

8. Three Attitudes that Hinder Team Effectiveness

Any time a team is formed for ministry, we are going to eventually deal with some wrong attitudes. One of the things we want a developing team leader to learn is to recognize and know how to deal with these attitudes when they appear in one or more of the team members. These three attitudes are found in Luke 9:46-56. Learning how to deal with these three attitudes will be the focus of our topic today.

The first attitude that hinders team effectiveness is found in Luke 9:46. That verse says, “Then a dispute arose among them as to which of them would be greatest.” Here, we see an attitude that is very common in the world. This attitude will always lead to competition, instead of effectiveness as a team. Mark 9:33-37 gives some additional details about this event. In Mark 9:33-34, we read, “Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, “What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road? But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who *would be the greatest*.”

In these verses, in Mark, we see that the disciples had been discussing this topic for a period of time as they traveled along the road. However, they quickly became silent when Christ questioned them, because they knew they had a wrong attitude. Their own guilt silenced them. However, it was not the desire of Christ just to make them feel guilty. Instead, He wanted to teach them how to have an attitude that would promote teamwork rather than competition.

Christ knew that it was time to sit down with the disciples and discuss with them the attitude that would promote teamwork. Mark 9:35 says, “And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.” Christ began with the negative and told them that the desire they had was caused by a wrong attitude. Christ had to repeat this lesson later, as Mark 10:43-45 says, ““Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”” Christ showed the disciples, by His own example, that they should have a desire to serve, rather than a desire to be first.

Second, Mark 9:36-37 says, “Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, ‘Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me.’” Those who want to be great are usually so busy trying to promote themselves that they have no time for anyone else, especially children. Here, Christ showed, by example, that greatness comes by humbling self and taking time to minister to all, even children. The word that is translated “receive” means *to receive by a deliberate action and with an accepting attitude*. By His actions, Christ showed the importance of accepting and treating others, even the smallest of children, with respect. We model the importance of humility by accepting others.

The second attitude that hinders team effectiveness is found in Luke 9:49. That verse says, “Now John answered and said, ‘Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we

forbade him because he does not follow with us.” In this case, John saw someone, who was not a part of their group, serving the Lord. John tried to make the man stop, because he was not part of their group. Today, we see many Christian groups who spend much of their time fighting against one another, because other groups do not do things their way. Christ said that this hinders the work of the Lord.

Instead, Christ told the disciples what they were to do in Luke 9:50. That verse says, “Do not forbid *him*, for he who is not against us is on our side.” The word that is translated “forbid” means *to hinder or restrain*. Here, we see that it is possible to become so busy trying to hinder others that we do not have time to do what God has called us to do as a team. Christ says those who are not against us are on our side. That is true, even when they have different opinions about the way to do things.

People who are Christians, but have slightly different doctrinal interpretations on a few topics are not enemies we should try to hinder or restrain. Christians who have a different style of music, or no music, are not our enemies who we should try to hinder or restrain. Christians who have more rules, or less rules than we have, are not our enemies who we should try to hinder or restrain. Our enemy is Satan, not other Christians. If we spend our time fighting other Christians, it will hinder both the work of the Lord and the effectiveness of our own team.

These Christians will have to give an account to the Lord for what they have done, or not done, just as we will have to give an account to the Lord for what we have done, or not done. 2 Corinthians 5:9-11 says, “Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.” We need to be obedient to what God has called us to do, not spend our time fighting against other Christians.

The third attitude that hinders team effectiveness is found in Luke 9:51-56. In Luke 9:53-54, we read, “But they did not receive Him, because His face was *set* for the journey to Jerusalem. And when His disciples James and John saw *this*, they said, ‘Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?’” In these verses, we see that the Samaritans would not accept the disciples of Christ, because they were on their way to Jerusalem. The immediate response of James and John was wanting to destroy the Samaritans.

Christ responded to James and John, in Luke 9:55-56, “‘You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save *them*.’ And they went to another village.” Here, we see an attitude of retaliation and a desire to get even. Christ made it very clear that such an attitude will hinder the effectiveness of the ministry team. Christ had to rebuke their attitude, because their attitude would hinder the effectiveness of the team.

By the very nature of our ministry of calling people to repent of their sins, we can expect that some of those we talk to will not accept us, because they do not accept our message. That does not mean

we should change our message. Christ did not turn around and stop heading toward Jerusalem. Instead, Christ clearly defined His purpose for the disciples again. Christ said that the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them.

Here, we see a key to helping a team learn to be more effective. When the team faces opposition, because we are faithfully teaching the Word of God, we need to take the time to remind the team of the purpose God has given us as a team. We have talked before about helping the team leader help the team develop unity of purpose. Opposition from the outside is an ideal time to remind the team of the purpose God has given us, so we immediately get our focus back on the purpose, instead of focusing on how to get even with the opposition.

Christ also did a second thing to help the disciples learn to deal with opposition. He provided an example by leaving that village and going to another village. Christ knew that there were many villages and places where they would have the opportunity to minister. Instead of destroying those who opposed, Christ showed the importance of using opposition to look for other opportunities to minister. In the same way, we will help the team become more effective if we help them see other opportunities, rather than focus on the opposition.

Christ used three incidents that happened, in their daily life as a team, to help the disciples learn to recognize and deal with three attitudes that would hinder and destroy the effectiveness of the team. Those same three attitudes often appear as teams develop today. One or more team members may have personal ambitions to be the greatest. One or more team members may focus on trying to hinder other Christians they don't agree with. Some team members may want to get even when the team faces opposition. That is why it is so important to help a developing team leader learn to deal with each of these attitudes which can hinder and destroy the effectiveness of the team. May the Lord richly bless you, as you help developing team leaders learn to deal with these and other attitudes that will hinder the effectiveness of the team.