

Missionary Families of Christ

LIVING AS A PEOPLE OF GOD

This course is part of the formation program in MFC. It is available to MFC members starting on their second year in MFC. It is an optional course for members and household leaders, but is a required course for unit and chapter leaders and other seniors.

This course may be conducted at the initiative of the different chapters or areas.

GOALS OF THE SIX TALKS

1. To help MFC members understand better God's call to us to live as His people.
2. To help MFC members grow in becoming a community of Christians who are truly committed to God and to each other.
3. To discuss the patterns and elements of our life together, in order to achieve greater unity and better order in the body.

TOPICS OF THE TALKS

1. Our basic commitment
2. Functioning as a body
3. Governance and personal guidance
4. Peace and discipline
5. Unity and disagreement
6. Our personal responsibility

CONTENTS

For each of the talks, the following are provided:

1. Expanded outline
2. Handout for participants

SCHEDULE

This course may be given in a variety of ways: in a one-day recollection, as a weekend retreat, in two separate half-days, over 3 evenings, or finally over 6 separate sessions. The separate sessions may be done on consecutive days or on a weekly basis.

An open forum is suggested either at the end of the whole course or at the end of every session.

LIVING AS A PEOPLE OF GOD

TALK No. 1 : OUR BASIC COMMITMENT

Expanded Outline

A. Introduction.

1. MFC is not just a movement, prayer group or service organization, but a community. It has the following elements:
 - a) A corporate life: government, structure, order, regular activities, formation.
 - b) A covenant. A concrete relationship to God and to one another.
 - c) Brotherly commitment to one another. We are not just members of one organization, but brothers and sisters in one family.
 - d) A distinct culture.
 2. In MFC, we have committed ourselves to God and to one another.
 - a) We value love and unity.
 - b) To preserve love and unity, we need order, which makes community life possible.
 - c) Order leads to peace, which leads to unity.
 - * Eph 4:3.
 3. Thus this course will outline the elements of order in MFC. Our goals in this course are:
 - a) For all of us to understand better the life we are trying to live.
 - b) For all of us to commit ourselves more firmly to this common life.
 - c) For MFC leaders responsible for the life and direction of MFC to be able to serve with greater wisdom and authority, for the sake of order and unity.
 4. All these will enable MFC to effectively pursue its vision and mission, and to serve God in the way He calls us to.
- B. Let us first understand better the life we are trying to live. Four Biblical terms that express the essence of what Christian community is:
1. “Brothers and sisters.” 1 Pt 1:22. “Since you have purified yourselves by obedience to the truth for sincere mutual love, love one another intensely from a pure heart.”
 - a) “Brothers” (and sisters) refers to a definite relationship among Christians.

- * It is a full personal relationship (not a limited one), just like a family relationship. “Sincere, intense, pure love.”
 - b) According to Jesus, our most important relationships are with those who are in the Lord. Lk 8:19-21.
 - * We share our personal lives, both spiritually and socially.
 - * Often we experience more intimate relationships with our MFC brethren than with our blood relatives.
2. “Community.” Acts 4:32.
- a) One heart and one mind.
 - * In our desire to grow together as a people of God.
 - * In our pursuit of the MFC mission.
 - b) We understand that we are stewards of what we “own,” and we hold everything “in common.”
 - * While we do not own things jointly, our brethren “have a claim” on our time and money. 1 Jn 3:16-18; Jas 2:14-16.
 - * This does not mean that all will be on the same economic level.
3. “Body of Christ.” Rom 12:4-5.
- a) The body has to be united so it can function together, as one, not independently.
 - b) God does not send us out as individuals to serve, but as a body.
4. “People/nation.” 1 Pt 2:9-10.
- a) Apart from God we are “no people.”
 - b) We are subject to a secular government, but our real allegiance is to God and His people.
 - * We’re citizens of countries, but for God what’s important is whether we are His or not.
 - * In case of conflict, we stand with God and the Church. E.g., population control issue, abortion, gay rights.
- C. Thus, being brothers/sisters, community, body of Christ, God’s people/holy nation, what is then the nature of our commitment?
- 1. Our commitment is to the Lord as His people, to live as a people of God.
 - 2. Elements of this commitment:
 - a) Live our lives in righteousness and holiness.

- * Be holy, as God is holy. 1 Pt 1:15-16.
- * Imitate Christ.

b) Live our lives in loving service.

- * Love and serve God.
- * Love and serve each other in MFC.
- * Serve others and the larger Church.
 - Most basic is through the pursuit of the MFC mission of evangelization and renewal.
 - Work for total human liberation.
 - Serve our parish.

D. More specifically, we have our covenant commitment in MFC.

1. Our commitment together is based on an explicit covenant.

a) Four basic elements: Personal life in Christ, family life, corporate life in MFC, and service in society.

- * Read the major headings and make comments.

b) Our covenant is an ideal.

- * Not necessarily already in place. This is precisely why we need mutual ongoing support.
- * What is important is that we understand the covenant, agree with it, and try to live it out.

c) Our covenant is voluntary.

- * We entered into it freely. We stay in MFC by our choice.
- * It could be for life, since we will continue to need support, and since our MFC mission will extend beyond our lifetimes.
- * A member can leave MFC anytime, if they feel MFC is no longer God's call to them.
 - Do this with prayer and input from leaders/brethren.

2. Our commitment is total.

a) Our commitment to God and to each other touches on our whole life. We don't just have activities, but a family relationship.

b) Not only when we are together. But all the time.

- * How I conduct my life, including outside community life and activities, has consequences on the whole body.

c) Not only to those we personally know and like, but to each and every member of MFC.

3. We are committed to mission. MFC is a missionary community

- a) Our mission is to reach out to all.
 - * Worldwide work, making disciples of all nations.
 - * Family renewal, evangelizing every member of the family. Building the Church of the Home.
 - * Work with the poor, evangelizing sectors of society where we are called to, e.g., prison ministry, restoration villages, migrant workers, etc. Building the Church of the Poor.
- b) Our work is primarily with Catholics, but we also will reach out to other Christians, and bring our family life renewal ministry to the other Christian churches. Given the opportunity, we will also reach out to non-Christians.

E. Conclusion.

1. God has called us to live as His people. We are able to live this out concretely in MFC.
2. We are no longer individuals, but one body.
3. As one loving united body, we can more effectively and faithfully serve the Lord.

LIVING AS A PEOPLE OF GOD

TALK No. 1 : OUR BASIC COMMITMENT

Participant's Handout

1. MFC is not just a movement, prayer group or organization, but a community. MFC has a corporate life, a covenant, fraternal commitment, and a distinct culture.
2. Four Biblical terms express the essence of what Christian community is.
 - a) "Brothers" (and sisters). 1 Pt 1:22.
 - b) "Community." Acts 4:32.
 - c) "Body of Christ." Rom 12:4-5.
 - d) "People/nation." 1 Pt 2:9-10.
3. Our commitment is to the Lord as His people, to live as a people of God.
 - a) We are to live our lives in righteousness and holiness. 1 Pt 1:15-16.
 - b) We are to live our lives in loving service—to God, to one another in MFC, to others and the larger Church.
 - c) Our commitment is based on an explicit covenant.
 - * An ideal that we attain to.
 - * Voluntary.
 - d) Our commitment is total.
4. We are committed to the pursuit of the life and mission of MFC.
 - a) Worldwide evangelization.
 - b) Family renewal.
 - c) Total human liberation.
 - d) Basic work with Catholics, open to other Christians, ultimately to reach out to non-Christians.

LIVING AS A PEOPLE OF GOD

TALK No. 2 : FUNCTIONING AS A BODY

Expanded Outline

A. Introduction.

1. God has a plan/purpose for us as a body. God has given us our life and mission in MFC.
2. In particular, we have been called:
 - a) To live a new life in Christ. We are to love God, one another, and others.
 - b) To be a community of servants.
 - * Live for others. Our lives are no longer our own.
 - * Make our gifts available for the needs of MFC.
 - c) To do mission.
 - * Evangelization and renewal, founded on family life. To make known the way of salvation (1 Pt 2:9).

B. Building up the body.

1. In order to fulfill God's purposes, we as individuals and MFC as a body need to be built up and strengthened. How?
 - a) The primary way is through us. We build each other up, in the course of our life together. Eph 4:15-16.
 - b) Everyone is involved in building up the community. There are no passive people.
 - * 1 Thes 5:11. Col 3:16b.
 - c) One very important position we hold is as son/daughter of God and brother/sister in the Lord. One very important service is daily love.
 - * All can do that. We do not need spectacular gifts for this.
 - * We can do this all the time, in or out of community meetings.
2. The body is also built up through different gifts and roles of service. 1 Cor 12:4-7.
 - a) God wants to give each and every member a gift, to be used for service.
 - b) There is interdependence.
 - c) We do our part, and rely on others to do theirs.
3. We are also built up through our work of evangelization and service to the Church.

- a) As we look to and serve others, we grow.
- b) As we experience the vibrancy and the many signs and wonders.

C. The necessity of order.

1. We are not merely individuals, but parts of one body. As such, there is a need for order.
 - a) Difference between an amoeba (no form, no order) and a man.
 - b) 1 Cor 14:33. Order and peace are of the nature of God.
 - c) Ex 18:13-27. For proper functioning of the body and for the care of members.
2. First, order in our personal lives.
 - a) Since our call is to fullness of new life in Christ, there is a need for care and pastoral support, to help put order in our Christian lives.
 - b) In MFC, all are under pastoral care by others.
 - * This is possible through our unique pastoral system of cell groups (households) led by household leaders.
 - * In addition: units, chapters, areas.
3. Second, order in the whole body. There is a need for authority and governance.

D. The function of seniors

1. According to the New Testament pattern of Christian community, leaders care for the body as a whole. Heb 13:17. 1 Thes 5:12-14. In MFC there are different groups of seniors.
 - a) Bodies of seniors.
 - * International Body of Counselors (assisting the Servant General)
 - * Servant Councils
 - * Area Councils
 - b) Individuals.
 - * Chapter Servants and up
2. In MFC, the highest governing authority is the Servant General.
 - * He has ultimate responsibility for care of all members.
 - * He appoints heads/leaders for various services and ministries.
 - * He oversees the pursuit of the mission of MFC.
3. Other leaders are extensions of the Servant General.

a) Area/Chapter/Unit/Household Servants, Coordinators (Region, Country, Zone, Area), heads of MFC Sections (couples, handmaids, servants, singles, youth, kids).

a) They have the authority of the Servant General, delegated according to their position.

b) They exercise authority subject to the overall authority of the Servant General.

4. Protection against improper exercise of authority:

a) Most basically, faithfulness to the Lord.

* More important than gifts or ability.

b) Following good order.

* Leaders are not free to just do their own thing. MFC has a clearly defined mission and culture.

* There is also a system of supervision over service.

c) Inputs from counselors and core teams.

d) Appeal to a higher authority within MFC, all the way up to the Servant General, if necessary.

e) Our submission and accountability to the Church, through our Spiritual Directors.

E. Our individual responsibility.

1. The seniors preside over the process of building up the community, but they do not do all the work.

2. Every MFC member has a voice in the direction of the body as a whole.

a) Bring up concerns, suggestions, leadings from the Lord.

b) Do this properly, in a way that helps build up.

* Usually through your immediate leader.

* But possible to speak directly to any senior.

* Should be done with respect and a spirit of submission.

F. Conclusion.

1. God's desire is to form and build up His people so as to be able to use them for His purposes.

2. We in MFC are called to be the body of Christ, to function as one coordinated whole, so as to be useful to Him

LIVING AS A PEOPLE OF GOD

TALK No. 2 : FUNCTIONING AS A BODY

Participant's Handout

1. God has a plan/purpose for us as a body. God has given us our life and mission in MFC.
 - a) To live a new life in Christ.
2. In order to fulfil God's purpose, we as individuals and MFC as a body need to be built up and strengthened.
 - a) We build each other up. Eph 4:15-16. 1 Thes 5:11.
 - * A very important position we hold is as son/daughter of God, thus brother/sister in the Lord.
 - * One very important service is daily love.
 - b) We are given different gifts and roles of service. 1 Cor 12:4-7.
 - * God wants to give each and every member a gift, to be used for service.
 - * We are interdependent.
 - c) We are built up through our work of evangelization and service to the Church.
3. There is a need for order in the body. 1 Cor 14:33.
 - a) To put order in our personal Christian lives, we need care and pastoral support.
 - * Ex 18:13-27.
 - * Our unique pastoral system of cell groups (households).
 - b) For order in the whole body, there is a need for authority and governance.
4. The function of seniors in MFC.
 - a) Seniors care for the body as a whole. Heb 13:17. 1 Thes 5:12-14.
 - b) The highest governing authority over the international MFC community is the Servant General.
 - c) Other leaders are extensions of the Servant General.
5. Protection against improper use of authority.
 - a) Most basically, faithfulness to the Lord.
 - b) Following good order.
 - c) Counselors and core teams.
 - d) Appeal to a higher authority within MFC.
 - e) Our submission and accountability to the Church through our Spiritual Advisers.
6. Every MFC member ought to take individual responsibility for the life and direction of the whole body.

LIVING AS A PEOPLE OF GOD

TALK No. 3 : GOVERNANCE AND PERSONAL GUIDANCE

Expanded Outline

A. Introduction.

1. We saw God's call to function as a body, and the role of seniors and other leaders.
2. In living out the roles of leaders and members in MFC, there is a need for governmental authority and submission.
 - a) Without authority, there would be a lack of direction and even chaos.
 - b) Without submission, there can be no effective authority.

B. The nature of authority and submission.

1. This arises out of the nature of our commitment in MFC.
 - a) We have committed our whole lives to the Lord, and as an expression of this, have committed ourselves to our covenant in MFC. Personal guidance is helpful for us to grow in our commitment.
 - b) Our community has been raised up by God to serve Him. Personal guidance is necessary to be able to move as one effective body.
2. Authority and submission are aspects of a relationship.
 - a) Not functional, but arising out of our relationship as brethren in the Lord.
 - b) There are many relationships discussed in Scripture involving authority and submission.
 - * Elders/community, husband/wife, parents/children, master/disciple, master/servant, commander/soldier, secular governor/subject.
 - * Most of these kinds of authority are also relevant for us.

C. Guidance one can expect from leadership in MFC.

1. Overall governmental authority in MFC belongs to the Servant General.
 - a) The Servant General directs the body as a whole.
 - b) Such authority is delegated to the other MFC leaders in varying degrees.
2. Leaders lead and care for the body and its members. This is done by:

- a) Teaching, correcting, encouraging, building up, praying for.
 - b) Personal guidance, regarding our life in MFC.
3. Personal guidance is given in areas concerning a member's participation in the life of MFC, as follows:
- a) Attendance at meetings and activities.
 - b) Formation courses to be taken.
 - c) Services to be performed.
 - d) Areas of conflict within the body.
 - e) Living out the MFC culture.
4. Leaders do not direct the personal lives of members, i.e., areas of life not directly related to their commitment in MFC.
- a) E.g., personal finances; choice of work; lifestyle; where to live.
 - b) Exceptions:
 - * An area needs significant correction.
 - * When the welfare of MFC is adversely affected.
 - c) However, members are encouraged to bring up and receive input on significant decisions and difficulties.

D. Submission.

1. Members should receive guidance willingly and submissively.
 - a) Like Jesus. Phil 2:5-8. Humility.
 - b) Free from pride, independence, rebellion, self-importance, desire for power, attachment to personal preferences, self-concern, self-protectiveness.
 - * Put aside all self-will.
 - c) 1 Jn 4:20. In the same way, our attitude towards human authority has a bearing on our relationship to divine authority.
2. The Bible urges a relationship of trust and full cooperation. Heb 13:17. 1 Thes 5:12-13.
3. Submission is not passive but active.

- a) Involves obedience, but not just looking for commands and obeying them. Rather, taking active responsibility.
 - b) Involves initiative.
 - * Seek out guidance, not just wait for it to be given.
 - * Actively discuss the input with one's service leader or Household Servant.
4. Submission to authority is based on obedience to and love for the Lord.
- a) Look to leaders as having been given position and authority by the Lord.
 - * Thus respect them as one would respect the Lord.
 - * Not dependent on perceived shortcomings of the leader.
 - b) We want to have order and unity so that we will be able to serve the Lord as a body effectively.
 - c) No one has to obey something they judge to be unrighteous.
5. If your judgment seriously differs from the leader, and especially if you think harm to the body would result, you can appeal a decision or directive.
- a) First appeal is made to the leader giving the direction. If response is not satisfactory, a second appeal can be made to the leader over him. If still not satisfactory, successive appeals can be made to higher authority, and can reach all the way up to the Servant General.
 - b) Appeals must be done openly, not secretly.
6. The fruits of submission:
- a) Allows individuals to receive wisdom, confidence and protection.
 - b) Prevents power struggles and conflicts, thus bringing peace and unity.
 - c) Strengthens the body.
 - d) Frees the body to serve the Lord effectively.
 - e) Fosters greater love among the brethren.
 - f) Removes hindrances that may prevent the power of God to work in the body.

E. Authority and love.

1. Guidance and submission in MFC should always function within the context of a loving relationship.

- a) Both leader and subordinate must be committed to one another in brotherly love.
- b) Those who exercise authority should care for those under them; those who submit to authority should cooperate and receive guidance willingly.

2. Both should desire to make the relationship a joy to the other.

F. Conclusion.

- 1. For us to live as a people of God and to function as a body, there is a need for authority and submission.
- 2. Together, exercising our respective roles actively, MFC can move as one, and be effective in the pursuit of our life and mission.

LIVING AS A PEOPLE OF GOD

TALK No. 3 : GOVERNANCE AND PERSONAL GUIDANCE

Participant's Handout

1. In living out the roles of leaders and members in MFC, there is a need for governmental authority and submission.
 - a) Personal guidance is necessary for the individual members to grow in their commitment and for MFC to move as one effective unit.
 - b) Authority and submission are aspects of our personal relationship as brethren in the Lord.
2. Direction from MFC leadership.
 - a) The Servant General directs the body as a whole. He delegates his authority to other MFC leaders.
 - b) Leaders lead and care for their members.
 - * Teaching, correcting, encouraging, building up, praying for.
 - * Personal guidance regarding one's life in MFC.
 - c) Leaders do not direct the personal lives of members in areas that are not directly related to their life in MFC.
 - * Exceptions:
 - An area needs significant correction.
 - The welfare of MFC is adversely affected.
3. Submission.
 - a) Members should receive guidance willingly and submissively.
 - * Like Jesus. Phil 2:5-8. Humility.
 - * Put aside all self-will.
 - b) A relationship of trust and full cooperation.
 - * Heb 13:17. 1 Thes 5:12-13.
 - * Not passive but active.
 - * Based on obedience to and love for the Lord.
 - c) If your judgment seriously differs, you may appeal.
 - d) Fruits of submission:
 - * Members receive wisdom, confidence and protection.
 - * Strengthens the body.
 - * Fosters greater love among the brethren.
 - * Frees the body to serve the Lord effectively.
4. Authority/personal guidance and submission should always function within the context of a loving relationship. It should result in joy for both leader and member.

LIVING AS A PEOPLE OF GOD

TALK No. 4 : PEACE AND DISCIPLINE

Expanded Outline

A. Introduction.

1. Eph 4:22-24. Holiness and righteousness should characterize the life of every Christian community.
 - a) We should not allow sin and wrongdoing to become an accepted part of our life together.
 - b) There should be no lack of love and peace.
 - c) If we do not follow Jesus' way of life, we cannot function as his body.
2. So the call to holiness is corporate, not just individual.
 - a) The sin of one is harmful to the others.
 - b) We are responsible for one another. We are accountable to one another.
 - c) We should call on one another to be faithful to our commitment.
 - * Mutual encouragement and correction.
3. Let us look at 3 areas.

B. First area: Personal reconciliation.

1. The ideal is that we should always be at peace with one another.
 - a) There may be difficulties, but there should be no hostility, grudges, resentment, bitterness.
 - b) This is simply based on a right relationship with God and our commitment to love one another.
 - c) It is also based on obedience to God. 1 Jn 5:3,4:21.
2. Thus, if something is wrong in the relationship between members, go and seek reconciliation.
 - a) Whether another has something against you, or you against another.
 - * Mt 5:23-24; Mt 18:15.
 - * "Against someone" means not just if we have an emotional difficulty or a somewhat negative feeling about another person, but when there is objective wrongdoing.

- * We do not have to go to another person for every small thing.
 - b) Our inner attitude should conform to our outward action.
 - * Guard against grudges, resentment, hidden suspicions, personal anger.
 - * One of our most serious obligations in MFC is to help preserve peace.
 - 3. If we are unable to work out a dispute, seek a judgment from the governing authority in MFC.
 - a) Seek wisdom on how to resolve the problem in the Lord.
 - b) Do not be self-seeking, defending our own rights or seeking vindication.
 - c) Do not go to secular courts against a member, unless this is the only alternative left. 1 Cor 6:1-7.
 - * One should even prefer to be cheated rather than cause serious dissension in the body.
 - 4. Our basic attitude: be peacemakers at heart. Mt 5:9.
 - a) Do not “fan the flames” of conflict.
 - * Guard against this as much as against actual conflicts.
 - 5. An important principle: In Christ there is no quarrel that cannot be resolved!
- C. Second area: Personal wrongdoing.
- 1. We are committed to help people out of personal wrongdoing.
 - a) Wrong attitude: It is OK if it does not harm others. It is OK if it is between consenting adults.
 - b) We are committed together to righteousness.
 - * Sin of one is harmful to others. It can block God’s action in the body.
 - * Also, it is a failure in love to leave someone in his sin.
 - 2. How can we help one another?
 - a) The basic way is through correction.
 - * Throughout the Bible, Christians are called upon to correct, to admonish, to reproof.
 - b) For leaders (parents in families and Household Servants in MFC), correction is an ongoing responsibility.
 - c) If we are not the leader, we can correct if it will be helpful.
 - * We are not always responsible to correct everybody for everything.

3. Forms of discipline (apart from correction):

- a) Exclusion -- for serious unrepented wrongdoing.
 - * Mt 18:15-17. Our motive is to win over our brother. Though harsh, it is done out of love.
 - * 1 Cor 5:1-5. "Hand over to Satan" = put them out of the Christian community, since the community is protection against Satan. Again, our motive is his salvation ultimately.
 - * Exclusion is a serious obligation on our part. It must be done if necessary. We need to realize the gravity of sin and the danger involved to a man's soul.
 - * Also, one's sin affects the rest. 1 Cor 5:6.
 - * Grounds for exclusion: wrongdoing that disqualifies a person from inheritance in the kingdom of God.
 - Violations of the basic commandments (murder, adultery, sexual immorality, etc.). Not just things like losing your temper, having an argument, etc.
 - Opinions incompatible with basic Christian truths (e.g., Jesus is not God; Jesus' death and resurrection not necessary to be saved, etc.). Not just difference in theological opinions.
 - Participation in non-Christian worship, including engaging in the occult, spiritualism, etc.
 - * This does not apply to non-believers (1 Cor 5:9-13). Exclusion is a matter of discipline within the Christian community.
- b) There are other types of Scriptural discipline for less serious offenses.
 - * Ostracism/admonition. 2 Thes 3:14-15.
 - * Gently setting another right. Gal 6:1.
- c) Termination from MFC.
 - * For refusal to try and live up to the covenant in MFC.
 - * For refusal to abide by community order. This includes publicly denying MFC teachings.
 - An attack on the order of a body is a threat to its life.
 - * For any other act that would seriously undermine the life and mission of MFC.

D. Third area: Speech and wrongdoing.

1. Peace can exist and discipline carried out in a loving way only if the body as a whole guards its speech carefully.
 - a) Wrong speech can be destructive. This includes speaking against, judging, gossip, criticism.
 - * This can sow mistrust and dissension.
 - * With such, we cannot become a community of love.
 - b) But if speech is disciplined, this can be one of the greatest sources of love.

2. Basic principle: Don't judge others. Mt 7:1-2.

- a) We don't mean there is no judgment at all within the community, because those in authority are responsible for judgments. For example: parents, magistrates.
- b) What does it mean then? Jas 4:11-12.
 - * What should not be done is to speak out against, to speak ill, to make accusations.
 - * 1 Pt 2:1.

3. What do we do if we see wrongdoing in the body?

- a) Go to the person and reprove him/her.
- b) Or go to the person's household leader or to another leader over the person.
 - * You must be willing to be identified.
- c) The above is applicable as well if our difficulty is with our own leader or with other leaders in MFC.

4. Other important aspects of speech:

- a) We should not readily believe accusations against brethren.
 - * If we are the leader, then we can investigate.
 - * If we are not the leader, and a member makes accusations against another member, we should tell him to bring it to the proper authority.
- b) We should not give negative evaluations of how others conduct their service unless we are responsible for their service.
 - * If we do have constructive criticism, we should pass this on to the service overseer.
- c) We should never insult or abuse anyone.

E. What makes it work? How can we embrace discipline and foster peace?

- 1. A common commitment to live lives of holiness and righteousness.
- 2. Fraternal concern.
 - a) Dedication to help one another live this kind of life.
 - b) Real love for one another. We are responsible for each other's lives, and we exercise that responsibility with loving care, with respect and compassion.
- 3. A strong commitment to and a desire to move forward the mission of MFC.

LIVING AS A PEOPLE OF GOD

TALK No. 4 : PEACE AND DISCIPLINE

Participant's Handout

1. Holiness and righteousness should characterize the life of every Christian community. Eph 4:22-24.
2. We should always be at peace with one another.
 - a) If something is wrong in the relationship between members, go and seek reconciliation. Mt 5:23-24; Mt 18:15.
 - b) If unable to work things out, seek a judgment from governing authority in MFC.
 - c) Be peacemakers at heart. Mt 5:9.
 - d) An important principle: In Christ there is no quarrel that cannot be resolved!
3. We are committed to help people out of personal wrongdoing.
 - a) It is a failure in love to leave someone in his sin.
 - b) We help basically through correction.
 - c) Forms of discipline:
 - * Exclusion -- for serious unrepented wrongdoing.
 - Mt 18:15-17. 1 Cor 5:1-5.
 - One's sin affects the rest. 1 Cor 5:6.
 - Grounds: Violations of the basic commandments, opinions incompatible with basic Christian truths, participation in non-Christian worship.
 - * For less serious offenses: ostracism/admonition (2 Thes 3:14-15), warning (1 Tim 1:5), gently setting another right (Gal 6:1).
 - * Termination from MFC.
 - For refusal to try and live up the covenant.
 - For refusal to abide by community order.
4. Speech and wrongdoing.
 - a) Wrong speech can be destructive. We must guard our speech carefully.
 - b) Basic principle: don't judge others. Mt 7:1-2.
 - * Meaning in Jas 4:11-12: do not speak out against, speak ill, make accusations. 1 Pt 2:1.
 - c) If we see wrongdoing, go to the person and reprove him. Or go to the person's leader or someone who has pastoral responsibility over him.
 - d) We should not readily believe accusations against brethren.
 - e) We should not give negative evaluation of how others conduct their service unless we are responsible for their service.
 - f) Never insult or abuse anyone.

LIVING AS A PEOPLE OF GOD

TALK No. 5 : UNITY AND DISAGREEMENT

Expanded Outline

A. The ideal of unity.

1. Jesus calls for perfect unity. Jn 17:20-23.
 - * Manifests his glory.
 - * Manifests the Father's love to the world.
 - * Makes possible a powerful witness to the world.
 - a) With unity, we experience the power and victory of the Lord.
 - * The early Christian community in Acts 4:32-33.
 - manifested the glory of the resurrection.
 - manifested the Father's love in sharing.
 - they bore witness; there was great respect for them.
 - b) Paul to other communities.
 - * Phil 1:27-28. Be united, be one; thus experience power and victory.
2. How do we achieve unity? Two ways:
 - a) By loving relationships, by the bond of peace.
 - * Mutual love means service, obedience, care, self-sacrifice. We are to look to the good of others.
 - * Unity means not just the absence of division and conflict, but loving one another as the love between the Father and the Son.
 - b) By means of authority/government and submission in the body.
 - * The seniors (elders) and other leaders teach, direct, lead. The members submit and receive guidance.
3. Aspects of unity:
 - a) Unity is not just external. Rather, it is a unity of heart and mind, of thought and judgment.
 - * It can't be legislated or just demanded.
 - * But rather is founded on:
 - assent to revealed truth (we're brethren in the Lord).
 - following the leading of the Spirit.
 - Godly wisdom about how to live together as MFC.
 - b) Unity requires:
 - * Seniors/leaders who lead well, who are godly, gifted and trained.
 - * Members who respond with a desire for unity.

- this requires humility: to accept the leaders, and to be open to be taught, directed and corrected.
- c) Humility does not mean giving up one's own mind. We are not robots; MFC is not a cult.
- * But it involves willingness to give those in authority the benefit of the doubt, to be cooperative, to handle disagreements in the right way.
 - * The secular ideal: pluralism, independence of judgment, individual creativity, diversity of viewpoint. The world is committed to individualism. Thus there are lots of conflicts.
 - * For us, we do not discard the above totally, but we look to a higher value, which is love of God and neighbor, involving unity of heart and mind.
 - * We are not against using our minds, being creative, or having some diversity. But our ideal is unity, not individual uniqueness.

B. Conflict and meekness.

1. We have a choice whenever we discuss or disagree: a spirit of conflict or of meekness.
 - a) If conflict prevails, disunity results. If meekness, unity grows and love thrives.
 - b) We cannot approach disagreement in a spirit that comes from the world/flesh/Satan and still expect to be a body of people who love one another.
2. Spirit of conflict.
 - a) What? An attempt to influence direction by applying pressure.
 - b) How? Manifestations:
 - * Hostile speech, abuse, even physical violence.
 - * Or less directly: being argumentative, critical, having a desire to debate.
 - * High value placed on protest, confrontation, intimidation, public attack or criticism.
 - * Factions, campaigns.
 - c) Conflict is either rooted in the flesh, or comes from a conviction that conflict is the best way to raise issues and get action. Either way, this is not our way in MFC.
 - * If it comes from the flesh, beware. Gal 5:19-21.
We will not inherit the kingdom!
 - * If out of conviction, we need to realize that:
 - there is a better way (next section).
 - not everyone in MFC has the same responsibility for the direction of the body, and that the body as a whole is not necessarily the proper forum for discussion.
3. Spirit of meekness. This should be our approach.

- a) This is the spirit of those who know that they are servants of God and of their brethren.
 - * Free of conflict, hostility, protest, factions.
 - * Can enter into discussion in good faith, trusting that all involved want to know the truth and follow it.
 - * Trust that the Lord will guide and lead His people.
- b) Acceptance of the senior's authority for decision-making.
 - * Manifested in a cooperative and submissive spirit.
 - * Being willing to accept a decision different from one's own opinion or preference.
- c) This does not mean unwillingness to be open in discussion.
 - * In fact, because of greater mutual trust among brethren, there should be greater ability to speak freely.
- d) Meekness is appropriate in the community, but not always outside.
 - * The situation outside community is often entirely different. In society, basic Christian principles and relationships are not in place.
 - * A more aggressive posture might be the appropriate thing. E.g., praying outside abortion clinics.

C. Dealing with issues/handling discussions.

1. In matters of approach (e.g., singing during worship; schedule of events; etc.):

- a) If you see something to be improved, then share your opinion.
 - * However, be constructive. Eph 4:29.
 - * If your evaluation is negative, speak only to the person responsible for your area of concern.
 - * If your concern is serious, ask that your suggestion be seriously considered. If there is no response, you can go to the next higher person in responsibility.
 - * In all these, accept that the final decision belongs to those responsible.
- b) Those responsible should be eager to receive input.
 - * They should take suggestions and even negative evaluation seriously (it might be from the Lord!).
 - * If they do not agree with the suggestions, then they should normally explain or account for their decision.

2. In matters of major direction or teaching or culture in MFC (e.g., family life, evangelistic thrust, etc.):

- a) All can have a role in the direction of the community.
 - * You can have your own opinion.
 - * The Lord may have a word for the community through you.
- b) But the seniors are the ones primarily responsible.
 - * They have responsibility for major decisions in MFC.

- * They listen to others and consult as needed, but they then make the decisions and expect others to accept and support these.

c) If you seriously disagree:

- * Ask for a reconsideration. Or also request a wider consultation.
- * Do not publicly oppose or organize opposition.
- * If you still can't personally accept the decision, you can request a judgment from the Servant General or his designated representative in the area, but should be willing to accept his decision.

D. Discussion in love.

1. God is love. Love is essential in Christian community. Eph 4:15-16.

a) Secular approach: value opinions, policies, approaches. MFC approach: value love relationship.

- * Secular: discuss issues, debate policies, evaluate performance. MFC: build one another up; serve the Lord.

b) Almost anything can be discussed if done in a way that is upbuilding.

- * In fact, a Christian community is a place for an open and free discussion, because we are secure in our love relationship.

c) To decide whether to discuss or approach differently, our criterion is whether or not the body will be built up.

2. Christian love involves loyalty.

a) Keep community disagreements within the community. Col 4:5-6.

- * It is disloyal:
 - to go to people outside to put pressure on the community to change.
 - to expose community difficulties to media or others outside.
 - to draw outsiders into community disagreements.
- * We do not keep secrets, but we do not have to publicly air our grievances.

b) We are to relate to outsiders in a way that will increase their respect for MFC.

c) A family spirit should prevail.

E. Conclusion.

1. We have been called to MFC. Part of it is Jesus' call to perfect unity.

2. We will have disagreements but we should handle these in a good way. With love and loyalty.

3. Then we can truly witness to the world.

LIVING AS A PEOPLE OF GOD

TALK No. 5 : UNITY AND DISAGREEMENT

Participant's Handout

1. Jesus calls for perfect unity. Jn 17:20-23.
 - a) With unity, we experience the power and victory of the Lord.
 - * Acts 4:32-33. Phil 1:27-28.
 - b) We achieve unity:
 - * By loving relationships.
 - * By means of authority/government and submission.
 - c) Unity is not just external, but one of heart and mind, of thought and judgment.
 - * Requires humility.

2. Disagreements can be faced in a spirit of conflict or meekness.
 - a) Spirit of conflict.
 - * An attempt to influence direction by applying pressure.
 - * High value placed on protest, confrontation, intimidation, public attack or criticism.
 - * Leads to disunity. Not our option in MFC.
 - b) Spirit of meekness. Our approach.
 - * Free of hostility, conflict, protest, factions.
 - * Can enter into discussion in good faith, trusting in the Lord's guidance.
 - * Acceptance of seniors' authority for decision-making.
 - * There should be greater ability to speak freely.

3. Dealing with issues/handling discussions.
 - a) In matters of approach.
 - * Can share your opinion. But be constructive. Eph 4:29.
 - * Accept that the final decision belongs to those responsible.
 - * Those responsible should be eager to receive input.
 - b) In matters of major direction, teaching, MFC culture.
 - * All can have a role in the direction of MFC.
 - * But the seniors are the ones primarily responsible, with the ultimate responsibility falling on the Servant General.
 - c) Discussions should be done in love.
 - d) We should be loyal.
 - * Keep community disagreements within the community. Col 4:5-6.
 - * A family spirit should prevail.

LIVING AS A PEOPLE OF GOD

Talk No. 6 : OUR PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Expanded Outline

A. Introduction.

1. Eph 4:7-8,11-16 (after passage on “unity in the body” in v. 1-6).
 - a) v. 7-8,11-12. The body is given gifts.
 - * To build up the body (inward look). Thus prophets, pastors, teachers.
 - * To equip members for ministry/service (outward thrust). Thus apostles, evangelist.
 - b) v. 13-15. Our goal: maturity in Christ. We are to be Christ-like, to enter into union with Christ.
 - c) v. 16. The condition for the body’s growth: the proper functioning of each part.
2. The body will function properly when:
 - a) There are certain activities and services that form the life and mission of the body
 - b) Each member takes personal responsibility for such vision and mission.
3. We will look at 4 major areas: caring for others, faithful participation at activities, service, and finances.

B. We are responsible for caring for others.

1. Generally, we are all brethren and should love one another.
 - * Even those MFC members we do not know personally.
2. Specifically, basic care is provided through the various pastoral groupings in MFC.
 - a) All belong to households. This is our basic means of caring for all.
 - * Our aim is to grow in intimate care and friendships.
 - * We do not limit our contact to the formal meetings, especially for those who live or work close to each other.
 - b) There are also the units, chapters, and areas.
 - * Our relationships should not be limited to our household. We are not islands, but all part of the larger body.
 - * We should respect MFC leaders outside our own groupings.
3. How do we care for our brethren?

- a) By loving, honoring, supporting, encouraging, showing concern for spiritual and material needs.
- b) By praying for them.
 - * There is much power in the intercessory prayer of many people.
- 4. While we have a special love and care for our brethren, we should look to the good of all. Gal 6:10.

C. Meetings.

- 1. We have various meetings in MFC.
 - a) Those on a recurring pattern.
 - * Small groups weekly – household meeting.
 - * Larger groups monthly – chapter prayer assembly.
 - * The larger body annually -- anniversary, Family Day, rallies, etc.
 - b) Others: teaching courses, leaders conferences, socials, etc.
- 2. Our posture. Heb 10:24-25.
 - a) An opportunity to worship God as a body (community).
 - * God can speak to us and build us up.
 - b) An opportunity to rouse and encourage one another.
 - c) We are not free to decide if we will attend or not.
 - * Attending activities is part of our covenant.
 - * If we have a good reason for being unable to attend, we should inform our household leader beforehand.
 - d) We should actively participate, not just sit there.
 - * Even just with active listening.
- 3. Continued failure, without valid reason, to attend meetings is a ground for termination of MFC membership.

D. Service.

- 1. MFC exists to serve God and the Church.
 - a) MFC exists not just for its own sake or even just for the welfare of its members, but so it can do a wider work of evangelization and renewal.

- b) Our ability to serve depends on two dimensions:
 - * Inward: we love one another and thus experience unity, order and peace.
 - * Outward: we give of our time and energy to serve others.
 - * The two go together and are both essential.

2. There are various specific services in MFC.

- a) One of the most important is pastoral leadership over people in households.
 - * MFC's unique pastoral structure: for every 5 to 7 couples (or persons if not married couples), there is one couple-leader.
 - * Thus one strength of MFC: fully 15-20% of total membership are leaders!
 - * We should all be open to being called upon to serve as household leaders. Otherwise, without new leaders, the body won't be able to care for new members.
- b) Household Servants become Unit Servants, who later can become Chapter Servants.
- c) Many other services: CLS team, music ministry, service teams, LCSC, parish.

3. Our posture.

- a) Be open to any service assignment.
- b) Seek the Lord about how you can contribute.
 - * It is OK to aspire to a position (1 Tm 3:1), but with a pure motive.
- c) Trust the Lord for what is needed for the service.
 - * The Spirit distributes gifts as He wills (1 Cor 12:11).
 - * You will grow into your service as you do it.

E. Finances.

- 1. Giving money to MFC is part of our covenant. Financial support for God's work is part of growing into Christian maturity.
- 2. The Scriptural teaching on financial giving is to give a tithe. Mal 3:7b-10.
 - a) Tithe = 10% of income after tax.
 - b) It is given to the body of Christ where you draw your support.
 - * For us, we can split our tithe between MFC and our parish, in whatever proportion we prefer.
- 3. Our posture.
 - a) The condition of our hearts is important.
 - * Generosity. We may give much, but if we grumble, then it is no good.

- * Joy in giving (2 Cor. 9:7)
- b) We should desire to further the worldwide mission of MFC.
- c) Everyone can and should make a contribution.
 - * Do not be ashamed of being able to give only a small amount, if that is all you really can afford.
 - * If every member gives regularly (monthly), even if not a full tithe, there would be enough money to fully pursue our ministry.
- 4. Be open to other uses of your finances.
 - a) Resource sharing in MFC.
 - b) Almsgiving.
 - c) Fundraising.
 - d) Personal support of other groups or individuals.
- F. Conclusion.
 1. It is a privilege for us all to be called by God into a body where we can learn to know, love and serve Him.
 2. We have a responsibility to do our share to make MFC truly a body God can use.

LIVING AS A PEOPLE OF GOD

TALK No. 6 : OUR PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Participant's Handout

1. Eph 4:7-8,11-16.
 - a) The body is given gifts to build itself up and to equip members for ministry/service.
 - b) Our goal is maturity in Christ.
 - c) The condition for the body's growth is the proper functioning of each part.
2. Caring for others.
 - a) Generally, we all love one another.
 - b) Basic care is provided through the pastoral groupings (households).
3. Meetings.
 - a) Our posture: Heb 10:24-25.
 - * An opportunity to worship God as a body.
 - * An opportunity to rouse and encourage one another.
 - b) We are not free to decide if we will attend or not.
 - * Attendance is part of our covenant.
 - * We can be absent for good reason. Inform our Household Servant.
 - c) Continued failure to attend, without valid reason, is a ground for termination of membership in MFC.
4. Service.
 - a) MFC exists to serve God and the Church.
 - b) There are various services in MFC.
 - * Most important is pastoral leadership of households.
 - c) Our posture:
 - * Be open to any service.
 - * Seek the Lord about how you can contribute. 1 Tm 3:1.
 - * Trust the Lord for what is needed for the service. 1 Cor 12:11.
5. Finances.
 - a) Financial support of God's work is part of growing to Christian maturity.
 - * Giving to MFC is part of our covenant.
 - * The Scriptural teaching is to give a tithe, i.e., 10% of our income. Mal 3:7b-10.
 - b) Our posture: generosity. We should desire to further the worldwide mission of MFC.
 - * Everyone can and should make a contribution.
 - c) Be open to other uses of our finances, such as resource sharing, almsgiving, fundraising, support for other groups or individuals. These are over and above our tithe.

(SG. Oct 7, 2019)