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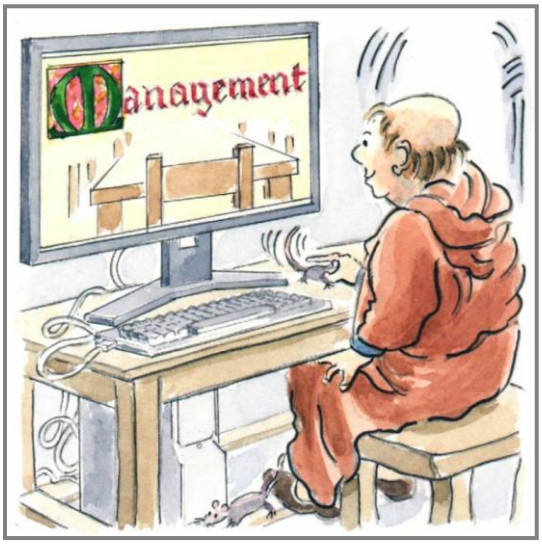

'One another' teams

TN79 Training Notes series: Management

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In Training Notes TN41, *What makes a group a team?*, I identify four necessary features. The third of these is 'A committed membership': the idea that people will do anything for each other in a real team setting.

The suggestion there was to check out Romans 12:9-21. These notes take that idea further by looking at all the 'one another' verses in the New Testament epistles (including Romans 12) and applying these to team building.

There are over 50 commands in the New Testament letters of Paul, Peter, James and John (and the letter to the Hebrews) where the Greek word *allelon* is used to show how the Christian community is to relate to and bless each other or, in a few cases, how not to relate. The English translation usually comes out as 'one another' or 'each other'.

The idea is of something mutually shared, shown or felt by both parties. This sounds just like what a team should be like, so here the various references have been analysed under seven headings within a team context. The epistles were, after all, written to small churches that needed to operate just like a team.

Most churches use the 'team' word too freely. Being in a team is a challenging responsibility as Training Notes TN41 tries to demonstrate. These verses when put together demonstrate that clearly.

These notes should be used by a team working together, rather than as reading for an individual. It would be best if all the Bible verses could be read out: perhaps allocating each one to different people.

Then there might be some assessment of how well the team is functioning under each of the seven headings, or an attempt to identify which areas the team is weakest in followed by a plan for how everyone might work together to improve matters. There are some team questions included at the end of these notes.

1 Love one another

Verses to read out:

Paul Romans 12:10; 13:8; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; 4:9; 2 Thessalonians 1:3
Heb Hebrews 13:1
Peter 1 Peter 1:22; 3:8; 4:8; 2 Peter 1:7
John 1 John 3:11,23; 4:7,11,12; 2 John v5

all in the context of how Jesus taught in John 13:34,35; 15:12,17.

You cannot function as a team, and especially as a Christian team, unless the love for each other that is the clear command for all Christians works out in depth among the members. Love here is not how you ***feel***, it's all about what you ***do***. Team members will see the love, the commitment to each other, by your behaviour and actions. You want to reach the point where others can look at you and say, "See how these team members love one another!". You could argue that all the following points are simply consequences of this one.

2 Live at peace with one another

Verses to read out:

Paul Romans 12:16: 14:13; 15:5,7; 1 Corinthians 12:25; Galatians 5:15, 26; Ephesians 4:2, 32; Colossians 3:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:13,15
James James 4:11; 5:9
John 1 John 1:7

This cluster of verses covers the ideas of accepting, tolerating, forgiving, agreeing, caring, not judging, not provoking and not grumbling. If you love one another these all follow, but it is on these actions and attitudes that the challenging test of real love comes into focus. Team members know the worst about each other and still accept each other. There can be no room for hidden grudges. Another way of seeing these would be to take the New Testament picture of the body and work that out within the team.

3 Serve one another

Verses to read out:

Paul Romans 12:10; 1 Corinthians 11:33; Galatians 5:13; 6:2; Ephesians 5:21; Philippians 2:3
Peter 1 Peter 4:9,10; 5:5

Here is a third 'one another' in Romans 12. Jesus demonstrated this in John 13:14 but the cluster of verses here includes the ideas of hospitality, honouring, submitting, bearing each other's burdens, praying for, using your gifts for others and being humble. In a team everyone, including the leader, serves. There simply is no concept of a hierarchy of status – even though a team has to have a leader. You have to leave your egos outside the room and submit to each other. Solo leaders find this hard.

4 Encourage one another

Verses to read out:

Paul Romans 14:19; 1 Thessalonians 4:18; 5:11
Heb Hebrews 3:13; 10:24,25

The New Testament concept of encouragement is much stronger than a passing comment aimed at making someone feel better. It has to do with building the other person up and stirring them to good works. It is a specific form of serving one another, but assumes a deep understanding of each person in the team and their needs. This form of mutual development cannot be done without the team having quality time together.

5 Greet one another

Verses to read out:
Paul Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12
Peter 1 Peter 5:14

Each of these includes the words, 'with a holy kiss' so the team needs to work out what the appropriate expression of that might be in their case! This is another form of encouragement: the deliberate action of making contact with the other team members instead of staying with one's own crowd and ignoring the others.

6 Teach and admonish one another

Verses to read out:
Paul Romans 15:14; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16

It is interesting to find that the idea of teaching (with both its positive and negative sides) comes into this 'one another' collection. In a team there should be a place for each person to both instruct and, where necessary, reprimand others for behaviour that fails to honour the team concept or for other faults. Each team member, including the leader, needs to remain vulnerable to reprimand from others. But all this has to be seen in the light of all the other headings in these notes. Note too how the idea of singing together comes into these verses.

7 Be honest with one another

Verses to read out:
Paul Ephesians 4:25; Colossians 3:9
James James 5:16

Lack of honesty destroys trust in a team but these verses also include the idea of confessing to each other, a level of honesty that many teams might baulk at. Transparency needs to be brought into the team ***culture***, or it will be unexpected and resisted when it suddenly appears. Which brings these seven points back to the first one again, to love one another. One way of visualising these would be in a circle.

So there are seven groupings of the 'one another' commands in the New Testament epistles, written to small churches and applicable today not only to Christian groups in general but, in particular, to any group that calls itself a team. But behind all these seven sets of commands there lies a reason that is true for any church but which perhaps provides the greatest challenge of all to a team:

Key **We belong to each other**

Verses to read out:
Paul Romans 12:5; Ephesians 4:25

These notes have not been about screwing ourselves up to try to match a standard for operational reasons, but a practical outworking of a fact. Those who have God as their Father are part of a family and, as sisters and brothers, a true community.

This can never be matched outside the Church, which implies that team-building in a Christian community should lie in a different league from other teams. It would be powerful if the business world's teams came to the Church to ask us for the secret of successful team-working. Sadly, that is rarely the case. Where have we gone wrong?

Team questions

1 What overall picture of a team does each member see by looking at all these points together?

2 Where might each person struggle most, and therefore need help, in applying these points for themselves within this team?

3 How well does the team together live up to the challenge of each of these seven areas? Take them one by one: you might even score them in some way.

4 Which ones does the team especially need to work at over the next few months? These would probably be the ones with the lowest scores.

5 How in practice might this be done?

6 What practical steps can each person take to help grow the group into a 'one another' team?

These notes are available at https://www.john-truscott.co.uk/Resources/Training-Notes-index then TN79. See also Article A45, *How to lead a team at church,* plus Training Notes TN41, *What makes a group a team?,* TN49, *What's going on under the water,* TN94, *Becoming self-aware*, TN101, *Working with a No. 2,* and TN139, *Church workers in teams.*

John's resources are marked for filing categories of Leadership, Management, Structures, Planning, Communication and Administration. File TN79 under Management.

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