

What is a Group

Howard Hendricks

I. Review. (Ephesians 4)

A. God dispenses spiritual gifts.

1. Gifts to men.

2. Men to the church.

B. Purpose: to build up the body.

C. Threefold product.

1. Unity.

2. Maturity.

3. Conformity.

D. This must be implemented; the body must be functional

II. What is a group?

A. A group is composed of people.

1. This is the most dynamic aspect of the group.

2. People are constantly changing.

3. From eight to ten people comprise the most effective groups.

a. The larger the group the less efficient the group is.

b. The larger the group the more passivity amongst the members.

B. Some common purpose - an attempt to focus people towards goals.

1. A plan.

2. An objective.

C. Participation.

1. The movement element - this takes you where you are to where you want to be.

2. You can lose a member of a group two ways.

- a. Paralysis.
- b. Cutting them off.

D. Definition: you have a group when you have a number of people that have goals and are working individually and collectively to reach their goals.

III. Breaking down the group.

A. There is no group or ministry without people.

1. There are many people who love the ministry but hate people.
2. We need to be ones that are likeminded and is selfless. (Philippians 2:19)
 - a. Every time you live for yourself, you invalidate Jesus Christ.
 - b. We are plagued with the curse of professionalism.
 - 1) There are many preachers, but few pastors.
 - 2) The ministry needs more who genuinely care.
3. The danger of flattery. (1 Thessalonians 2:5)
4. Successful group work begins with an understanding, an appreciation of, and a love for people.

B. Two phases to communication:

1. Message - we are long on this area being great students of this.
2. Man - we fall short on understanding our audience.
 - a. Areas of difference between people - backgrounds.
 - 1) Variety of spiritual backgrounds.
 - a) Need subgroups.
 - b) Need a man-to-man ministry.
 - 2) Variety of educational backgrounds.
 - a) Today there are people who cannot read, and most ministry is based on students who can.
 - b) People need to be able to read so that they can grow in the Word.
 - 3) Cultural differences.

- a) Evangelicals are specialists in reaching the middle class.
- b) Many Pentecostals are effective now at reaching the lower class.
- c) Some people are needed to specialize in certain people groups.
- d) God gives the body every type of person to reach every type of person.

4) The area of the family.

- a) People who come from homes of suppression or neglect.
- b) People who come from homes where they do not know how to give or receive love.

b. Needs.

1) Love.

- a) The Lord did not ask us to love the lovely.
- b) Personal example of visiting a difficult child's home.

2) Security.

- a) This is tough with the problem of paternalism.
- b) Personal example of a seminary student dependent upon his mother.
- c) We are guilty of developing insecurity when people become too dependent upon us.

3) Acceptance.

- a) A warm and accepting environment.
- b) There ought to be a therapeutic aspect to it all.
- c) You have to accept yourself before others can accept you.
- d) A threatened member within a group is not a creative member in a group.

c. Problems.

- 1) We often treat the symptoms rather than the cause of the problem.

d. Personality.

- 1) Two kinds: the person who never talks and the person who talks too much.
- 2) We tend to like the people who are most like us.
- 3) We also like the ones who like us.
- 4) We have to learn and respect them all.
- 5) People can discern whether you are interested in them or not.
- 6) You must respect what your students have to offer.

IV. Five application principles.

- A. Expect a diversity of gifts within your group. A group has a personality just like an individual does.
- B. Discover the gifts within the group. We deplore differences rather than developing them. Many of the gifts within groups are hiding.
- C. Magnify the gifts within the group. This needs to be communicated.
- D. Develop the gifts.
- E. Coordinate the gifts. When everyone is respecting everyone else for their different gifts then you have a force. This is when the team congeals. The whole process is a learning process.

Application questions:

1. Why do you think the speaker spends so much time on becoming a student of your audience? What principles are the most significant in becoming a student of those you are working with?

2. Assess your own group or groups. How well do they create an environment of love, security, and acceptance? Would all the group members agree with you?

3. What struck you most about the speaker's application principles? How can you be more mindful of the gifts - both within the individuals and as individuals - in your group?
