

ARM Prison Outreach International

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"Maintaining Unity: Good Communication Prevents Division"

Joshua 22

Editor's Note: This "MM" is the 6th email message of 2008 in a series that ARM is sending as an encouragement to preachers, chaplains, and Christian workers around the world. It is a message based on Joshua 22 -- a lesson of how good communication can maintain unity. It is my prayer that this message will encourage you and those you teach. May God bless your labors! -- Rod Farthing, Development Director

Joshua 22 "Maintaining Unity: Good Communication Prevents Division"

1. Mom ran in to break up her boys who were fighting again. She opened the door to see fists flying, rolling over, grabbing, headlocks and the like. She split them up and said, "Who started this fight?" The little one pointed at his brother and said, "He did, when he hit me back!"

2. The Bible records saint's lives -- warts and all, (Source of phrase, Oliver Cromwell as he spoke to portrait artist) even a few altercations. Joshua 22 teaches us how to avoid altercations that have always plagued God's people.

3. (22:1-9) Two and a half tribes were given an honorable discharge and left for home.

4. 22:10 Big altar built- looked like the one at the tabernacle.

The Law clearly said there should be only one altar of sacrifice.

5. 22:11,12- Reaction of the other tribes- "This means war!" They knew there would be awful consequences to this action if not remedied.

6. (22:13-15) they sent representatives to talk this over first.

Prop. The greatest enemy of the success of God's people often comes from within, not from without. (Jericho was no obstacle for God.)

7. The Great Wall of China- runs for a thousand miles along the northern border of China. But did you know that in its first 100 years of existence

China was invaded three times? They didn't go over, under or around the wall; they simply bribed the gatekeeper and he let them walk right through.

8. Often we are defeated, not because our enemy is great, but because we are weak.

Notice this threat from within came as soon as the threat from without was over.

IE. "We have met the enemy and it is us!" said the comic strip character Pogo.

TS This chapter reveals 3 internal threats to the body of Christ.

I. WE'RE IN DANGER WHEN WE FAIL TO VALUE OUR COMMUNITY.

1. These people in Joshua 22 knew that they were inextricably connected with each other. These 2 1/2 tribes had left their lands to help the other tribes conquer Canaan. They viewed being the people of God as a team sport! What one person or tribe did had a vital effect on the others.

There's a wonderful story about Jimmy Durante, one of the great entertainers of a generation ago. He was asked to be a part of a show for World War II veterans. He told them his schedule was very busy and he could afford only a few minutes, but if they wouldn't mind his doing one short monologue and immediately leaving for his next appointment, he would come. Of course, the show's director agreed happily. But when Jimmy got on stage, something interesting happened. He went through the short monologue and then stayed. The applause grew louder and louder and he kept staying. Pretty soon, he had been on fifteen, twenty, then thirty minutes. Finally he took a last bow and left the stage. Backstage someone stopped him and said, "I thought you had to go after a few minutes. What happened?"

Jimmy answered, "I did have to go, but I can show you the reason I stayed. You can see for yourself if you'll look down on the front row." In the front row were two men, each had lost an arm in the war. One had lost his right arm and the other had lost his left. Together, they were able to clap, and that's exactly what they were doing, loudly and cheerfully.

Holy Sweat, Tim Hansel, 1987, Word Books Publisher, Page 104-105

2. America values independence and individuality – some of that is good. But--

PROBLEM- our culture values individuality and independence more than God does and the spirit of the culture has infected the church!

3. That is why so few feel responsible to other believers and to fix

problems and to make the church better. (Too often, if we don't like what is going on at church, we just go shopping for another one! Marriage problem too!)

4. Being a Christian is more than a private transaction between a person and Jesus!

1 Corinthians 12:13 "...all were baptized into one body..."

Ephesians 2:19 "...members of God's household..."

MEMBERSHIP is important in the body of Christ. No Lone Rangers! You cannot reach your full potential as a Christian without being closely connected with the body of Christ!

These people KNEW that

A. THE SIN OF FEW AFFECTED THE MANY.

22:16-18,20 Peor (24,000 died), Achan (36 died at Ai)

Ever heard anybody say, "It's my life and I'm not hurting anybody else?" We hear all the time about the dangers of 2nd hand smoke, but we rarely talk about 2nd hand sin. Because we are intimately connected, my sin has an affect on you.

B. MANY SHOULD SACRIFICE TO HELP A FEW ESCAPE SIN.

22:19 They basically said, "We will do whatever it takes to help you walk closely with God. They felt a responsibility to help each other walk with God.

Larry Doby was the first African American to play baseball in the American League. In his first at bat for the Cleveland Indians amidst the boos and catcalls he swung at the first three pitches and missed each by a foot. He went back to the bench, sat down by himself, put his head in his hands and sat there. The next hitter was Joe Gordon who was on of the greatest 2nd basemen to ever play and a very good hitter. The pitcher was one that Gordon usually hit very well. He swung at and missed each of the first three pitches by two feet, walked to the dugout, dropped his bat, sat right down next to Larry Doby, put his head in his hands. Nobody ever asked Joe Gordon if he struck out on purpose, but as long as they played together, every time they went out on the field, Larry Doby would pick up Joe Gordon's glove and toss it to him. Larry Doby went on to become a great hitter in the American League. Joe Gordon said to himself, "*His struggle is my struggle!*"

We must learn to value our community or we won't have continued

victory.

II. WE ARE IN DANGER WHEN WE FAIL TO VALUE OUR POSTERITY.

1. In one sense the struggle was all about kids.

22:21-25 We want our kids to be welcome to worship at the tabernacle.

2. Back in Joshua 3 the memorial stones were there as a reminder so that their kids would see them and ask. This altar would do the same thing.

3. **Psalms 71:17,18** Future generations of God's people should be important to the present generation.

4. It is our responsibility to pass on what we believe to the next generation.

5. Kids must be a priority in our ministry. They need Christian family leadership and they need the church's love and support. I wish we had more who were driven to teach children's classes, VBS, Pay for a week of camp.

6. **Judges 2:10** What a terrible situation! It takes only one generation for degeneration to take place.

III. WE ARE IN DANGER WHEN WE FAIL TO VALUE OUR UNITY

22:26-30 It is amazing how quickly fellowship can be threatened by a misunderstanding.

Ever heard about the kids back in the bedroom who were screaming, arguing, and yelling at each other? The mom shouts back, "You kids, stop that fighting." One of them shouts back, "**We're not fighting, Mom, we're just playing church.**"

LESSONS-

1. **Don't be too quick to suspect your brothers of backsliding.**

2. **We've got to be ready to sacrifice in pursuit of reconciliation.**

We must promote peace and harmony between brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Sadly, Jesus' followers have often gone to war over issues that don't have

nearly as solid a Biblical foundation as the unity of believers!

Rom 15:5-7 5 May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus,6 so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 7 Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. (NIV)

Eph 4:3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. (NIV)

Phil 1:27 Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel (NIV)

Phil 2:1 If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. (NIV)

3. Unity takes work; division comes easily!

Restoration Movement- "One brotherhood uniting all Christians" Great principles, but difficult in practice. You don't have to agree with me to be my brother, just have to be born of the same Father.

4. We need to learn to talk to each other instead of about each other.

We are quick to talk about each other and slow to talk to each other.

Before these tribes went to war, they went to talk!

5. We are going to have conflicts in church. Like infections, they seldom go away by ignoring them. They need to be addressed.

Conclusion: Suggestions on what to do when situations arise:

1. Make every effort to believe the best about your brothers. It costs no more to give your brother or sister the benefit of the doubt. Determine to believe the best until you know better. We don't know motives, don't assume the worst.

2. Be careful about confrontation, especially if you enjoy it.

Some people live for war- don't be one of those people. **22:33** They

rejoiced that there would not be a fight.

3. Have nothing to do with spreading rumors.

This is the source of much grief in the body of Christ.

WE HAVE HEARD. (22:11) OK, what do you do when you have heard?

Jesus had something to say: Matthew 18- Go to the offender and talk- don't spread it around! Stewardship of information. Speak the gospel, hold the gossip

If your brother is wrong, help him stop his error, if he is not wrong, help him stop the rumor. How can you handle rumors?

1] Ask for sources nameless sources are not believable.

2] Research the other side

3] Ask the person- "May I quote you?"

4] Openly admit, "I don't appreciate hearing that"

If you enjoy hearing this you are sick!

It is hard enough to love each other, please don't make it harder!

Matthew 5:23,24 go fix the problem, then bring your offering.

Romans 12:18 "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men."

Bear Bryant one said: "I'm just a plowhand from Arkansas, but I have learned how to hold a team together. How to lift some men up, how to calm down others, until finally they've got one heartbeat together, a team. There are just three things I'd ever say: If anything goes bad, I did it. If anything goes semi-good, then we did it. If anything goes real good, then you did it. That's all it takes to get people to win football games for you."

"Remain faithful unto death .." Rev. 2:10B

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In 2007, ARM donated over 5.28 MILLION DaySpring Greeting cards to prisons!