Week #3

WEEKLY STUDY &
SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Key Idea

“Deeply held disagreements become the occasion to exercise love by openness to learning from one another” (132).

Key Verse

“You are the body of Christ and parts of each other.”

— 1 Corinthians 12:27 (CEB)

Readings for the Week
to Prepare for the Small Group Discussion

Psalm 37:4


1 Corinthians 12:14-31

Chapter 3 of A Plain Account of Christian Perfection Theologically Considered by Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki pp.125-134.

Section VII of A Plain Account of Christian Perfection by John Wesley pp. 73-80.

Overview

In 1 Corinthians 12 Paul is addressing a disagreement in the church by reminding them that each is given different gifts and each gift is designed for the common good of the body. The body does not function as it should when a piece is missing, nor does it work properly if all the parts are the same. All the members/pieces/parts of the body are arranged and placed by God.

The weak and the strong, the honorable and the less honorable are all indispensable to the body of Christ.
Diversity and unity are held in tension, by the one Spirit, in one body: “You are the body of Christ and parts of each other” (1 Corinthians 12:27). Wesley concludes his Plain Account of Christian Perfection by giving us six “Be aware of” and one “Be” pieces of advice. For John Wesley, as for us, Christian perfection is an ongoing work of transformation throughout our life journey. This is not a journey we make on our own, but in union with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Gathering Prayer

*Your Word, O God, is living and active, a powerful means by which you speak to us. Give us ears to hear what you are saying, rather than hearing only what we want to hear. Give us courage to measure our attitudes and actions by your truth and the desire to align our lives by your call to discipleship. Light us with your Spirit and set our hearts ablaze with the yearning to know you and love you ever more deeply. Amen.*

Discussion Questions

1. **Beware of Pride:** “If you think you are so knowledgeable of God as to no longer need human teaching, then pride is at your door” (125). Wesley believed that we needed to learn from those who had opposing thought/beliefs than we have. When was the last time you entered into a conversation with someone who had an opposing view from yours? What was your attitude going into the conversation? Did you come from a place of love or war? How did the conversation end? Did you learn something positive from the conversation? Why or why not?

2. **Beware of Enthusiasm:** Over time words can change their meanings. How do you define enthusiasm? How was enthusiasm defined in John Wesley's day? How would you reword John Wesley's second advice to apply to today?

3. **Beware of Antinomianism:** Define Antinomianism. How do you prevent antinomianism in your church; In your life? What do you value more, freedom or love? Why? What works are you doing which show Christian love towards others? How do you grow or sustain the spirit of Christian love?

4. **Beware of Omission:** “Wesley tells us that if we desire Christian perfection, we are not to neglect any opportunity for doing good of any kind” (131). How do you know if you have missed an opportunity for doing good? “How might a review of your day or week reveal missed opportunities for doing good?” (98).
5. Beware of Desiring Anything but God: What consumes your thoughts on an average day? “Take an inventory of a typical day, how often do you think of God? What would it take and what would it look like to you to “desire only God” at work, home school and play?” (99).

6. Beware of Schism: “Deeply held disagreements become the occasion to exercise love by openness to learning from one another. In the process, we are protected from the idolatry of supposing that “our” side – whichever one that may be – is infallibly right” (132). How do you deal with contradiction and opposition? As you look back over your life, where did the greatest growth appear? In light of Wesley’s words, is it possible our denomination and culture are in the midst of an opportunity to reach new heights of learning how to love? Your thoughts…

7. Be Exemplary in All Things: The shortest advice, it covers them all. What advice do you need to work on? What does that work look like?

Close with prayer, using the words of I Peter 1:3-9 (CEB):

“May the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ be blessed! On account of his vast mercy, he has given us new birth. You have been born anew into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. You have a pure and enduring inheritance that cannot perish—an inheritance that is presently kept safe in heaven for you. Through his faithfulness, you are guarded by God’s power so that you can receive the salvation he is ready to reveal in the last time.

You now rejoice in this hope, even if it’s necessary for you to be distressed for a short time by various trials. This is necessary so that your faith may be found genuine. (Your faith is more valuable than gold, which will be destroyed even though it is itself tested by fire.) Your genuine faith will result in praise, glory, and honor for you when Jesus Christ is revealed. Although you’ve never seen him, you love him. Even though you don’t see him now, you trust him and so rejoice with a glorious joy that is too much for words. You are receiving the goal of your faith: your salvation.”