MEANS OF GRACE

I. Note to Leaders
   A. An understanding and application of the MOG is one of the most important things you can communicate to the people in your home church. If they do not regularly partake of all of the MOG, they will not grow to maturity.
   B. Obviously, the best way to ensure that this happens is to make sure that your workers are an example in their own lives. This sheet is designed to instruct the workers about the MOG and to stimulate practical discussion on how they and the people with whom they are involved can improve in this area. Feel free to use this material over several weeks.

II. General Understanding For Teaching MOG
   A. First, make sure everyone knows what the five MOG are; word, prayer, fellowship, discipline and ministry.
   B. Draw the analogy between physical and spiritual growth. The two requisites for physical growth are: regular, balanced nutrition and exercise. One without the other will hinder, not help growth. The same thing is true with spiritual growth.
      1. Word, prayer and fellowship provide the balanced nutrition; discipline and ministry provide the exercise.
      2. Be sure to point out that the MOG are not works we do to make God happy (this is how most people view Bible reading, prayer etc. - especially if they have any experience with the institutional church); rather, these are the means or channels through which we receive the life of God for growth.
   C. Be sure that all of your workers understand the importance of <u>all</u> the MOG. Each one has a unique importance and value for all Christians. In other words, MOG are not like spiritual gifts - we all need all the MOG.
      1. Being proficient at 4 out of 5 will not result in 80% sanctification; but it can result in serious spiritual problems.
      2. As you go through each MOG, ask your workers (and begin with yourself) to share which ones they find most difficult. Agree to hold each other accountable for improvement in these weak areas. Discuss practical ways you can do this with each other, as well as with other people in your home church.
   D. Workers should understand that when people in the home church complain of spiritual problems, the first thing to investigate is whether or not they are neglecting a MOG. This is the cause of the vast majority of spiritual problems.
      1. So they can show their people the need for these MOG, each worker should memorize at least 2 or 3 verses on each area.
   E. As you go through each of the MOG, ask your workers each of the three questions and get their input <u>before</u> you offer the provided answers. The provided answers are not exhaustive.
      1. You should also go through each of the scriptures and be sure they are understood.

<u>THE WORD</u>

Scriptures: Jn. 8:31 & 32, 17:17 - Acts 20:32 - Rom. 10:17, 15:4 - Col. 3:16 - 2 Tim. 2:15, 3:16 & 17 - Heb. 5:11-14 - 1 Pet. 2:2

I. Why Is It Important:
   A. Provides an objective record of God's point of view
      1. Scripture says that we need renewed minds (Rom. 12:2 - Eph. 4:24) because we have been brain-washed as non-Christians into seeing things from the wrong perspective (i.e. 1 Jn. 2:15-17). The Word shows us God's point of view and therefore the key to a transformed mind is knowing and acting upon God's Word.

B. Satanic opposition: often through distractions, interruptions, wandering or gross thoughts.
C. People who are very academically oriented often have difficulty with prayer, since it involves subjective and intimate relating.
D. Self-sufficient mentality: the person feels no need to pray for a variety of reasons. (Lk. 18:9-12 - Jas. 4:13-17)
E. Continuing in sin about which God has convicted the person will make him not want to pray. (see 1 Pet. 3:7)

III. How To Develop It
A. Find someone who is good at prayer and ask them to pray with you regularly.
B. Keep a prayer journal which lists requests, answers, etc.
C. Begin by meditating on how God has blessed you and thank Him for these things. This often is helpful in drawing you near to God. (Col. 3:15-17)

FELLOWSHIP

Scriptures: Acts 2:42 - Rom. 12:5 - 1 Cor. 12:14-27, 14:26 - Eph. 4:14-16, 5:18-21 - Phil. 2:1-5 - Col. 2:19, 3:12-17 - 1 Thes. 5:14 - Heb. 10:24 & 25

I. Why Is It Important:
A. Because we are a part (& not the whole) of the Body of Christ, we need what the other parts of the Body supply. (1 Cor. 12:21 & 22)
B. For the same reasons, the rest of the Body needs our specific function for its overall health. (1 Cor. 12:15-18) If we aren't in fellowship, we cannot see needs or discover our spiritual gifts.
C. Guards us against imbalance in our walks - tangential people invariably do not submit to the Body. (Col. 2:19 - Eph. 5:21)
D. Helps make more concrete God's love for us and our love for God. (1 Jn. 4:20)

II. Why Do We Neglect It?
A. Cultural damage:
1. Our culture glorifies the autonomous view of man: the person who needs nobody is seen as the most "together".
2. Many of us come from broken or alienated homes and fear intimate personal relationships.
B. Faulty value system - fellowship is seen as an option which can be discarded if we are busy, rather than as a mandatory requisite for growth.
C. Some people have a selfish attitude that is manifested when they get involved in romantic relationships. Suddenly they withdraw from fellowship, especially if someone in fellowship has expressed concern about the relationship.
D. Some are hesitant to become involved in fellowship because their previous exposure to "church" has been negative. They may have been involved in cultic or hyper-legalistic groups or in liberal churches which were very boring.
E. Emotional problems hinder many from becoming deeply involved in fellowship.
F. Bitterness or moral impurity also causes withdrawal.
G. Pressure from members of the fellowship.

III. How Do We Develop It?
A. Obviously, you must get regular exposure to fellowship. This involves not only coming to meetings regularly, but also doing social things together and (most importantly) developing close friendships with believers. This takes time & effort.
B. If you have problems getting close to people, try to get involved in a helpful function of the fellowship. (giving people rides, helping clean up meeting places) This should not be regarded as a substitute for fellowship, but as an easy way to

2. We need an objective authority by which to judge our feelings, experiences and circumstances because these things are subjective. Our walks will be based on these subjective and undependable things if we do not walk by faith in the Word.

B. The Word opens the door for correctly understanding the other MOG. For example, it provides the proper basis for knowing Christ personally by providing facts about Him. Our prayer relationship with Him should be based on the Word. (Jn. 15:7)

II. Why Do We Neglect It?

A. Simple laziness or "don't care" attitude.

B. Cultural damage - many people have hardly any concept of real self-discipline or imagination needed for rigorous study. Many never read at all. These factors may lead some to think that Bible study is simply impossible for them, when in reality they only need practice.

C. Those with a church mentality may feel that hearing Bible teachings is enough, or that they are unqualified for serious study because they have no formal (seminary) training. How do you disprove this assumption?

D. Simply don't know where or how to begin. They may have tried reading the Bible starting from Genesis and got bogged down in Leviticus.

E. Some who are very experience and feeling oriented see no need for the Word in their lives, especially if it contradicts or invalidates their experience.

III. How Do We Develop It?

A. Regular exposure to teachings. Suggest that they take notes, ask questions, listen to tapes, etc. Most people should be able to attend at least two teachings per week.

B. Offer to get together with them for more extensive personal study. What we are not disciplined enough to do alone we can usually do with someone else. You can pursue book-studies, study doctrinal themes, work on problem passages, etc.

1. "How to" study methods are helpful (Inductive method, Navigator work-books, etc.)

C. Suggest Christian books that have been helpful to you. Lend or give them if the person seems only half interested. Offer to get together to discuss the content.

D. Suggest a daily journal in which they write down what they have gotten out of the passage they were reading that day.

PRAYER

Scriptures: Matt. 6:5-7, 18:19 - Lk. 18:1-8 - Jn. 15:7 - Acts 2:42, 12:5 - Rom. 8:26 & 27, 15:30, 12:12 - 1 Cor. 14:15 - Eph. 6:18 - Phil. 4:6 - Col. 4:2 - 1 Thes. 5:17 - 1 Pet. 5:6 - 1 Jn. 5:14

I. Why Is It Important?

A. It is impossible to have a personal relationship with Christ without communicating with Him regularly, intimately and honestly.

B. While the Word provides the objective basis for our walk, prayer provides much of the subjective basis. We should share all of our burdens, joys, sorrows, anxiety, etc. with Him. Seeing answered prayer also builds our faith.

C. Since we listen to God in prayer as well as talking to Him, direct leading often occurs during prayer.

D. In many cases, God waits until we ask before He acts. (Jas. 4:2)

E. Prayer during fellowship with other Christians helps the quality of that fellowship. (Eph. 5:18 & 19)

F. Is very important with regard to spiritual warfare. (Eph. 6:18)

II. Why Do We Neglect It?

A. Laziness - prayer takes self-discipline.

start more in-depth involvement.

C. If you have more severe emotional problems, which effectively hinder this kind of involvement, get help from a qualified Christian counselor.

MINISTRY

Scriptures: Jn. 4:34 - Acts 20:35 - Rom. 12:10-13 - 1 Cor. 12 - Eph. 4:11-13 - Phil. 2:1-4 - 1 Thes. 5:13 & 14 - Heb. 10:24 & 25 - 1 Jn. 3:16-18

I. Why Is It Important?

A. Ministry is practicing Biblical love, which is the goal of Christian instruction. (1 Tim. 1:5)

B. Each person needs to contribute their function in order for the Body to be healthy (Eph. 4:16)

C. Counteracts a selfish, temporal value system by replacing it with investing in eternal things - people. (see Matt. 6:19-21 & interpret in light of 1 Thes. 2:19&20)

II. Why Is It Neglected?

A. Ignorance of the Body concept taught in Scripture. People with an institutional church background often think that no one is able to minister except the clergy.

B. Selfishness or faulty (temporal or materialistic) value system - unwilling to serve others or be involved in the Body.

C. Misunderstanding about degree of emotional or spiritual maturity required for ministry. We need maturity in order to increase our proficiency in ministry, but <u>any</u> Christian who wants to minister can do so. (How old were the disciples when Christ sent them out in Lk. 10?) In fact, there is no other way to increase our competence without practice. (1 Tim. 4:14-16)

D. Lack of training, motivation or equipping by other older Christians. (2 Tim. 2:2)

E. Discouragement:

1. Over previous failure in ministry.
2. May have been taught that it is impossible to minister unless you know what your spiritual gift is. Since these gifts may take <u>years</u> to emerge into recognizable form, many despair long before that, concluding that they are in some way unqualified to minister.

III. How Do We Develop It?

A. Obviously, you must be vitally involved in the Body, since this is where most ministry occurs.

B. Rather than choosing a gift area to experiment with, choose a <u>person</u> and try to meet <u>all</u> of the needs you discover in them.

1. This teaches you to actively search for the needs, an essential ability for effective ministry.
2. When you find needs which are beyond your ability to meet, find someone who is competent for the task; watch them closely and question them. In this way, you learn additional ministry skill.
3. Over a period of time, your areas of ministry strength (gifts) will begin to emerge. In the meantime, you have been fruitfully serving the body!

C. Consistent exposure to the other MOG (especially the Word) is necessary in order for you to equip yourself and develop increasing competence.

D. Personal discipleship by an older believer is very helpful in development of ministry skills. The older believer can often answer questions or problems you encounter. They can also encourage you when you feel discouraged by relating similar experiences.

E. Persistence - ministry skills take time to develop. Any Christian can become highly competent in ministry, but such competence is the result of much effort, study, failure, etc. Often, those who are less gifted succeed in ministry because they have the determination to keep going. Do you desire to be used by God, no matter what the cost? This is the attitude necessary.

DISCIPLINE

Scriptures: Matt. 18:15-17 - Lk. 9:23 & 24 - 1 Cor. 11:30-32 - 2 Cor. 1:3-9, 4:7-13, 7:8-10 - Phil. 1:29 & 30 - Heb. 12:1-13 - Jas. 1:2-5 - 1 Pet. 1:6 & 7, 2:19-21, 4:12-19

I. Why Is It Important?
   A. Necessary for every believer in order to produce maturity.(Heb. 12:6, 10, 11, 13)
      1. Builds and refines our character.
      2. Exposes and corrects harmful habits and attitudes.
      3. Increases faith-dependence on God.
   B. Proves that we are loved by God. (Heb. 12:6)
   C. In addition, church discipline is necessary because it protects the believer from himself (when he is harming himself through wrong attitudes or actions).
   D. It also protects the Body from that person's potentially damaging effects. (1 Cor. 5:6

II. Why Is It Neglected?
   A. Often disregarded because of a rebellious attitude. ("No one has the right to tell me what to do!") (Heb. 12:5 & 13)
   B. Discipline is often misinterpreted as punishment if the person does not understand grace. (1 Jn. 4:18 - Heb. 12:6) If this is the case, be sure to teach them the difference.
   C. Cultural damage: many are conditioned to avoid pain at all costs. Many find it inconceivable that a painful experience could bring constructive change, yet this is exactly what Scripture promises. (Heb. 12:11)
   D. Many believers have had inadequate experience with church discipline:
      1. Some have never received church discipline because their church did not practice it for any one of a variety of reasons. (lack of love, insufficient understanding of Scripture, fear of confrontation, etc.)
      2. Some have had bad experiences with legalistic or authoritarian discipline from previous church or cultic involvement. This naturally causes an overreaction or suspicion over any church discipline.

III. How Do We Develop It?
   A. Do not seek suffering or bring it on yourself through wrong behavior. (1 Pet. 2:20, 4:1)
   B. Decide to receive discipline as a sign of God's love for you. Actively seek to learn what God wants to teach through this experience of suffering. (Jas. 1:2-5)
   C. Learn to ask for constructive criticism from those with whom you are involved, especially from older, more mature Christians. (Prov. 11:14)