

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS ON THE FIELD

Studies repeatedly show that the major problem in groups working on the mission field is their inability to get along together. God has shown that He can work through people who fuss (Mk. 9:33-37, Lk. 9:46-48, Mt. 20:20-28), but stress will be reduced and work will proceed better when there are smooth interpersonal relationships within the group. In the interest of such the following suggestions are given:

1. One's own internal condition is most important to interpersonal relating. There is a tendency to project one's confusion, frustration, lack of role, sense of failure, discontent, homesickness, guilt, etc., into the interpersonal situation.
2. In group activities it is easy to be threatened by persons of greater or diverse talents, resulting in either hostility toward self often manifesting itself in depression, or hostility toward others manifesting itself in envy and jealousy.
3. Some are so much loners and are so afflicted by the "do your own thing" philosophy, that it is difficult if not impossible for them to work compatibly in a group situation.
4. Some are so psychologically isolated, remote, aloof, cold, formal and polite, unknown and unknowing...that they find group functioning difficult.
5. There is often difficulty in a shared decision type arrangement requiring compromise...for the rigid individual. The defensive individual will be reactive to the rejection of ideas or suggestions, confusing this with personal rejection.
6. A possible irritant in groups consists in the fact that they are made up of persons of varied habits and lifestyles...early arrivers vs late arrivers, spontaneous (impulsive) persons vs the highly organized, the perfectionist vs the just get byer, early vs late bloomers (in the day's schedule), etc.

7. The careless or thoughtless use of ammunition poses problems...by this I mean that each person has just a certain amount of influence that can be used in a group. Some try to influence, criticize, correct, or in some way have decisive input into everything, and eventually may no longer be heard (or they may arouse resentment because they are seen as dictators), while others carefully measure their ammunition, using it when and where it really is important and will count the most.

8. Varied progress in the language, in cultural adaptation, and in acceptance of and by the locals can upset group patterns.

9. Group members need to learn to reinterpret the stimulus, to look under and behind the words and actions of others for understanding, rather than being reactive and defensive.

10. Open communication is very important on a regular basis with each free to express whatever may need to be expressed (keeping point 7 in mind).

11. It is urgently necessary to avoid party spirit, gossip, and gang tackling.

12. Coworkers need to labor to be counselors to each other, developing an atmosphere of empathy, and approachableness.

13. Coworkers need times of separation from each other.

14. Coworkers need to worship and grow spiritually together in a regular program.

15. Group members need to develop modesty about the weight and importance of their opinions, and especially to be able to mark the difference between their opinions and Scripture. It is as bad to make laws God did not make as it is to break the ones he did make! The word offend in Scripture refers to one about to leave or lose his faith, not to one who merely disagrees. This word has too often been used to manipulate a group.

16. Group members with a positive outlook on self and life, and positive regard and expectancy for others will do well in a group.

17. Group theory:

- a. Maximize contact and communication
- b. Define the sources of conflict - truth, power, authority (there is always a commodity in scarce supply that people are vying for)
- c. Do not allow opinion to reach status of Biblical principal
- d. Define the limits of tolerable parameters (what are the most objectionable situations you can cope with)
- e. It is good to sometimes ask in an objective outsider
- f. build into your system a means of airing tensions and of conflict resolution (Miss. Vol. 8 No. 1, Jan. '80, Gerald Bates, "Missions and Cross-cultural Conflict)

18. The role of anger in interpersonal relations. James tells us that the anger of man does not work the will of God (1:19-20). The following points are gleaned from an article by Craig Massey, *Anger: The Destroyer Within*, Moody Monthly, January 1985.

- a. Anger is sinful and disruptive when: It makes one become cruel to others (Gen. 49:7),
 - It causes one to lose his/her temper (Prov. 12:16),
 - It causes others to be afraid (1 Kgs. 19:2-3)
 - It stirs up other people's anger (Prov. 15:8),
 - It causes one to seek revenge (Prov. 24:29),
 - It is the result of hate rather than love (1 Cor. 13:5),
 - It leads to physical, emotional, or psychological harm (Gen.4:5—8, Prov. 15:1,4,18).
 - It causes us to act the part of a fool (Eccles. 7:9).
 - It brings about bad decisions (1 Sam. 18:8-9).
 - It interferes with the reception of the Lord's blessings (2 Kgs. 5:10-12).
 - It makes one unqualified to serve the Lord (Titus 1:7).

- b. How to maintain control when angry:
 - Admit you are capable of anger (Rom. 3:23).
 - Admit it when you are tempted to let your anger take a form which God has condemned in His word (Eph. 4:31-32).
 - Set controls for your anger (Eph. 4:26).
 - Recognize there are alternatives to anger (1 Peter 4:8).
 - The control of anger is a sign of maturity (Prov. 16:32).
 - Be quiet when circumstances are chaotic (1 Thes. 4:11).
 - "Count to 10" before expressing anger (Prov. 19:11).
 - A high quality of intellect is reflected in self—control (Prov. 14:29). -
 - Avoid association with people prone to the expression of anger (Prov. 22:

- c. How to help others when they are angry: 24).
 - Deal gently with them (Prov. 15:1).
 - Show great patience (1 Peter 2:21-23, 3:9).
 - By self—control you will encourage your own children (and others)(Col. 3:21, Eph. 6:4).
 - Self-control will your mate in stressful times (Col. 3:19).
 - When all else fails, it is sometimes necessary to separate from an angry person (Prov. 22:24).

19. Learn to deal with stress better, and you will do better as a group member.

- a. Know yourself & your stress level. work within your proper context.
- b. Work for balance in all relationships (family, friends, co-workers, work).
- c. Develop a positive attitude toward stress. It is a key to accomplishment.
- d. Control stress levels by regular breaks from your normal routine.
- e. Work on your organization—proper priorities, daily increments, follow thru.
- f. Internalize your standards---what is good for me is better than minimums or comparisons. Develop "I can" rather than defeatist thinking.

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