**Building Good Relationships**

One of the most unforgettable memories during my ministry as corps officer was the dedication of our Corps building. It had a beautiful chapel with nice furniture, a great AV system, a nice sized gym, and many multi-purpose rooms throughout the building. Our Corps building became a good example for ministry, so other officers and people interested in building projects visited us to tour our facilities. In the Army, we have many beautiful buildings. However, people and their relationships are more important than big, nice buildings.

In our lives, we have many relationships with others. They are one of the essential elements of our lives. Yet, relationships are sometimes impossibly challenging to navigate. We know from experience that relationships with people can be a source of stress, from handling conflict and confrontations that may end a relationship, to growth and maturity when successfully handled. What then should we do with tough relationships? How can we make our relationships better? We need love and unity.

Love is essential for a good relationship. Jesus says that we are to love one another because love comes from God and when we love, His love is made complete in us (1John 4:7,12). He also says we need to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:39, NIV). Jesus told a story about an unlikely neighbor who displayed mercy to an unlikely recipient. We know it as the story of the Good Samaritan. It teaches us what loving our neighbor is supposed to look like. Our relationship with God should be to extend love to our neighbors in need. However, it is easy for us to love only the people we like. Sometimes God brings people who are hard to love into our lives to teach us to love.

Unity comes from our love and service to one another through relationships, in community. The Bible teaches us not to discriminate against people: *"My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism." (James 2:1NIV)* We all have different personalities, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and religious beliefs. But, despite our differences, we must love each other because Jesus committed us to love as He loves us. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul wrote about the relationship between Jesus and community love. *"So in Christ Jesus, you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.  There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus".* *(Galatians 3:26-28, NIV)*

God longs for us to give ourselves entirely to the community around us. He longs to use us for the healing and building up of each other. And he longs for us to embrace humility as we receive help and sharpening from others around us. The Bible says, *"You can develop a healthy, robust community that has right with God and enjoy its results only if you do the hard work of getting along with each other, treating each other with dignity and honor." (James 3:18, MSG).*

As Christians, we are to follow Jesus teachings. It does not mean to just study the Bible or merely talk about it, but to live what it says. We must have grace for each other. We must love even when we are unloved. We are to help when no one else will. By intentionally building good relationships with each other, we can make our home, workplace, and community better. Let’s build up the body that Jesus loves that the world might better know the loving and available God we serve. Ephesians 4:16 says: ***“From whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love."* *(ESV)***

Questions for individual or group reflection:

\*Have you ever been challenged with building a good relationship with someone who you have a hard time loving? What was the result?

\*From the scriptures shared, which one you find more challenging personally and why?

\*Share ways you can show love to others to intentionally build good relationships.

\*Try being intentional in building good relationship with someone from your group who is from a different background than yours. Next time you meet as a group, share something you have learned with the experience of reaching out in love.

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