

THE WORD and the Team

a

Bible Study Guide

on

Team Ministry



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Prelude

Why Team Ministry? This study guide attempts to answer that question. We are most familiar with the idea of team work in the world of sports. The same idea of unity of action can be used in the church's ministry. There is considerable scriptural basis for team ministry. Team ministry can also, when conducted properly, provide strength and beauty in the church.

We regularly see teamwork in athletic competition. An efficient double play combination would fail if the first baseman decided not to do his job. A running back can only be successful when he has blockers working in front of him. A volleyball spiker would be useless without excellent setters. An Olympic relay team is made up of a group of individuals who absolutely must use teamwork to get the baton to the finish line. The entire team working together fluidly, efficiently, and with a great deal of effort will be successful. Failure on the part of any of the team members causes the entire team to suffer.

Consider the negative example presented to us in Joshua 6. Joshua had been assigned by God the task of leading perhaps some two million people into the land of promise. Jericho was "a piece of cake" only because God blessed the efforts of the Israelites. The spies proved faithful. Rahab certainly helped. The priests and the people followed the Lord's directives precisely. There was no problem as the walls came tumbling down. The team was successful.

Next came Ali. The spies who had been sent ahead reported that the town was so small a group of a few thousand could easily defeat it. Yet, Israel was routed. Thirty-six died. The people were demoralized. Joshua tore his clothes and prostrated himself before the Ark of the Lord. What had happened? Why had God left his chosen people? Two million people suffered because one man, Achan, sinned. He pleaded guilty to plundering a robe, some silver, and some gold. His actions were a

devastation to the people. One team member ruined it for all of the other members of the team.

On the other hand, the Scriptures give us numerous positive examples of team ministry. In Exodus 32, immediately following the incident of the Golden Calf, the Levites proved their fervor for the Lord by supporting Moses in disciplining the people. Because of this action the entire tribe of Levites was set apart as a team for service to the Lord. We think also of the example given to us by Jesus in Luke 10:1. Throughout the countryside he sent his disciples two by two. These many teams served by telling the people about who had come. Acts 13 shows the teamwork of Paul and Barnabas. Aquila and Priscilla are mentioned several times in Scripture, particularly in Acts 18, as members of God's team. Throughout the Old and New Testament Scriptures we see the concept of team ministry in carrying out the Great Commission given to the disciples by our Lord (Matthew 28).

There are strength and beauty in God-pleasing team ministry. Let us take a beautiful image from the Scriptures to put into our mind's eyes what team ministry can mean. The Scriptures often use the image of a wedding to express the intimate relationship between God and his people, the Church: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless" (Ephesians 5:25-27).

A similar picture is presented in Revelation 21:2: "I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband." The imagery is also used in the Old Testament; for example, Hosea 2:19-20: "I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the Lord." The

bride, the Church, is holy, cleansed, purified and perfect. She is radiant. She possesses the God-endowed qualities of righteousness, justice, love, compassion, and faithfulness. The Church is a beautiful bride, prepared and ready for presentation to the Bridegroom.

Let us take a closer look to emphasize the concept of team ministry. Look once more at the bride. Her beauty is enhanced by a golden rope necklace. In the center of the necklace is one large strand larger than all the rest combined. We see-engraved on that strand one word: CHRIST. Intertwined around the strand of "CHRIST" are numerous smaller strands. Engraved on these are the names of pastors, principals, teachers, and lay people. Through a magnifying glass we make out the names of specific church workers. Your name is there and so is mine. The necklace is sparkling, bold, and durable. Each strand is essential to ministry. Each is coiled around CHRIST, who gives it the strength.

This guide is for pastors, principals, teachers, and lay people, who all are laboring as servants of Christ in the church. We are strands of servants working together as a team to preach and teach the saving gospel for the salvation of souls. May this guide be a source of strength and edification to each of us as we labor for Christ. May we grow spiritually through the Word. May we serve our Lord faithfully, and may our efforts as a team glorify God.

Purpose

The purpose of this study guide is two-fold. First, we will learn the truths of Scripture which deal with team ministry. Second, we will make practical applications through the eyes of Scripture as it applies to our members as a team.

Recommendations and suggestions

It is recommended that the members of the team participate in an in-service study prior to the beginning of the school year. Team

members include pastors, principals, teachers, and board of education members. All members are urged to participate in the study and discussion. Quality study will be achieved if each individual team member is actively involved. The pastor or principal should lead the study and make certain that all participants are given the opportunity to express their views.

No suggestions are made regarding the number of lessons for the complete Bible study because each team will spend varying amounts of time of each topic. The leader will need to select the portions for each sessions.

Portions of the study may seem trivial or even condescending. After all, don't we all know the mission of the church? Yet, this very point must be reviewed, analyzed, and scrutinized. Without a clear understanding of purpose, individual team members may begin pulling the load in different directions.

Sometimes lay persons or young called workers are hesitant to speak on the subject of Scripture in the presence of pastors or older workers. Don't hesitate! Your thoughts, your zeal for the work of the Lord, and your enthusiasm to serve the Lord are important ingredients for the team. On the other hand, veteran team members are encouraged to be open-minded to new ideas and to speak with the wisdom of experience.

It is evident that this guide is intended for congregations with Lutheran schools. Congregations without day schools could also use it in conjunction with Sunday schools. Simply replace the principal with the Sunday school superintendent. There may also be value in joint board studies or church council studies.

God bless your study through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The Team's Mission

A team with a mission is a team with purpose. Team unity is essential to team

success. Common-ground thinking brings about a unity in purpose. For example, imagine the dictator of a semi-powerful nation sending his army to invade and occupy a much smaller, defenseless nation. The smaller nation is plundered and ravaged by the occupying army. The rest of the world is aghast. This invasion cannot be tolerated. A group of nations with a single united purpose begins to organize. Resources are gathered. Some nations provide money. Others muster the best fighting men with the best military equipment. Battle plans are drawn. When everything is ready, the invading army is attacked. Every soldier in every tank, in every airplane, in every helicopter, in every place has one thought in mind: Defeat the enemy! By God's will the mission succeeds because of team organization. The team is united in purpose, in thought, and in the common goal.

Dictators, kingdoms, and empires have arisen and fallen throughout history. We acknowledge the fact that such events will continue until the end of time, for such sinful factors as greed, pride, thirst for power will continue to exert their wicked influence. They come not from men alone but also from Satan. Ever since the Garden of Eden, this supreme evil dictator has wrought havoc on the human race. His purposes are death, destruction, and eternal damnation. This evil dictator is powerful. He has a mighty army with countless followers. He rules the evil world and invades the church.

Just as evil dictators are often destroyed, so Satan's power has been curtailed. The perfect love and life of God in Christ has wrought the victory for all mankind. Remember the necklace on the bride. The strength and beauty come from the central strand, CHRIST. But He is no longer with us physically. But he has mustered his army. He has called upon pastors, principals, teachers, board members, and congregations to fight the good fight of faith. He began with eleven disciples. He continues with us today.

As a team we work to glorify our Lord. "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you

do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). Our lives and actions--all that we do--we do for God's glory.

The directions of Christ to the church are numerous in quantity but single in purpose. The mission (purpose) of the church is to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20). (At this point determine how the Great Commission applies to each team member individually and to the group in general. Use a round table format.)

Discussion

1. How do I, in my position in the church, "go and make disciples"?
2. How does my work relate to the other members of the team?
3. What comfort is found in this passage for me in my position?
4. What unity of purpose is found for all the team members?

Principle one

The mission (purpose) of the church is to glorify our Lord by making disciples for Christ.

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Members of the ministry team are compelled by Christ's love to live for him. In 2 Corinthians 5:14,15 we are told: "For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again."

A similar thought is given to us by Paul in

Galatians 2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

Discussion

1. What does our love for Christ and his love for us compel us to do within team ministry?
2. Why are we Christians to do what that love compels us to do?

Principal two

Christians live a life of good works through Christ who lives in them.

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Members of the ministry team become members only through the work of the Holy Spirit. When Jesus gave the Ministry of the Keys to the church, he said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven" (John 20:22b-23).

At Pentecost the disciples received the Holy Spirit in a special way. "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them" (Acts 2:4).

Spiritual gifts are the principal thought of 1 Corinthians 12. Specifically, Jesus says in verse 3: "...and no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit."

The idea of teamwork is also shown us in verses 7-11: "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to

another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another the ability to speak in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines."

As 1 Corinthians 12 continues, we see the famous discussion on the body of Christ and the many parts that make up that body. The eye is important to the body as is the hand and also the ear. The body has many parts, but there is still just one body. As team members we need to analyze ourselves as to how we fit into the unit.

Discussion

1. How can I know for sure that the Holy Spirit is working in my life?
2. How can I determine what spiritual gifts God has given me and to what degree these gifts have been given?
3. How can I apply these gifts to the purpose of the church?

Principle three

The Holy Spirit gives different gifts to team members to carry on team ministry within a congregation.

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The Lord has given us the necessary tool to be used in team ministry. That tool is God's Word. "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me" (John 5:39).

Paul also records this fact for us: "Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Romans 15:4).

As team members, then, we should diligently study Scripture, since it is the tool that keeps us in Christ and brings others to Christ.

Discussion

1. How much time should I, as a team member, spend personally studying God's Word?
2. Should Bible study be a joint effort with other team members? If so, why?

Principle four

Since God's Word is the tool given to the church, team members will diligently study Scripture.

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God's team members need to use God's Word properly. In 2 Timothy 3:16, Paul tells Timothy: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness." It is essential that team members diligently study God's Word. "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

In 2 Timothy 4:2 Paul says: "Preach the Word, be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage - with great patience and careful instruction."

We can't get too much of the Word, for Colossians 3:16 teaches: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom." God expects team members to teach and admonish one another.

Discussion

1. What obstacles stand in the way of rebuking and admonishing one another?

2. For the sake of team ministry, what can be done to overcome these obstacles?

Principle Five

The Lord directs team members to encourage, rebuke, correct, and train one another.

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There are certain qualifications required of those who do the Lord's work in team ministry. In Titus 1:7-9 we read: "Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless - not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to much wine, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trust-worthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it." (See also 1 Timothy 3:1-7.)

We also see how God has diversified the workers of the team. Consider 1 Corinthians 12:28,29: "And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles?" (See also Ephesians 4:11-13.)

Discussion

1. How is my Christian demeanor important in team ministry?
2. How do the various offices of the team relate to one another?
3. How does the diversification of offices aid in the purpose of the church?

Principle six

God requires certain qualifications of the members of the team whom he has provided for the ministry.

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It is also important for team members to realize that they should help, encourage, and admonish one another as members of the team. Here reconsider Colossians 3:16: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom." Again, we note 2 Timothy 4:2b: "correct, rebuke and encourage - with great patience and careful instruction." This principle includes the agape love found in 1 Corinthians 13. This agape love is the highest form of love. It is a deep spiritual concern for others, all others. Included are co-workers, parents, children, and congregation members. Agape love forms the foundation for our relationship as we go along on our daily walks in life.

Thinking specifically now of team ministry, agape love, when put into practice, is "the most excellent way" (1 Corinthians 12:31b). If every team member always practiced agape love with each and every team member, no relationship problem would exist.

Paul puts agape love into perspective in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3: "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing."

As we proceed with the characteristics of agape love, ask yourself each time, "Do I possess this quality? Am I weak or strong at this point?" In other words, "Know thyself." (Use personal reflection rather than round table discussion.)

Love is patient

Patience is a virtue. Patience is uncomplaining endurance. Patience is calmness in waiting. Patience is quiet perseverance.

Everyone has a breaking point where impatience raises its ugly head. This usually occurs when others don't follow my way of thinking, my schedule, my plan.

Consider Jesus' patience. He had worked with and taught his disciples for three years. He had performed miracles, used parables, and given them the examples of prayer. He had suffered and died. He arose and appeared to them. He instructed them some more. Then, just before his ascension, the disciples asked if he was "...at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel" (Acts 1:6). They still didn't understand! Yet, Jesus didn't reach a boiling point: He didn't yell, holler, or scream. He dealt with them in patient love.

Am I patient? (Pause and pray for personal honest reflection)

Love is kind

A kind individual is considerate of others. Kindness causes a person to try to be empathetic regarding others' feelings. Kindness acts. Kind people do good things for others.

It's easy to be kind to people we like or who are kind to us. It's not so easy to be kind to someone who is obnoxious, pushy, obstinate, or disagreeable. Paul includes kindness in his guides for holy living. "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievance you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity" (Colossians 3:12-14). Kindness is a virtue permeated with agape love.

Am I so kind? (Pause and pray for

personal honest reflection)

Love does not envy, does not boast, is not proud

Here we have the negative side. Envy, boasting and pride come from a self-seeking spirit, urged on by Satan. Little children have a "me," "my," "mine" attitude. Me first; that's my toy; it's mine, not yours. If we are always God-fearing, mature Christian adults as our Lord wants us to be, then we will put away childish, spiritually immature attitudes. Then we will always rejoice with others who have received spiritual, mental or material gifts in excess of our own. Then we will always be humble about the gifts God has given to us. Since all gifts are from God--we do not deserve them--they were given for us to manage for the eventual glory of God.

Am I envious, boastful or proud? (Pause and pray)

Love is not rude or self-seeking

A rude person is discourteous and impolite. A rude person interrupts others. Antonyms of rude are polite and courteous. Am I the first person in line at congregational dinners? (Am I last in line to prove how humble I am?) Do I reveal myself with a me-first attitude? Am I self-seeking?

Remember, the overseer is self-controlled, respectable, hospitable and gentle. As Christian professionals, we are examples to others in the congregation. At meetings we listen to all views, not merely expound our own. The disciples were rude and self-seeking, yet Jesus washed their feet.

Am I rude or self-seeking? (Pause and pray)

Love is not easily angered and keeps no record of wrongs

Here we have the antithesis of love, patience, and kindness. Some have a short fuse. Anger rises quickly and responds with

harsh actions and words. Usually when such a person calms down, he apologizes. Can you truly forgive? This leads us to wrong record-keeping. Peter wanted to know how often he should forgive. Forgiveness is endless. Do I remember the harsh word someone said to me? Do I remember that parent who has undermined my God-given authority? Do I remember what the pastor or another teacher or board member did to me? The ability to remember is a gift we use to memorize God's Word. It's a misused gift when we lovelessly remember wrongs against us. Temperance, self-control, not being violent or quarrelsome - these are virtues.

Am I easily angered? Do I keep a record of wrongs? (Pause and pray)

Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth

Disputes spirits among members of the team can easily result in the delighting in the evil others do. When a co-worker or a board member does some wrong and another worker or member has had problems with that individual in the past, it is easy to rejoice in that person's error. A spirit of love does not delight in evil but strives for correction. Ham delighted in his father's sin, however, Shem and Japheth properly covered their father's sin. Love rejoices in the truth. Jesus called himself the Truth. Regardless of persons or personalities, the truth of the Scripture is what is right.

Do I delight in evil or do I rejoice in truth? (Pause and pray)

Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres

The Eighth Commandment clearly points out that we should speak well of one another. Love will cause us to protect one another's reputation, to trust one another, and to have the same hope and perseverance, regardless of circumstances. We can't underestimate Paul's repeated use of the word "always." Christian love will always protect our fellow workers.

We will always trust one another. We will always carry the same hopes, and we will always persevere regardless of what happens. No trial or burden in the ministry can overcome the saving grace of the gospel. Do I always protect the reputation of others? Do I always trust? Do I always hope? Do I always persevere?

(Pause and pray. Include the board, the pastor, the principal and the teachers in your daily prayer list.)

Unity in the Body of Christ

The Lord blesses team unity with the fruits of success. The opposite is also true. Turmoil among the called workers or board members can result in turmoil among the sheep and lambs of the congregation.

There is nothing more beautiful than to watch a basketball fast break with crisp, precise passes resulting in an easy lay-up. It is just as beautiful to watch a ground ball to the shortstop who scoops it up, flips it to the second baseman who pirouettes and fires the ball to first, all within three to four seconds. This kind of beauty in team work should also be found among us workers for the Lord. Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:1-8:

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit - - just as you were called to one hope when you were called - - one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men."

We have all been called to saving faith by the Holy Spirit. Now through that Spirit we

are to live lives worthy of that calling. The Lord uses the adverb "completely": We are to "be completely humble and gentle." We are to be patient and to have love for one another. We not only have such love, we bear with, or gladly put up with, one another in that love. With the Spirit's help, we make every effort to keep that unity peacefully through the Spirit. As a team we are one body. We have the same Spirit. We have the same hope of eternal salvation. There is only one Lord Jesus Christ who is God. We have the same saving faith in that God. Through the same Baptism we were first given the forgiveness of sins and the faith necessary for our salvation.

When Jesus left us, He apportioned to us various gifts. By using these gifts in the unity of faith and the Spirit, members of a team ministry succeed in their calling. Once again, from the world of sports we turn to the lovely game of baseball. A baseball team has a lead-off batter who will do anything to get on base. He will irritate and distract the pitcher with his base-running skills. The #2 hitter will protect the #1 hitter until the base is stolen; then the big bats of the #3, #4, and #5 hitters come up and clear the bases with power. We can't all be lead-off batters; we can't all be #2 batters; we can't all be power hitters; but by working together in unity for the Body of Christ, we will succeed because of the uniqueness of our gifts.

Let's get practical

In researching this project, I consulted several principals from around the country who were involved in the field testing of the Team Ministry Program. I asked for strengths and weaknesses of the program. Over all, there was a balance between strengths and weaknesses. Our purpose for this study is to evaluate the weaknesses from a team ministry point of view. We need to look at the source of problems and then to deal practically with these problems. Weaknesses that were mentioned included the following:

1. Staff or board conflicts hindering the ministry

2. A disputing spirit among staff members or between staffs and principals
3. In some cases, misunderstanding of law and gospel
4. A lack of confidence in one another
5. Weakness in administration
6. A passive, untrained school board
7. Some pastors too active and some not active enough
8. Weakness in the skills necessary to be a good principal
9. Various individuals not being good team players (that is, ego problems, a lack of willingness to compromise and a veering away from the main calling of ministry)
10. Cliques or competing groups within the team
11. Individual biases causing obstruction in the ministry
12. Program used for "unloading" various pent-up feelings against one another
13. Minor conflicts become major problems
14. Pastors and principals sometimes regard themselves as "little Napoleons" and feel their authority is threatened
15. That participative management is not efficient
16. Situations of principals vs. faculty develop
17. Individuals can become overly sensitive and defensive
18. Fear of reprisal
19. The program opens doors for personal

attacks

20. Evaluations of the pastor or board ignite below-surface problems

These are serious weakness. How do we deal with them? There are certain gifts of Christian attitude that will overcome a large number of the real or perceived weaknesses in the program. These gifts involve our relationship with one another. Do we have the unity of Spirit? Do we have love for one another? As we analyze the weaknesses, we see a common thread: sin. We see jealousies, impatience, lack of love, lack of truth, lack of harmony. These weaknesses are mentioned not to criticize the program but rather to develop a spiritual, analytical approach to dealing with the problems.

We learn that when dealing with children and their parents, if we had handled the little problems, we will not have experienced the big problems. How do we do this? As always, we, as Christian workers, turn to the Scriptures for guidance and direction. The Scriptures alone will teach us how to manage conflicts with one another.

Situations/conflicts

We see an ego problem in Luke 22:24-30: "Also, a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be the greatest. Jesus said to them, 'The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greatest, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. You are those who have stood by me in my trials. And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.'"

Law

"You are not to be like that," Jesus says. "The greatest should be like the youngest; the one who rules should be like the one who serves."

Gospel

"I came among you as one who serves. I confer on you a kingdom, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom." Jesus desired a change of attitude among the disciples. He used both Law and Gospel.

Discussion

1. How was ego the cause of the conflict among the disciples?
2. How did Jesus resolve the conflict?
3. What similar conflicts may occur on our team?

Scripture directs us to serve humbly in kingdom work.

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The early leaders of the church needed to meet at the council in Jerusalem. We read in Acts 15:1-21:

Some men came down from Judea in Antioch and were teaching the brothers: "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved." This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question. The church sent them on their way, and as they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told how the Gentiles had been

converted. This news made all the brothers very glad. When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them.

Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses."

The apostles and elders met to consider this question. After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear? No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are."

The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the miraculous signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them. When they finished, James spoke up: "Brothers, listen to me." Simon has described to us how God at first showed his concern by taking from the Gentiles a people for himself. The words of the prophet are in agreement with this, as it is written:

After this I will return and rebuild David's fallen tent. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, that the remnant of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things that have been

known for ages

It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood. For Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath.

Discussion

1. What doctrinal conflict was the reason for the meeting in Jerusalem?
2. How should doctrinal conflicts be resolved?

Only God's Word can be used to resolve conflicts.

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In the same chapter we read of a disagreement between Paul and Barnabas (verses 36-41)

Some time later Paul said to Barnabas: "Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing." Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Discussion

1. What differences of opinion caused the conflict?
2. Why was there no resolution?
3. How was the conflict managed?

The purpose for considering the above conflict and its outcome is to see that sometimes members of the team simply might need time to back off and separate temporarily. Prayerfully, a reunion can take place at a later date.

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Ephesians 6:10-20 reveals to us our greatest conflict.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for

which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

Discussion

1. With whom is our greatest conflict?
2. What has God given us so we can manage this conflict?
3. What is the role of prayer in dealing with conflicts?

Thus it is clear that Satan is one of the major causes of conflicts within the church. This means that all the participants in the conflict must use **only** God's Word to defeat Satan's efforts in their hearts.

Paul expressed concern for the Galatians in Galatians 5:15-26:

If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other. So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery, idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and

desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Discussion

1. What is the primary conflict revealed here?
2. How do serious conflicts affect the team and the church?
3. How can such serious conflicts be prevented?

Use of the fruits of the Spirit by all team members is essential for God-pleasing team ministry.

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In Matthew 18:15-20, Jesus gave us practical advice concerning a team member who sins against us.

If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.

Discussion

1. What specifically is the conflict?
2. How am I to respond in the management of the conflict?
3. How might this conflict not apply to team ministry?

In love, members of a team will strive to help one another. When one sins, others will try to help him realize his sin and through the Word lead him to repentance and faith in the Lord's gracious forgiveness.

Situations

For each situation, the team will benefit by discussion of the problems and solutions, basing their considerations on **THE WORD**.

Situation #1

St. John congregation is in need of a new teacher for the fall term. St. John's has already extended several calls, but they were returned. The Conference of Presidents will soon be meeting in New Ulm; therefore, the congregation decides to call a graduate. Besides a fifth-sixth grade teacher, the congregation needs a coach. The youth group has not been particularly active and the feeling is that a young man would be able to invigorate the program.

For years now it has been expected that all faculty members would be in the congregation's adult choir. The teachers have also been expected to assist with Sunday School classes. Young Ted Wilson seems to be the perfect match for St. John's. Perhaps in future years Ted could be a principal, but, for the time-being, it is thought that fifth and sixth grades would be the best for him. Besides, he has participated in athletics in college, so he is a natural to be assigned to St. John's.

Soon after graduation Ted marries, and he and his new bride move to the town in which St. John is located. The first thing Ted does is block-plan his textbooks for the year. He and his new wife get to know their new hometown and their new congregation. With a great deal of enthusiasm Ted enters his first full year of teaching. He arrives at school each morning at 7:00 A.M., to be certain that his lessons are in order. He teaches from 8:30 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. He has athletic practice after school until 4:30 P.M. He goes home for dinner and then returns in the evening to work on tomorrow's lessons. Ted gets home at 9:30 each night.

One night each week Ted and his wife attend choir rehearsal. On Saturdays he has youth activities, and on Sundays he teaches a Sunday School class. As time goes on, Ted begins to lose his enthusiasm, because he doesn't seem to have a life of his own. His wife begins complaining that she never sees him. What started out as an enthusiastic called worker begins to develop into frustration and burnout. Other problems begin to develop. Parents aren't pleased with his work in the classroom. Ted seems to be angry with the children far too often. Something has to be done.

If we analyze this situation, we see where the problem began. It began before Ted even received the call to St. John's. It began when too much was expected of the teachers. Of course, Ted's situation would have to be discussed at the board of education level. The board comes to the realization that teaching, especially in a Christian school, is a full-time job. The extra responsibilities given to teachers often are not handled well simply because of time constraints.

It is decided that the board and faculty should meet to evaluate teacher positions within the congregation. Possibly, even job descriptions should be developed. The board, the faculty, and the pastor take a long, hard look at the situations that have developed regarding congregational needs and duties assigned to teachers. It is decided that the #1

priority for the staff is teaching. The group evaluates the congregation's needs in music, athletics, youth activities, and Sunday school. It is decided that each teacher should be assigned one duty outside classroom teaching; the duty should fit the ability and personality of the teacher. Programs not covered are simply dropped.

Far better, congregational lay people can come forward and offer to take charge of unmet congregational needs. The pastor and teachers, following the scriptural tenet of preparing God's people for works of service, assist the lay people from a spiritual point of view. They also periodically meet with the called workers to analyze, develop, and set goals. All find this to be a happy, workable solution to a problem that has been at St. John's for many years. The teachers are teaching. Each is serving the congregation in an area in which he/she feels qualified. Teachers are happy with what they are doing. The congregation members are working more. Team spirit improves. The ministry of the church is enhanced.

Situation #2

For many years the congregation at St. Mark's has called its staff of teachers for ten months. It has been somewhat confusing and unclear as to the congregation's responsibilities toward the teachers during the summer months. Should they paint classrooms? Should they work with vacation Bible school? Should they do graduate studies in specific fields of education? Who should pay for that study? What do teachers do all summer?

The pastor and principal feel strongly that teachers should, on a regular basis, continue their education at local universities. At the end of the year, the teachers are tired and resist or flatly refuse to take summer courses. The teachers are not improving themselves as professional educators. The pastor and principal have become frustrated with the teachers. Communication breaks down. Personal conflicts develop. Irritation shows. The matter is brought to the board of education

for a review. The board recommends that the congregation change the calls to 12 months. That happens. A program is developed that requires teachers to take a set number of courses within a set number of years. A fund is established within the congregation to receive gifts to pay the expenses.

At first, the teachers are upset with having to do all of this, but as time goes on and courses are completed, the teachers come back with a renewed enthusiasm and new ideas that they can improve in their classrooms. Miss Jones, who has been putting off these classes, sees how invigorated her colleagues are and finally, the last one to give in, attends courses herself and finds concepts that can be applied in her classroom.

As always, university courses need always to be reviewed by way of study and growth in God's Word.

The teachers become more professional. The ministry of the Lord is enhanced. The quality of the school is improved. The teachers now look forward to being able to attend universities, workshops, or seminars.

Situation #3

The staff at St. Matthew's is made up of six teachers. Three of the teachers are older and more experienced. Two of the teachers are within their first few years of teaching. The principal has now been there for five years. Let's face a fact: this principal is totally disorganized. His classroom is a mess. He has difficulty following the planned curriculum in his textbooks. His students are able to get him off on tangents. Faculty meeting agendas are unprepared or poorly organized. At the meetings the teachers talk about what happened in school that day and how little Johnny misbehaves; consequently, little business is conducted.

The teachers are becoming very frustrated with this principal. How are they to deal with this matter in agape love? Should one of them

be assigned talk to the principal? Should a group do it? Should they talk to the pastor and leave the problem with him? Should they go to the board of education chairman? After all, this man is their principal, called by the Lord. How is this to be done? It is decided that the oldest and most experienced teacher should meet with the principal and in an evangelical way present the problem to him. During the meeting the principal pours out his emotions.

For some time now he has not felt qualified to be an administrator. He has considered resigning his call. It has now been presented to him that others see his problems in the same way that he does. The teachers as a team have always liked the principal as a person; they just haven't liked the way he has worked as their principal.

It is decided that the board, the pastor, and the teachers together discuss the matter in a calm, patient, and loving manner. Several options are considered: (1) The principal could resign. (2) The situation could continue as it always has with nothing being done. (3) The congregation could send the principal to graduate courses in school administration. The board and the teachers and the pastor, as one, express a willingness to help.

The pastor has long been gifted with strong administrative qualities. He begins weekly meetings with the principal on basics of setting up agendas and conducting meetings. The pastor offers to conduct meetings for a brief period of time to show how it should be done. Teachers make a point of discussing only important matters and school business at the faculty meetings. The board funds the school administration courses at a local university. The teachers also offer temporarily to take some of the workload off the principal so that he can develop one area of his work at a time.

The principal's call has been saved. The teachers, through patience and love, have helped their brother, and the pastor has helped his brother. The board has done its duty. By the time an additional five years passes, a very fine principal has developed. The ministry of

the church is enhanced. The quality of education in the school has improved. People are happy.

Situation #4

The board of education has decided to adopt the Synod's entire Team Ministry Program. The teachers are made aware of how the program is conducted. Concerns begin to develop.

Situation #4a

The principal of the school graduated from college two years ago. There are two other teachers on staff. One has been teaching for ten years. The other has been teaching for 23 years. The teachers are deeply concerned that an inexperienced principal is going to visit their classrooms and evaluate their teaching. How can this situation be resolved? Think about it.

Situation #4b

The principal of the school has been in his position for 20 years. There is a staff of four teachers. The principal's wife is one of these teachers. As a person, the principal's wife has long felt inadequate as a teacher. She feels that anything that she does well can only be credited to God and that of herself she can do nothing. She learns that the principal, who is her husband, will be visiting her classroom. She throws up her hands in despair. He is such a good teacher and administrator, and he is going to come into her classroom and critique her teaching.

The principal and the teacher are looking at the Team Ministry Program from two totally different viewpoints. Another teacher on the staff becomes aware of the situation and decides to help. How can this situation be resolved? Think about it.

Situation #4c

The principal will visit the classrooms, another irritation point surfaces: What does the

seventh and eighth grade teacher know about teaching the primary grades? The feeling among some of the lady teachers is that men lack sensitivity and will make negative comments that will only hurt their feelings. There will be a tearing down. One of the teachers talks about a negative experience some years before. At that time a school visitor suggested that she should be doing something other than teaching. Factions develop within the faculty. Something has to be done. How can this situation be resolved? Think about it.

Situation #5

Most of the schools within our synod conduct interscholastic athletics for the children in their schools. Under normal circumstances the purpose of this program is to teach basic sport skills in, for example, basketball. We also want to teach our children Christian sportsmanship within the context of team competition.

Within your congregation you have mild-mannered Mr. Schmidt. Max Schmidt is an easy-going, likeable, athletic sort of person. He coaches his team well when teaching fundamental sports skills. Mr. Schmidt has but one flaw: he is overly competitive. When Max gets into games, his face often turns red as he shows anger toward members of his team or toward referees. Regularly his clipboard slams to the floor. Occasionally an expletive is heard. Does Mr. Schmidt's behavior enhance the ministry of the church? Does he show love, patience, and kindness, or does his competitive spirit actually serve as a negative influence for the students and parents who observe him? Which team ministry members would be responsible for dealing with this problem? What would these team members do to correct the problem?

Back to situation #4a - a possible solution

The teachers take their concerns to the pastor and the board of education. The principal is somewhat hurt by his colleagues'

reaction. He sees in his responsibilities the need to be the supervisor of instruction, and his fellow teachers are keeping him from doing his job. In patience and love it is understood that he is young and will need help in visiting a classroom and making evaluations. It is decided that for his first year the entire staff visit one another. Formal evaluations are not kept. The teachers learn how to communicate with one another, discussing strengths and weaknesses and the areas for improvement. They also have an opportunity to exchange ideas on what works and what doesn't.

Back to situation #4b - a possible solution

Another teacher on the staff becomes aware of the teacher's concerns and decides to help. A great deal of encouragement is given by the third party to the teacher regarding her abilities. She also works on that teacher's humble attitude. First of all, it is indeed wonderful to be humble, but true Christ-like humility is founded on trust in the Lord to fulfill his promises to help his people in all their needs. Therefore, the teacher needs to understand and believe that her lack of confidence is more a lack of confidence in the Lord than a weak or non-existent self-confidence. She is encouraged by these words of the Lord: "I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength." The principal admits that for many years he has not encouraged his wife nearly enough regarding the good work she does in her classroom. He begins to compliment her more often. In the first year of the Team Ministry Program the principal realizes that his wife would feel uncomfortable; therefore he considers one of three options: (1) the school counselor would serve the classroom as a school visitor, (2) another teacher on staff would visit the room, or (3) the principal himself would make short visits initially to show that his visits would be helpful and uplifting.

Back to situation #4c - a possible solution

The principal sees his responsibility as supervisor of instruction. The teachers have

made it quite clear that they are deeply concerned about his evaluations, for in their viewpoint he does not know anything about teaching kindergarten or preschool or the primary grades. They also recall that they got into an argument with him last week. "What kind of evaluation will he make?" they ask.

The principal decides that one or two of the teachers will be selected to visit his classroom first. They evaluate his teaching and point out strengths and areas for improvement. He shows them evaluation forms and how they would be completed. In the next step the principal visits the teachers and follows the same procedure. Over time, the teachers come to realize that the principal is there only to help and not to sit in judgment.

Summary of Situations

Through all of these situations we see the importance of patient and loving care for one another. We have seen the importance of communication and the acquiring of communication skills. We have seen how dilemmas can be resolved when all of us deal with lives worthy of the spiritual calling that we have been given. Congregations have been harmed by controversies among called workers and boards of education. The ministry of the church has been by cliques and factions within the administration of a congregation and school. Sin raises its ugly head, and we sinners must admit the responsibility.

It is hoped this study will make a difference in how we deal with one another in our congregations and schools. Never in the Scriptures are we called to tear one another down. That is not what admonish means. Always in the Scriptures we are encouraged to build one another up in the Body of Christ. May each one of us be a strand in the gold, rope necklace, enhancing the beauty of God's church on earth.

Communication/Administration

A necessity for good team ministry is good

communication and a proper understanding of administration. Let's first take a look at communication. Communication has as its root the regular meeting and "touching base" with other members of the team. For example, Mr. Tim Nelson, the seventh grade teacher, has been asked to teach an adult Bible class beginning in September. Over the summer months Mr. Nelson puts a great deal of thought into what he will be teaching. He learns that a parenting class would be most useful for the congregation, for he sees torn families and he sees parents who are weak or incapable of a proper use of God's Word in the raising of their children. Through his analysis he develops a nine-week parenting course for the Sunday morning Bible class.

Unknown to Mr. Nelson, the pastor and Board of Elders have decided that the theme for the first quarter of the Sunday school year will be evangelism. Courses are developed. Two weeks before the Sunday school program is to begin, Mr. Nelson comes into the church office all excited about his new course. He is devastated to hear from the pastor that his course cannot be used. He is to follow the curriculum developed and teach a course in evangelism.

Does it happen? Yes, indeed! The problem was a simple lack of communication between the pastor and the seventh grade teacher. Hard feelings could have been avoided if they had simply discussed the matter far in advance.

This carries over into the area of administration. The pastor, is called as spiritual leader of the entire congregation. The principal is responsible for the administration of the school and its program. He must stay in close contact with the pastor. The teachers will be responsible for their classroom teaching and quite likely, other programs within the congregation. They need to communicate regularly with the pastor and the principal and, of course, with the board of education.

It is necessary that each person has a clear understanding of his or her role within the

team. Those in positions of authority must learn to listen to those with whom they work. Authority does not mean dictator. Those who serve with a person who has been given authority, are to respect that authority according to the Fourth Commandment. It is quite possible that a person will be an authority in one role and be under authority in another. We are always to be clear in our roles. (Discuss this matter as a team. Consider passages previously used in this study guide.)

Evaluations

In corporate America, evaluations of workers throughout an organization have been common for many years. In public education the evaluation of teachers is a requirement. As a result controversies have arisen concerning the proper means by which to evaluate teachers. For many years the Wisconsin Synod has conducted the School Visitation Program in which teachers have been evaluated. These evaluations had benefits. Teachers have been visited by experienced teachers who encouraged them in their teaching ministry. Teachers were given recommendations for improvements. These evaluations were helpful to the synod in completing call lists.

Having served as a WELS School Visitor for 18 years, I still find the need to talk to teachers prior to the classroom visit. I need to reassure them that I am not visiting their room as some sort of tyrannical inspector. Rather, my visit is intended only for the encouragement of the teachers and for possible improvements that would be suggested. It is my opinion that the vast majority of teachers do have negative or emotional concerns when an evaluator comes into the room. I must admit that I, too, prepare a little better, try a little harder, and concentrate more on proper teaching techniques when a school visitor comes into my room. By nature we don't like being evaluated; however, the benefits far outweigh these concerns. It is hoped that this study guide has given you a clearer understanding of the oneness that we have as called teachers of the Word.

When our faculty adopts the Team Ministry Program beginning next fall, my own fifth-sixth grade teacher will likely be asked to visit my room. This man has been teaching for some 15 years. He is without a doubt one of the best fundamental teachers I have seen. He is a kind and compassionate individual who looks for strengths. I am even more certain that he will find areas for improvement. I'll be nervous when he comes. I'll be gratified when it is over, but above all, my teaching will be enhanced by the suggestions he will give to me. Of these things I am certain.

Principals in our schools, permit me to speak to you directly. The Lord has called you to oversee and supervise instruction in your school. Do your work with patience, kindness, openness, and honesty. The teachers whom you analyze should have a clear understanding of the purpose of your analysis. That purpose to help them improve their instruction of children. You are there to help teachers make disciples. As you do that, you will need to listen to teachers and discuss with them their ideas regarding improving their teaching.

Our purpose as Christian educators is clear: we are to make disciples of all nations, we are to teach them to observe everything as the Lord has commanded us. There is no more important calling in life than to be a pastor or teacher of God's Word.

For the Team Ministry Program to succeed in a God-pleasing way in each Lutheran elementary school, humble cooperation, based on the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the fear of God and on a zeal for the edifying of Christ's lambs and for the glory of our marvelous Lord and Savior are essential.

Conclusion

The Lord places upon our sanctified shoulders the responsibility for the success of the Team Ministry Program. By the grace of God and with his needed help, success will be forthcoming if we live in peace with one another (Romans 14:19; 2 Corinthians 13:11),

if we forsake judging one another (Matthew 7:1-5), if we live in service toward one another (Galatians 5:13, Philippians 2:3), if we are always ready and willing to forgive one another as our Lord forgives us (Ephesians 4:32), if we encourage one another in mutual service to the Lord (Acts 15:32; 2 Timothy 4:2), if we deal with one another in Christ-like humility (Philippians 2:5-8), and if we pray earnestly and regularly for one another (2 Corinthians 13:9).

NOTE: All Bible passages are taken from New International Version 1978 By New York International Bible Society, 144 Tices Lane, East Brunswick, NJ 08816

As I researched and studied this project, I came to some basic realizations. After looking over the past 20 years in the ministry of the Lord, I repent that I did not accomplish what the Lord wanted me to accomplish in my relationship to called workers. Many times we simply need to hang our heads in shame, and with repentant hearts, look to God for forgiveness.

Going through this Bible study shows how important it is for the ministry of the church that the members of that ministry live in harmony with one another. A congregation blessed with gifted called workers and qualified board members, all who are sincere in their ministry to the Lord will be a congregation that visibly fits the scriptural picture of the church as the bride of Christ. Those called workers and board members, like a golden rope necklace, enhance the beauty of that church. Individual members of the church will grow spiritually.

This can only be done with the unity in team ministry. We team members have sinful natures. We also have a new Creation. Through the work of the Holy Spirit and the power of the gospel, we are able to defeat the sinful nature, permitting the new creation to exert its influence. We put our best efforts into the service of the Lord, when we have a smiling, loving spirit and when we have the bonds of peace. As always, the means of grace serve as the tools for spiritual growth and church growth. Team members merely use the tools. May the Lord bless us.

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