

THINGS WE LOVE: GOD'S PEOPLE

May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. (1 Thessalonians 3:12, NIV)

THERE IS A VERY GOOD CHANCE you are not reading these words alone today. It's a Friday, and many of our local Links Fellowships share the Friday devotions and studies together. They meet, read, converse, and pray, all for the purpose of learning and growing together in their commitment to Jesus.

Even if you've not connected with one of these Fellowships, though, there are enough readers of the Links Daily Devotional that someone else is likely reading at the same time you are. It's not so kneesy-nosey, but it's still a communion of believers, united in heart with their eyes toward Christ. It certainly heartens me when I am engaging my own study of the Scriptures to know that I have like-minded friends mining the same riches during their time of study and reflection.

When Paul wrote to the believers in Thessalonica, he paired both these forms of fellowship in his words to them.

He expressed the love that he and his ministering brothers Silas and Timothy shared for these people. They were men and women without great earthly means, but they had devoted their lives to the Lord and wanted to serve him with their words and actions. Earlier Paul wrote "now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 3:8). Even at a distance, the great apostle drew strengthening encouragement from the lives of his fellow believers.

Paul also encouraged these believers in their fellowship with one another. "May your love increase and overflow," he said. You should desire this same thing for the local fellowship you are connected with, be it through your church, or with Links Players, or with any other group. Stagnancy is never good. To be growing in love "for each other and for everyone else"—here is the hallmark of Spirit-blessed fellowship.

Golfers understand the beauty of human connection. Playing the game alone can provide a quiet escape now and then, but nearly all of us enjoy the game more when we play it with a friend. Interestingly, the platforms of social media now often reveal to us that tour players love the same. Jordan Spieth wins the Claret Jug, but all his competing buddies drink from it, too. As men and women of Christ, we are united around a cup as well, the communion cup of Christ's blood. Let's unite around it together in growing, healthy fellowship.

Opening questions What kind of golf partners do you most enjoy: competitive, conversational, casual? • What are the potential payoffs and struggles of entering into Christian fellowship?

READING 1 Corinthians 1:9; 1 John 4:1-6 & 4:7-12

Foundational fellowship (1 Corinthians 1:9)

With whom should our most foundational fellowship be? How might you gain this fellowship? How does this fellowship advance the purpose and outcome of our human relationships?

Teamed for truth (1 John 4:1-6)

John was concerned about minding the truth. How does a fellowship of believers help one another discern these important matters?

Fellowship and love (1 John 4:7-12)

Don't all people want to love each other? How is this different for those who follow Christ? What specific ways can believers uphold each other in love?
