Why do men have a desire for the Inner Ring? What will satisfy it?

Desires exist for a reason. According to C. S. Lewis, “Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists” (Mere Christianity 121). For every desire, there is a satisfaction that fulfills that desire. However, many times the purpose of desire is not fully recognized, because it is “not yet attached to the true object, and will even appear as the rival of that object” (“The Weight of Glory” 29). In other words, one might desire companionship and think that a new puppy will satisfy that desire. However, desire for a puppy may actually compete with whatever it is that will really fulfill that desire. The desire for companionship will ultimately be fulfilled when one is united as one body with Christ and his saints, but while one waits for this heavenly unity, one often tries to fulfill the need for companionship through other means, not understanding that these will never bring full satisfaction.

The same is true in the case of desire for the Inner Ring. Everyone at some point has a desire to be “one of the gang.” This desire is for acceptance, and is intensified by peer pressure. Many a man has mistakenly believed that this desire dies after adolescence, and has gone on trying to be similarly accepted at his workplace or in his community. The Inner Ring in and of itself is not evil, but the desire for it leads to snobbery, scoundrelism, heartlessness, and back-stabbing (“The Inner Ring” 149; 152). Moreover, merely gaining acceptance into a particular Ring does not satisfy the desire. Once a new Ring is discovered, the desire immediately returns (“The Inner” 17). If gaining entrance into an Inner Ring does not fulfill the desire, there must be
something else that does, and the issue becomes one of mistaken identity. The Inner Ring has been mistaken for something else that will truly satisfy man's desire to be accepted, and the question of what men actually desire must be asked.

The answer to the question of what men truly desire is twofold, and only through breaking the desire for the Inner Ring can a man realize either answer. Firstly, men desire friendship. This involves not only camaraderie, but also common interest and understanding. Surprisingly, friendship often looks very much like an Inner Ring, which is actually a hollow parody of real friendship (“The Inner” 157). Such hollow friendships are perhaps only a weak shadow of what is to come with and through Christ, which will be completely fulfilling. This leads to the second desire: “Good report with God, acceptance by God, response, acknowledgment, and welcome into the heart of things,” which Lewis collectively calls “glory” (“The Weight” 41). It is this “welcome into the heart of things” that is the same sort of desire found in the desire for the Inner Ring. It is a desire to be within, accepted, and noticed. What men really desire is the attention and acceptance of God. The desire for the Inner Ring is actually a desire for Heaven.