

# Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc.

1789 Iglehart Ave St. Paul, MN 55104-5215 www.dtminc.org Ph. (651) 283-0568

## Meeting to Condition and Train God's Strike Force

by Dan Trygg

"...new wine must be put into fresh wineskins" Lk. 5:38

"...I will build My church; and Hades' gates will not prevail against it." Matt. 16:18

It was very clear from Jesus' first declaration about the mission of His "called-out people" that **the church was never intended to be a harmless, passive, religious society. It is to be an aggressive strike force to assault, overcome, and destroy the entrenched power of the enemy, Satan** (Matt. 16:18; cf. II Cor. 10:4-6). Like Jesus, we are to give hope to the poor, liberate the oppressed, and restore sight to those who have been blinded (Lk. 4:18,19). The church is portrayed as one necessary component of the offensive forces of God's Kingdom engaged in the struggle for the liberation of planet earth from the influence and devastation of evil. **We are a company of Kingdom commandos and compatriots who are here to bring the liberating, healing, and restorative influence of the King's dominion into territory that has been held by the enemy.** God does not expect us to be able to totally banish the enemy's presence and influence. That is a job reserved for the final assault and conquering of this planet at the return of Christ. **What, then, is our job? To establish points of light in the midst of the darkness, so that the reality and hope of the Kingdom of God could be clearly seen** by those whose hearts long for it (Matt. 5:14-16; Phil. 2:14,15). We are to bring a visible, tangible expression of God's nature and influence, so that people will be able to see His heart toward humankind, and to witness and hear the hope and promise of the Good News of His love to anyone who will come to Him. Thus, **it is imperative that we are diligent to establish and maintain the quality, clarity, and brightness of the light which we bring.** Since we ourselves have come out of darkness, **for each of us this is a process of renewing our minds, and aligning our lives with God's purposes, so that we can effectively radiate His glory** which indwells us by the Spirit.

**This process of renewing and aligning ourselves is part of what the apostle Paul is referring to, in Eph. 4:15, when he wrote, "...we might grow all things into Him...".** Earlier in the same paragraph, he referred to some members of the Body who have been given the ability to "equip the saints for work of service, unto building up of the Body of Christ". The word translated as "equip" can also mean to "mend, restore, set right, adapt, prepare, make complete, outfit, or train". This covers both healing from past damage, as well as preparing for future usefulness. The focus of the work of service in which we all participate has to do with building up one another. "Building up"? Building up for what? Paul states the goal in the next couple of verses, "until we all might attain to the oneness of faith, and of a experiential knowledge of the Son of God, unto a fully-grown person, unto a measure of the maturity of Christ's fullness...". In other words, **when we meet together, we ought to do whatever is necessary and helpful to assist one another in removing blockages to our development, and to encourage one another in the accomplishment of growth in three basic areas: (1.) a common understanding of the faith; (2.) an experiential relationship with Jesus; and, (3.) Christlikeness in our character.** Why these three areas? Because we need to know enough truth to be able to discern and avoid deceptive teaching that would lead us astray into things that are unprofitable or dangerous. We also need to begin to discern how God communicates with us individually, so that we can function in response to the inner workings of His Spirit in areas of spiritual giftings and promptings to take action. As we act on these promptings, the power of God can flow through us into the lives of others. Finally, we need to become like Jesus in order to express the character of God in the everyday interactions we have with life, so people can see that Jesus is real, and the Good News really is something positive that produces health, happiness and benefit. Love is the goal of our training process, and the ultimate mark that we are legitimate followers of Jesus (I Tim. 1:5; Jn. 13:34,35).

**This encouragement toward growth which we do with each other can happen in many different ways, and at many levels.** It can refer to *emotional encouragement*, or "cheerleading" someone to take risks to stretch in new ways. It can mean *coming alongside to instruct* someone in specific ways from the Scriptures, or from your own life experiences, or from insights received from the Holy Spirit, so that they can expand their understanding and discover new ways of living life, ...or stop doing what doesn't work, or what may be harmful to themselves or others. This can be as simple as telling your own story, or it may take the form of more direct counseling and instruction. **All of this interaction should be from hearts of love and affirmation. The messages we share**

**ought to strengthen and affirm us.** Although sometimes we will experience feelings of inadequacy, guilt and remorse over past failures or habitual sin, healthy Body-life gives us messages of grace and encouragement from others which can help us press through those numbing emotions to find solutions to our struggles.

**There is no room here for criticizing, judging or condemning others.** Such attitudes come from pride or fear, and are not consistent with God's heart toward the person He has redeemed. **Our job is *not* to criticize them, it is to help them overcome what remains of their past ways of thinking and living life.** We cannot afford to be "shooting our wounded", or "beating up the broken". We must have grace for one another, and remember that people who are stuck *are stuck*, ...they do not see how they can get out of their mess, and they may even be too tired and "beat up" to put up much of a struggle. A blind spot is *something you can't see*, ...so how can you begin to address what you don't even perceive is a problem? Paul urges us to "rebuke the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all people..." (I Thess. 5:13). This tells us that people can be in different stages of ability to face their issues. We cannot expect the same thing from everyone. In another place, we are told that those who are spiritual should "restore" those who are "caught" or "entrapped" in sin. This is the same word as "equip", mentioned in the previous paragraph. **There is a need for healing from past scars, as well as learning new skills**, implied by the use of this word. Mature Body-life includes the commitment of going through the messes with people.

**The purpose of meeting together is to build one another up, to further people toward maturity. One of the ways God intends for us to do this is through the use of spiritual gifts.** He is willing to personally work with us to assist one another in ways that go beyond what is humanly possible. He will give supernatural insight and revelation to lead us to areas of hurt or need, or to expose things He wants to address in the person's life. He will also pour out His power to cause healing or to effect miraculous change in people or circumstances, so that His Kingdom purposes are accomplished. **He has chosen to provide these "outflowings" of His power through people.** This means that: **(1.) There is a partnership between God and the person.** If the person through whom God desires to work does not make him or herself available to be used by Him, then, oftentimes, *nothing happens*. The power of God never *is* released. Can God do miracles without any human agency? Sure. But, generally, He has chosen to work *with* and *through* people. **(2.) There is also a partnership, or inter-relationship, with one another, whereby God has chosen to make us interdependent upon one another to receive the full array of His benefits** which He desires for us to experience. Could God bring all of His grace and power into your life apart from others? I am sure He could. The question is not, "What *can* God do?" rather it is "How does God *choose* to operate?" Generally, it is *through other people*. In light of these truths, Paul gives basic instructions so that people can learn to recognize and exercise their gifts in an orderly way so that "all things [may] be done for edification" (I Cor. 14:26-33), i.e., to build people up toward the attainment of maturity. The vision he had, incidentally, included the free expression and function of everyone, not the overriding dominance of a few select individuals. By encouraging everyone to use their gifts, more would have the opportunity to develop their unique abilities in the interactive fellowship of Body life. Maturity and growth are hastened "according to the proper working of each individual part" (Eph. 4:16).

**Maturity cannot take place on a wide scale without the responsible interaction of everyone in the Body.** To Paul, maturity was not just an individual, one-on-one proposition. He had a vision for how growth was to be encouraged and developed by means of a Body-life, interactive dynamic. For example, looking again at Paul's words to the Ephesians, "...the equipping of the saints [is] for the work of service, to the building up of the Body of Christ; until *we all* attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. ...[out] from whom *the whole Body*, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of *each individual part*, causes the growth *of the Body* for the building up of itself in love" (Eph. 4:12,13,16). **Growth and maturity take place as the parts of the Body interact according to their God-designed function.** A passage from Colossians conveys the same idea, "[out] from whom *the entire Body*, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God" (Col. 2:19). Growing the church is not the job of a pastor, or a board of leaders, or a planning committee. **Growing the church is the job of the church.** The *Body* causes the growth *of the Body*, as the various parts link together in supportive, healthy, life-sharing ways that value and affirm *all* the members, and trains and encourages them to function as God empowers them to function. **Learning to function in our gifting is an important part of developing a skilled strike force. The Body is to be a learning laboratory for this training.**