, JAMES, JOHN, for deeper lessons in discipleship. Yes Jesus had alone time, sought out solitude to pray and commune with God, but he developed disciples in community.

From the *Discipleship Journal*:

Consider this: Jesus chose to be a member of a small group. In fact, He was the ultimate small-group leader. He taught thousands on hillsides and was superb in one-on-one situations, but when it came time to pour His life into the people He knew would be the most critical to the spread of the gospel, He chose to invest a huge portion of His time and discipling efforts into the lives of just twelve guys.

And what a motley small group it was: guys who argued with Him and with each other; imperfect human beings who struggled with envy, jealousy, deceit, and lying; men who didn't seem to "get it" most of the time.

That's what growing in Christ is all about: spending time together, studying and learning what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ; lifting others up when the discouragements of life get them down; getting the support you need when those daily struggles descend upon your turf; praying together about earthly and heavenly things; and growing stronger relationally as the body of Christ.

This was the approach Jesus used in establishing the church. We need to deliberately follow his lead.

- In the EARLY CHURCH – ACTS 2ff, devoted themselves to apostles’ teaching, fellowship, breaking bread and to prayer . . . believers continued to meet together, broke bread in homes, ate together with glad and sincere hearts . . . the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. Acts 2: 42-47.
- Lord’s prayer – completely plural language – “our Father”, “give us”, “lead us”, “deliver us”.

TRADITION

- ROMAN CATACOMBS – CHURCH IN PERSECUTION – (as well as the church today in many places including China) – formed itself into small groups for support, for discretion, for safety.
- ZINZENDORF, HERNUTT COMMUNITY -- In the 18th century a Moravian community, under the leadership of Count Zinzendorf, living together, praying together for several generation for more than a hundred years, thereby launching the great missionary thrust of the Reformation. One of their converts was John Wesley, founder of Methodism.
- WESLEY – HOLY CLUB, CLASS MEETINGS . . . **no holiness apart from social holiness – interpersonal relationship and evidence of pursuit of social justice.**
 - John Wesley describes the discipline involved in class meetings as “watching over one another in love.”
 - John Wesley, the founder of Methodism and its descendents (including Salvationists) was so called because of this *method* of class meetings, which he developed for the discipling and maturing of the thousands and thousands of converts under his ministry. This was a means by which Wesley’s converts were able to continue in a life of obedient faith rather than becoming “disorderly walkers”. (John Wesley’s Class Meeting, Henderson)
 - The absence of such a plan – a method, a structure – was, in Wesley’s words, “birthing [the new converts] to the destroyer”. In other words, just as surely as it would be consider the height of irresponsibility and neglect, to bring a baby to physical birth and leave them to their own self-care – so it is with spiritual newborns. Wesley admonished that there was an absolute responsibility to make provision for the care of these recent converts to Christianity. Otherwise we were doing them no good at all to awaken them to the grace and mercy of God, only for them to be devoured by the destroyer, due to lack of discipleship made available by the church.
- George Whitefield (contemporary of John Wesley) whose labours “died with himself” – said, “Brother Wesley acted wisely – the souls that were awakened under his ministry he joined in class [small group for spiritual formation], and thus preserved the fruits of his labours. This I neglected and my people are a rope of sand.”(*The History of Methodism*, Holland M. McTyeire).
- The Wesleyan revolution is an illustration that long-lasting spiritual transformation is not the product of dynamic preaching or of correct doctrine. It comes only through serious disciple-building, in keeping with Christ’s Great Commission . . . The class meeting which Wesley developed was the instrument by which preaching and doctrine were harnessed into spiritual renewal. It carried the revolution. (Henderson, p.31)

- SA – The Salvation Army O & R for Ward and Penitent-Form Sergeants, 1922, USA – reveals a similar strategy in place as that of John Wesley’s Class Meetings – in the SA in the early 20th century.
 - Every soldier and recruit would be part of a Ward.
 - 2 Ward Sergeants per Ward – one woman, one man – should watch over soldiers and recruits within Ward – watch over them spiritually, strive to keep them well-saved, sympathize with, advise them when they come into difficulty, do all possible to promote their happiness, holiness and usefulness in every way.
 - Ward Sergeant will take personal charge of every Convert in his/her Ward from the moment of introduction to Convert.
 - Ward Sergeant will hold an indoor meeting of the Soldiers and Recruits in his/her Ward once every week – to include, prayer, Scripture reading, personal testimony as to spiritual progress.
 - Clearly the early day Salvation Army had a method, a plan to nurture believers (recruits and soldiers alike) in a consistent and systematic way for their spiritual maturation and continued obedient faith.

REASON

- From SOLITARY CONFINEMENT FOR THE INCARCERATED – TIME OUT CHAIR FOR YOUNG CHILDREN – ISOLATION, LACK OF COMMUNITY IS PUNISHMENT, CAN MAKE US DISTRESSED, EVEN ILL.
- “BROCCOLI-IN-THE-TEETH” SYNDROME -- BLIND SPOTS – WHO WILL HELP US? WHO WILL TELL US?
 - If I have broccoli in my teeth those around me are more likely to know it before I do and those who love me will tell me about it.
 - Like wise, for the spiritual life, there are aspects of our lives that those around us are more likely to be aware of than we are ourselves. We call them blind spots.
 - The consistent involvement in small groups and the mutual accountability therein is aimed at preventing self-deception and remaining focused in discipleship under Christ.
- STRENGTHEN US WHEN WE ARE WEAK? ENCOURAGE US? We note that the Armor of God does not cover our backs – perhaps because we are to do that for one another.
- In the business world there are audits and check and balances to help organizations remain honest. How much more do we need an outside perspective to help us remain honest.

From Bill Thrall & Bruce McNichol - *Leadership Catalayst* (2003):

In describing developing integrity in leaders, point out that in order to develop we need environments where we trust and are trusted. They assert:

- *Wearing a mask thwarts my character development.*
- *Whatever I’m hiding makes me vulnerable to sin.*
- *A great gift you can give to a leader is to teach them to hide nothing.*

In a safe place:

- *I can be honest about who I am*
- *You are free to tell me who I am*
- JAMES 5:16 – CONFESS OUR FRAILTIES/WEAKNESSES TO BE HEALED (SINS TO BE FORGIVEN)
- WE NEED SOMEONE TO HELP SPUR US ON? Hebrews 10:24 (Wesley and Booth accountability questions). Try using the questions included at end of article in a small group or with a trusted accountability partner.

EXPERIENCE -- to help one another in continued obedient faith – to be holy.

- CONTEMPORARY – WILLOW CREEK church made a public confession and repentance of the neglect of disciple-making and declared a shift in their structure from a church WITH small groups to a church OF small groups (2007).
- Carl F. George, church growth researcher writes in Prepare Your Church for the Future:
 - “I believe that the smaller group within the whole – called by dozens of terms, including *small groups* or the *cell group* – is a crucial but underdeveloped resource in most churches. It is, I contend, the most strategically significant foundation for spiritual formation and assimilation, for evangelism and leadership development, for the most essential functions that God has called for in the church”.
- Gilbert BILEZEKIAN uses the term “BALD SPOT CHRISTIANITY” (COMMUNITY 101) to describe the inadequacy of simply coming to a church building for an hour a week, sit in straight rows looking at the back of the head of the person seated in the row in front of you. That, Bilezekian says, it not the kind of church experience that results in spiritual growth and Christlike maturity.
 - Bilezikian uses the metaphor of “family” to describe what the church should be – “a group of people, few enough in numbers to sit around in a circle, facing each other and sharing the joy and the benefits of togetherness” (54). Bilezikian states, “Personal growth does not happen in isolation. It is the result of interactive relationships” (54).
- Bilezikian points out that wherever the church is a thriving community, even in the midst of persecution and suffering, it is structured on the basis of small groups (55).
- Schwarz’ research (Natural Church Development) concludes that the *most* important characteristic of healthy communities of faith and therefore people of faith, was the multiplication of small groups that are focused on discipleship (32).

- Northern New England Division Small Groups – Research project for my MA Thesis
 - Every officer in the Northern New England division participated in small groups for spiritual formation throughout the program year. This emphasis was given for a period of six years. During one of those years the participants were asked to describe their experience in the small groups. The officers/leaders participating in small groups throughout the Northern New England division describe their experience in small groups as beneficial to their spiritual formation, to their relationships, particularly with others in the small group. It was also beneficial to their sense of support and connectedness, and therefore their resistance to loneliness and discouragement, to their overall sense of health and wellness and to their own responsibilities in their local corps (church) and communities.
 - Additional descriptions by the officers themselves of the benefits of the small group experience include: a sense of connectedness, accountability, support, and community, as well as equipping for ministry, growth in discipleship and leadership development for the God-given essential functions of the church, and many more (see attached).

- We feel the pain personally when another believer falls from grace, stumbles into sin and moral failure, and even when another Christian demonstrates brokenness, carnality and compromise.

- My spiritual prosperity and strength in Christ are dynamically related to yours and vice versa.

More from the interview with Ron Sider in Christianity today upon the release of his book, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience*.

[Our] culture is radically individualistic and relativistic. Whatever feels right for me is right for me; whatever feels right to you is right for you. That's the dominant value. It's considered outrageous for somebody to say somebody else is wrong. But historic biblical faith understood the church as a new community. The basic New Testament images of the church are of the body of Christ, the people of God, and the family of God. All these stress the fact that we're talking about a new community—a new, visible social order. That new community in the New Testament was living so differently from the world that people would say, "Wow, what's going on here?" Jews were accepting Gentiles. The rich were accepting the poor and sharing with the poor. Men were accepting women as equals. It just astonished people because the church was so different from the world. It was countercultural. Furthermore, [the New Testament church] understood that being a member of the body of Christ meant that you were accountable to each other. If one suffered, you all suffered. If one rejoiced, you all rejoiced.

One of the most important ways we develop mutual accountability in the local congregation is through small groups. It's almost impossible to follow Jesus either in [matters of] sex and marriage or in money and helping the poor by yourself. You

need the strong support of brothers and sisters. While the whole congregation should be like that, we need small groups to struggle with the specifics and talk about our struggles and get encouragement and prayer support. I wish every person in all of our churches . . . members were in a small group. (Sider – interview by Stan Guthrie of Christianity Today, April 2005, “The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience”).

Several of our local corps (churches) are the size of a small group. The issue is intentionality. When people come to The Salvation Army, where are they finding community? Where do they find a loving community to guide them in the spiritual life? Again the issue is intentionality.

From John Wesley to Willow Creek, no body of believers is too small or too large to grow, both qualitatively and quantitatively through spiritual formation small group participation.

The potential within The Salvation Army in the 21st century for a powerful witness to the holy power of God is enormous.

Small groups are a frugal means of developing disciples, offering healing to the broken, and a sense of belonging to the lonely and to us all, and to sustaining lives of continued obedient faith in Christ – lives of holy living.

This is the hour for Salvationists to claim our Wesleyan birthright of heart’s warmed, social holiness, societal transformation – through the method of spiritual formation small groups.

The world is in need of a holy witness of the people calling themselves as Christ’s followers, because without holiness – holiness in the church – no one will see the Lord.

Ephesians

5:

15-17

Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.

In other words – we don’t have time to waste! The stakes are too high.

What Can I Do?

- Work at building communities of trust by being trustworthy.
- Join or start a small group bible study or accountability group.
- Seek out relationships that help you grow deeper in Christ.
- Submit yourself to character examination by another Christian.

To that end let us heed the words of Hebrews 10: 24-25

*24 And **let us** consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 [**let us**] not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

APPENDIX V

ANTICIPATED BENEFITS FROM REVIEW OF LITERATURE

CONNECTEDNESS/ SUPPORT (11)

- connectedness
- mutual accountability
- the joy and the benefits of togetherness
- meaningful community
- lessening of feelings of loneliness
- Opportunity to gain understanding from the insight and input of others
- Supportive fellowship
- authentic relationships are established
- Openness and caring
- readiness to accept help from the outside
- opportunities to experience the grace and love of God through fellow believers

SPIRITUAL GROWTH (11)

- spiritual formation
- grow in discipleship which results in more-effective pastors
- spiritual well-being
- cared for spiritually
- equipped for ministry
- mobilized for preaching the gospel
- evangelism
- spiritual support
- spiritual guidance
- spiritual growth and serious discipleship
- church health

OVERALL HEALTH (7)

- emotional well-being
- support during difficulties and troubles
- personal growth
- releases healing power to the people of God (James 5:16)
- acceptance that helps us repair our wounds
- leadership development for the most essential functions that God has called for in the church
- loved, served, celebrated, and admonished, begin to change

APPENDIX VI

ANTICIPATED BENEFITS – ACTUAL

CONNECTEDNESS/ SUPPORT (71)

- felt accepted
- fellowship is vital
- we are learning how to function in a healthy community
- affirming
- encouraging
- validating
- buildings relationships – teaching us what real relationships are about
- necessary for accountability
- Relational warmth
- Familiarity
- We know each other
- Closeness interpersonally
- Stronger sense of community
- We are relaxed and able to be ourselves
- No hiding who we really are
- Peer, loving care-frontation
- Not surface relationships but we dig deep
- Intimacy
- Commonality, shared work, resource sharing
- Intimate prayer times, non-threatening
- Caring for one another regularly
- We are known and accepted here
- Sense of family
- Relationships primary, curriculum secondary
- It forced me to build relationships
- It kept me from being aloof
- We are so far out this gave us connection
- At bigger divisional events – now we are connected
- Without small groups we would be disconnected
- Last retreat – there was much more openness amongst the officers
- It seems as if there is less competitiveness now
- Officers are more willing to seek prayer – this was not so before
- Small Groups afford me opportunity to know a group of officers
- I realize now we have both similar and dissimilar challenges
- Division wide there is more closeness
- We can share joys and difficulties
- being more connected, less isolated
- Good group dynamics
- Variety of personalities and stages of life
- Group grew as interaction developed
- Continuity of groups is preferred
- Interaction with one another is beneficial
- Once a month is not enough
- we are getting to know each other,
- we enjoyed each other
- intergenerational mix was helpful and positive
- enjoyed fellowship and hospitality in home setting
- knowing we have the support of each other when times are tough and distressing
- This helped us know that someone was there for us both spiritually and physically
- Received encouragement from one another
- Having a “safe” place to share concerns
- Getting to know people
- Freedom to share burdens – privilege of bearing one another’s burdens
- God’s provision to me – to be open and transparent
- Encouragement – this should have been years ago – healthy freedom to share
- Love for each other
- Not isolated – nothing is impossible – fruitful
- People were missed when absent – a sense of connectedness and belonging
- More apt to call others – more at ease – likely to reach out for help when needed
- Newness to group – decision made to trust each other
- Calling each other for support
- peer accountability
- officer fellowship
- Fellowship
- brought a closeness between officers involved
- greater mutual respect, understanding and accountability
- enjoyed fellowship
- sharing is a very important part
- allowed personal growth and enriched peer relationships
- we support and encourage each other
- we are there for each other

SPIRITUAL GROWTH (25)

- beneficial experience for duplicating in local corps ministries
- iron sharpens iron
- We are accountable to one another and the disciplines
- This keeps us moving forward
- Help to attend to God's voice, obedience follows
- High level of spiritual growth and accountability
- Intimate prayer times, non-threatening
- Not building up burdens or bitterness
- Officers are more willing to seek prayer – this was not so before
- we have been forced to stretch in our walk with God and spouse
- being held spiritually accountable is a good thing
- This helped us know that someone was there for us both spiritually and physically
- Curriculum for Bible study helpful
- Helped develop leadership skills in remembering to remove focus from ourselves and place it where it belongs with God
- Yes! (strength given to fellow officers) For instance if one of us is having a hard time, we can work through it in a safe environment and come through the struggle stronger
- We had some really awesome prayer time at the end of the session
- Freeing content – empowering information
- Accountability – awareness therefore of the divisional pulse – it's not just me – these are regional issues
- Heightened awareness of what the enemy and the Lord are doing

- Freedom to share burdens – privilege of bearing one another's burdens
- Shared prayer, strengthening each other
- Depth of sharing – liberating – talk about anything
- This has been a spiritual and emotional bank account to draw on
- Rapid growth – affirmation
- spiritually enriching and challenging

OVERALL HEALTH (33)

- we are learning how to function in a healthy community
- This keeps us moving forward
- Encouragement to keep going
- No hiding who we really are
- Not building up burdens or bitterness
- Safety then to move out
- This has been a good experience
- This has been very beneficial and positive
- It seems as if there is less competitiveness now
- Division wide there is more closeness
- We can share joys and difficulties
- Previously I remember the agony of other officers
- It was much more prevalent during sharing times
- It made us de-motivated to share our successes
- affirming
- encouraging
- validating

- Helped develop leadership skills in remembering to remove focus from ourselves and place it where it belongs with God
- We have learned that authentic community life is hard to come by in this division, but it is wonderful when it does happen
- Yes! (strength given to fellow officers) For instance if one of us is having a hard time, we can work through it in a safe environment and come through the struggle stronger
- Privilege to participate
- Encouragement – this should have been years ago – healthy freedom to share
- God's provision to me – to be open and transparent
- High integrity – trustworthy, maturity
- This has been a spiritual and emotional bank account to draw on
- Rapid growth – affirmation
- Able to dump – empty it out – share – and then move on – don't stay there
- Wellness – I am more well because of this group
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- effective in knowledge/skill building
- overall health
- It is important to be part of this
- Without . . . the accountability group . . . would not be doing as well
- in the beginning I was dead set against these small groups. I felt uncomfortable and felt I did not have anything to offer . . . but over the last 3-4 years I know I need them. Thank you!

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