

UNITY NOT UNIFORMITY

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This topic indicates two areas for discussion by our study group:

(1) Unity and its importance to our group -- the teamwork essential for group activities (2) The fact that we need not have uniformity in any way in order to enjoy unity.

Harmony and teamwork are essential in our study group activities just as in any group work, but think of the added significance to those of us who have read the enlarged story of teamwork and its meaning through universe ages to come. Consider this quotation written by a Mighty Messenger, "One of the most important lessons to be learned during the mortal career is teamwork." 312:2

Here in our study group we can practice to improve this art of teamwork and of working together harmoniously knowing these abilities must be used and improved upon far beyond this mortal existence. "Of all the problems in the universe requiring an exercise of the consummate wisdom of experience and adaptability, none are more important than those arising out of the relationships and associations of intelligent beings. Whether in human associations of commerce and trade, friendship and marriage, or in the liaisons of the angelic hosts, there continue to arise petty frictions, minor misunderstandings too trivial even to engage the attention of conciliators but sufficiently irritating and disturbing to mar the smooth working of the universe if they were allowed to multiply and continue. Therefore, do the Perfectors of Wisdom make available the wise experience of their order as the 'oil of reconciliation' for an entire superuniverse." 311:6

Isn't this a comforting thought as we are each continually working to promote harmony and to develop good working relations, not only in our homes and places of occupation but in our social lives and in this study group? Isn't it pleasant to contemplate that the angels themselves are devoted to this task of fostering and promoting teamwork? 312:2

"The spheres of perfection are manned by those who have mastered this art of working with other beings. Few are the duties in the universe for the lone servant. The higher you ascend, the more lonely you become when temporarily without the association of your fellows." 312:2

Many guideposts point the way to help us in this work of developing teamwork or unity in a religious group. Listen to the words of a Melchizedek of Nebadon: "While religion is exclusively a personal spiritual experience -- knowing God as a Father -- the corollary of this experience -- knowing man as a brother -- entails the adjustment of the self to other selves, and that involves the social or group aspect of religious life." 1090:10. "Religion is first an inner or personal adjustment and then it becomes a matter of social service or group adjustment.... What happens to these religious groups depends very much on intelligent leadership." 1090:10

How fortunate we are in this group to have an able leader who is continually working in this area of maintaining harmonious relationships!



Again we hear of the importance of leadership when Jesus was giving the "Farewell Personal Admonitions to His Apostles". In speaking to Andrew who had always acted as the leader of the apostles he said: "In my universe and in my Father's universe of universes, our brethren-sons are dealt with as individuals in all their spiritual relations, but in all group relationships we unfailingly provide for definite leadership. Our kingdom is a realm of order and where two or more will creatures act in co-operation, there is always provided the authority of leadership." 1959:1

In further advising Andrew, Jesus said: "If your brethren desire to retain you as their counselor, I direct that you should, in all matters temporal and spiritual, do your utmost to promote peace and harmony among the various groups of sincere gospel believers." 1959:3

This repeated appeal to promote harmony and loyal fellowship is often given throughout the Papers. It appears that spiritual development is predicated on several factors among which, one of the main ones is: "yielding the ministry to one's fellows of that which has been received from one's spiritual benefactors." 1095:6

Again we read: "Habits which favor religious growth embrace cultivated sensitivity to divine values . . . sharing one's spiritual life with one's fellows, avoidance of selfishness." 1095:4

This same idea is brought out by Jesus to his young student when he said: "Ganid, no man is a stranger to one who knows God. In the experience of finding the Father in heaven you discover that all men are your brothers, and does it seem strange that one should enjoy the exhilaration of meeting a newly discovered brother? To become acquainted with one's brothers and sisters, to know their problems and to learn to love them is the supreme experience of living." 1431:1

Again a Melchizedek of Nebadon tells us: "It is a fact that religion does not grow unless it is disciplined by constructive criticism, amplified by science and NOURISHED BY LOYAL FELLOWSHIP." 1088:9 He also tells us that, "Creative, comforting and love-expanding fellowships" are essential to true religious growth."

The exciting mathematics pointed out in a paper by Malavatia Melchizedek show the great achievements that are possible through fellowship and group activities. He indicates that the results of working together total far more than the sum of the parts. "Intellectually, socially and spiritually two moral creatures do not merely double their personal potentials of universe achievement by partnership technique, they more nearly quadruple their attainment and accomplishment possibilities." 494:11. When we reflect a moment about the number in our group and quadrupling each two, the mathematical progression here is not only staggering but decidedly encouraging for all accomplishment. Let's get started!



Our favorite Greek philosopher, Rodan of Alexandria pointed out several additional guideposts for this long, long journey. Said he: "Even though you are effectively armed to meet the difficult situations of life, you can hardly expect success unless you are equipped with that wisdom of mind and charm of personality which enable you to win the hearty support and cooperation of your fellows. You cannot hope for a large measure of success in either secular or religious work unless you can learn how to persuade your fellows, to prevail with men. You simply must have tact and tolerance." 1774:2

In Rodan's superb discussion of the "Art of Living" he pointed out many values of group unity and harmony. Among them are the values of mutual self-expression and self-understanding. He said, "Many noble human impulses die because there is no one to hear their expression. Truly it is not good for man to be alone. Some degree of recognition and a certain amount of appreciation are essential to the development of human character." 1775:8

One pitfall he admonishes us to avoid is that of prejudice. Listen to his words: "Prejudice blinds the soul to the recognition of truth, and prejudice can be removed only by the sincere devotion of the soul to the adoration of a cause that is all-embracing and all-inclusive of one's fellow men. Prejudice is inseparably linked to selfishness." 1774:6

Rodan further showed how these associations of friendship and mutual affection encourage the higher levels of living. He said that through personality association the mind of one augments its spiritual values by gaining much of the insight of the other. In this way men enrich the soul by pooling their respective spiritual possessions. "Likewise in this same way, man is enabled to avoid that ever-present tendency to fall victim to distortion of vision, prejudice of viewpoint, and narrowness of judgment. Fear, envy, and conceit can be prevented only by intimate contact with other minds." 1776:2

He calls personality association and mutual affection "the enhanced defense against all evil." There is positive strength in the fact that you live for the welfare of others and these others likewise live for your welfare and advancement. Man languishes in isolation. 1776:4

Jesus also spoke often of the importance of tact and tolerance in group associations: "As you grow older in years and more experienced in the affairs of the kingdom are you becoming more tactful in dealing with troublesome mortals and stubborn associates? Tact is the fulcrum of social leverage, and tolerance is the earmark of a great soul. If you possess these rare and charming gifts, as the days pass you will become more alert and expert in your worthy efforts to avoid much of the trouble which is certain to be the portion of all who suffer from lack of emotional adjustment, those who refuse to grow up, and those who refuse to grow old gracefully." 1740:6



Jesus also taught us the steps to take to learn to forgive an associate, One evening at Hippo during the Decapolis tour he said to a disciple: "The Father in heaven forgives you your sins; therefore, should you learn to forgive one another. If your brother sins against you, go to him and with tact and patience show him his fault. And do all this between you and him alone. If he will listen to you, then have you won your brother. But if your brother will not hear you, if he persists in the error of his way, go again to him, taking with you one or two mutual friends that you may thus have two or even three witnesses to confirm your testimony and establish the fact that you have dealt justly and mercifully with your offending brother." 1762:5

Picture the evening meeting at Amathus when Jesus and the apostles with other inquirers were discussing spiritual unity. James Zebedee had asked, "Master, how shall we learn to see alike and thereby enjoy more harmony among ourselves?" When Jesus heard this question, he was stirred within his spirit, so much so that he replied: "James, James, when did I teach you that you should all see alike? I have come into the world to proclaim spiritual liberty to the end that mortals may be empowered to live individual lives of originality and freedom before God. I do not desire that social harmony and fraternal peace shall be purchased by the sacrifice of free personality and spiritual originality. What I require of you my apostles is SPIRIT UNITY -- and that you can experience in the joy of your united dedication to the wholehearted doing of the will of my Father in heaven. You do not have to see alike or feel alike or even think alike in order spiritually to be alike. Spiritual unity is derived from the consciousness that each of you is indwelt and increasingly dominated, by the spirit gift of the heavenly Father. Your apostolic harmony must grow out of the fact that the spirit hope of each of you is identical in origin, nature and destiny.

"In this way you may experience a perfected unity of spirit purpose and spirit understanding growing out of the mutual consciousness of the identity of each of your indwelling Paradise spirits; and you may enjoy all of this profound spiritual unity in the very face of the utmost diversity of your individual attitudes of intellectual thinking, temperamental feeling and social conduct. Your personalities may be refreshingly diverse and markedly different, while your spiritual natures and spirit fruits of divine worship and brotherly love may be so unified that all who behold your lives will of a surety take cognizance of this spirit identity and soul unity; they will recognize that you have been with me and have thereby learned and acceptably how to do the will of the Father in heaven. You can achieve the unity of service of God even while you render such service in accordance with the technique of your own original endowments of mind, body and soul.

"Your spirit unity implies two things, which always will be found to harmonize in the lives of individual believers: First, you are possessed with a common motive for life service; you all desire above everything to do the will of the Father in heaven. Second, you all have a common goal of existence; you all purpose to find the Father in heaven, thereby proving to the universe that you have become like him." 1591:7,8.



Jesus often talked on this topic of our individual differences and how we each react differently but that our one point of unity is that each is indwelt by the divine spirit. When he met with the evangelists at Bethsaida he concluded his evening address by saying: "You should remember that in body and mind -- emotionally -- men react individually. The only UNIFORM thing about men is the indwelling spirit. Though divine spirits may vary somewhat in the nature and extent of their experience, they react uniformly to all spiritual appeals. Only through, and by appeal to, this spirit can mankind ever attain unity and brotherhood."  
1672:7

I, personally, feel that we who have this great privilege of studying the Papers will be held accountable for far more than those who have not. We are like the man in the parable with the five talents -- we are now charged with the responsibility of producing! In reference to the topic under discussion tonight: Are we able, with our knowledge gained from the Papers to promote peace and harmony and to demonstrate unity in the truest possible sense?

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