CHRISTIAN GROWTH GROUPS

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NOT FOR CIRCULATION

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INTRODUCTION

The Problem

Members of larger churches often are deprived of the advantages of close fellowship. Consequently, they either remain in the church with social needs unfulfilled, or they seek fulfilment outside the Adventist church in ways that may conflict with a Christian life-style. Many withdraw from the church permanently.

The Purpose of the Study

A Christian growth group was formed at the Hillview Seventh-day Adventist Church with the above-mentioned problem in mind. Its purposes were:

1. To find whether group interaction would help meet fellowship needs which are unfulfilled in formal corporate worship
2. To discover whether the group experience would increase members' spiritual awareness thus deepening their appreciation of Christian values
3. To test the small group as an instrument to help members develop more rewarding relationships within the church
4. To provide a setting in which people could discover self-worth and experience character and personality development

5. To provide support for people as they endeavoured to overcome personal problems that were hindering the enjoyment of Christian faith and witness.

The Scope of the Study

It was planned to invite up to twelve people in the church to join a small group to meet in the home of one of the members each Friday evening for a period of ten weeks.

The Importance of the Study

The importance of this study was to be evaluated by the following criteria:

1. Whether relationships formed in the group satisfied the needs of members
2. Whether retiring people would become more outgoing and enjoy sharing within an accepting group, thus promoting growth
3. Whether social and spiritual topics would blend and be helpful to participants
4. Whether principles that guided interaction in other groups would be suitable for a Christian group
5. Whether such a group would become an attractive centre for people without church fellowship
6. Whether personal development and group cohesiveness would be lasting.

Methods Used in the Study

The leader planned to facilitate but not dominate

group interaction. Subject matter was to be of personal interest to a wide spectrum of members so that participation would be encouraged. Sub-groups would be used to encourage discussion of biblical topics. Thus people would be motivated in their development by interaction with each other and fellowship in the truth of the gospel. The relaxing environment of a home was an advantage in personal communication.

CHAPTER I

CHRISTIAN GROWTH GROUPS IN BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

This chapter expresses the biblical basis for Christian growth groups. The theological setting is the nature of man who is made "in the image of God." Fellowship with God and man is presented as a vital part of life and everyone's privilege. Christ and the twelve apostles and the house-church are the New Testament model for Christian growth groups and the ideal example of fellowship. Admonitions to grow are found in both Testaments and groups are set forth as centres for their fulfilment. Finally, it will be shown that the "one accord" condition, with the saints "equipped for the work of ministry," undergirds the New Testament theology of mission.

The Nature of Man

Man is a social being.[1] The Bible account of creation reveals his need for companionship with other humans and with God. Indeed, God revealed Himself as God in relationship when He said, "Let us make man in our image." (Gen 1:26). This statement also revealed God's desire for relationship with man.

[1]A social being is a person possessing the potential for relationships with others.

The Meaning of the Image of God in Man

In the first chapter of Genesis God is revealed as Creator. His power brought all things into existence. In the second chapter, God's love is revealed. He relieves the loneliness of man by the creation of Eve. In the first chapter man is called 'ādām, which simply means man. However, when Eve is made, Adam is called 'îš and Eve 'iššā. The creation was not complete until man was in relationship with a fellow human being. Eve in relation to Adam was also in the image of God.

The population of the earth was in God's mind when He created it. Therefore the creation of Eve was not an afterthought. Evidently the creation of Adam on his own was to prepare him to experience a need so that he would appreciate Eve the more when she was created. "The Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him" (Gen 2:18). This is the only "not good" statement relating to creation. That condition of Adam's loneliness was remedied by the creation of Eve.

It is true that man, created for "fellowship with God," can "only in such fellowship" find his real life and development."[1] It is also instructive to note that the fellowship which Adam enjoyed with God was to be lived out in deeper appreciation through human relationships. Together Adam and Eve were in the image of God. In the image of God "created he them" (Gen 1:27).

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[1]See Ellen G. White, Education (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, 1903), p. 124.

Newbigin gives credit to Doctor Nyles for his understanding of the word "image." He records the following illustration of the image of God.

> The image of a King's head on a coin is part of the coin and cannot be separated from it. Even if the King dies, the image remains on the coin. But there is another kind of image. On a still and cloudless night we may see the image of the moon in the water of a lake. So long as the water is unruffled by wind, and the moon not covered by cloud, the image will shine out clear and beautiful. But if a cloud comes between the moon and the earth, the image will disappear, or if the water is ruffled by wind, the image will be scattered and distorted. Thus the image of the moon in the water does not belong to the water in the same way that the image of the king on the coin belongs to the coin. The image belongs to a certain relation between the moon and the water. If the relation is broken, the image is distorted or lost.... When man turns away from God, the image is distorted and spoiled; if God were to turn away from man, the image of God would be completely lost and man would no longer be human.[1]

The distortion referred to in the above quotation is the result of sin. One such result is alienation from God and fellow human beings. In the words of Berkouwer,

> The high-handed attempt to control the image of God is perse, illegitimate, and is in its very origin an act of unmistakable alienation from God. And it is, simultaneously, an act of extreme self-alienation, since man thereby seeks to construct an 'image of God,' although he himself, in communion with God, should be that image in all his being.[2]

The results of sin recorded in Genesis reveal a self-alienation and a broken fellowship with God and with each other. Jourard revealed keen insight when he stated that, "a self-alienated person--one who does not disclose himself truthfully and fully--can never love another person, nor can

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[1]Lesslie Newbigin, Sin and Salvation (London: SCM Press, 1956), pp. 16-17.

[2]G. C. Berkouwer, Man: The Image of God (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1973), pp. 81-82.

he be loved by the other person."[1] Adam and Eve revealed this very clearly. Their open, loving, sociability was inhibited by sin. Spiritual and social alienation is the result of self-alienation. If he cannot trust himself, neither can he trust and love others.

Eric Hoffer refers to self-alienation when he says, "There is as much difference between us and ourselves as between us and others."[2] Bevan draws a similar conclusion when he considers Adam's isolation.

> Since personal existence can never be in isolation, man is a person because he is the being to whom God speaks. He is also the being who needs human companionship, as the first man in Genesis did, who was consequently given the companionship of the woman to be a help to him.[3]

The New Testament Application of the Image

Jesus is revealed as the ideal man in the image of God. "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation" (Col 1:15). The result of His coming is the restoration of man. "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren" (Rom 8:29). Such conformity was God's purpose and calls for an appropriate response from man--a response of faith and love. Man must "receive the reconciliation." Only then can transformation

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[1] S. Jourard, The Transparent Self (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1964), p. 25.

[2] Eric Hoffer, The Ordeal of Change (London: Sidywick & Jackson, 1964), p. 118.

[3] R. J. W. Bevan, Steps to Christian Understanding (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 97.

take place. "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit" (2 Cor 3:18). The "new creation" in the setting of reconciliation would include a restoration of the image of God.

A restoration of relationship would be expected, for an "in Christ" new creation would resemble the original, resulting in harmony with God and between people.[1] It is not possible to have genuine relationships on a spiritual level without this in turn affecting the social sphere. Directives in the Sermon on the Mount illustrate this. "So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift....Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven" (Matt 5:23,24,44,45 RSV).

Another approach is shown in chapter six of Matthew where people are warned against making a pretence of religion to be seen of men. God calls for consistency and genuineness. People are not to pray "to be seen of men." They are not to give alms for human praise, and to fast "to be seen of men." This would be to fake a relationship and make a pretense of love. But "if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you: but if you do not forgive men

[1] See 2 Cor 5: 16-21 for context.

their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt 6:1,5,13,14, RSV). The emphasis is not on religious standards and observances, but on right relationships with God and man and a right attitude toward yourself and God. The image of God demands this. That is how it operates. The horizontal and vertical planes of relationship are interdependent. This is further developed by John when he states that "he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen (1 John 4:20). Such relationships are vital for the image of God to be restored in man.

> No man is fitted for an isolated life; everyone has needs which he cannot supply for himself; but he needs not only what his neighbours contribute to the equipment of his life but their actual selves as the complement of his own. Man is naturally and incurably social....By our mutual influence we actually constitute one another as what we are.[1]

In a group situation the social nature of man is developed. Each member contributes to group life. Each person is significant and supports others who are seeking growth. In a sense, each assists the other in the restoration of the image of God. Ellen White agrees with this conclusion when she says, "He designed that the principles revealed through His people should be the means of restoring the moral image of God in man."[2]

From these considerations it will be seen that each

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[1]William Temple, Christianity and Social Order (London: SPCK, 1976), pp. 69-70.

[2]Ellen G. White, Prophets and Kings (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, 1917), p. 16. The present writer freely acknowledges that in Ellen White's writings, "moral" is often used to qualify "image of God." But this does not detract from the concept of relationship--rather it adds dimensions to it, for lack of morality destroys relationships.

person is of value to God and one another. Each person deserves to be taken seriously and to be treated with respect. Human significance is based upon the importance of a person in God's scale of values. Just to be living indicates value, for all life is sustained by God. He sees significance and value in any person who has life. Christian Growth Groups encourage the development and practice of this realization.

The Realization of Human Worth

The realization that each person has been redeemed at infinite cost increases our sense of human worth. Self-esteem is important for human happiness, self-acceptance, and character development. Feelings of inferiority are destructive and out of harmony with God's will. "The Lord is disappointed when His people place a low estimate upon themselves. He desires His chosen heritage to value themselves according to the price He has placed upon them. God wanted them, else He would not have sent His Son on such an expensive errand to redeem them."[1]

If low self-esteem can be traced to a low estimate impressed upon a person by "authority figures" or peers, then what must it do for a person's self-esteem to realise that One so great as Jesus Christ places such a high estimate upon him that He would take his place on a cross. People are not loved merely when they are good, for the good and evil alike are cared for by God. "He makes His sun rise on the evil and

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[1]Ellen G. White, Desire of Ages (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, 1898), p. 668.

on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt 6:45). "While we were helpless....While we were sinners....While we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son..." (Rom 5:6-10).

> Significance depends upon understanding who I am in Christ....My need for security demands that I be unconditionally loved, accepted and cared for, now and forever....My acceptibility to God depends only on Jesus' acceptability to God, and on the fact, that Jesus' death was counted as full payment for my sins.[1]

That One so great did that for each person raises the sense of human worth to a very high level.

It is the sense of guilt that lowers man's sense of worth. Some guilt is false, for according to Tournier, "Feelings of inferiority inevitably end in guilt."[2] These turn the mind of man inward upon his own inabilities, uncertainties and inadequacies, thus robbing personality of its outgoing nature. However, real value can be restored by the unconditional acceptance and love of people in fellowship.

Richards indicates that "deep commitment to each other and an identity with each other in Christ" is a necessity for the development of close fellowship. He pleads for time and "a face-to-face relationship. A relationship we can have only with a few others at one time. And thus a church is forced to move to a small group sturcture."[3]

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[1]Lawrence J. Crabb, Effective Biblical Counselling (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1977), p. 70.

[2]Paul Tournier, Guilt and Grace (London: Hodder & Stroughton, 1974), p. 24.

[3]Lawrence O. Richards, A New Face for the Church (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1970), pp. 149,153.

The small group then becomes the reconstruction centre for personality; a centre for restoring trusting relationships which overcome alienation. Acceptance is unreserved. Thus growth groups become places where healing takes place and where growth in confidence and positive virtues are realised.

"I am not worthy" is a phrase that is repeated in the New Testament reports. "I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; therefore I did not presume to come to you," confessed the Roman centurion when Jesus was asked to heal his servant (Luke 7:6). Yet Jesus saw worth in the man and his servant and said to the multitude that followed him, "I tell you not even in Israel have I found such faith" (Luke 7:6-7,9). It is worthy of note that this man was highly regarded by the Jews. He loved the Jewish nation and had built them a synagogue. He showed deep concern for his servant, but in the presence of Jesus he felt unworthy. "I am not worthy" confessed the prodigal on his return to his father's house. He nevertheless returned trusting in the mercy of his father. He was welcomed and restored. God sees value where man sees only failure and shame. He does not forget that man was made in His image.

Fellowship in the New Testament

Its Meaning and Application

"In composition 'fellow' always means partner or companion."[1] Several compounds appear with fellow such as fellow-citizen, fellow-disciple, fellow-heir, fellow-helper,

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[1] J. Hastings, ed., Dictionary of the Bible (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1899), s.v. "Fellowship."

fellow-labourer, fellow-prisoner, fellow-servant, and many others. The basic idea is that of sharing a common life of interest. Among Christians their common bond is their faith in Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 13:14) to bless their life, their brotherhood and their service."[1] "The theological motif of broken fellowship with God (as in primeval history), the problem of preserving the community in the order which is according to God's will (cf. Isa 5:8), and the role of the community in the ultimate, universal picture of salvation..." is the background given by Schatternmann.[2] Numerous uses of koinonia as a Pauline term indicates a sharing, participating in, or a partner. Clearly, closeness of fellowship is indicated and is presented as the expected and natural outcome of being united in Christ. According to another oft-quoted work, fellowship indicates "joint interest, or having one common stock. The fellowship of the saints is twofold: 1. With God (1 John 1:3; 1 Cor 1:9; 1 Cor 13:14); 2. With one another (1 John 1:7)."[3]

A koinos person shares and has something in common with another person, as someone with common interests or concerns. "It is as individuals that we enter into a permanent relationship with Christ...this personal relationship is

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[1]William Henry Green, "Fellowship," The New Westminster Dictionary of the Bible Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), p. 297.

[2]J. Schattenmann, "Fellowship," The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology (Exeter, U.K.: The Paternaster Press, 1975-1978), 1: 641-42.

[3]J. McLintock and J. Strong, Encyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiological Literature (1969),s.v. "Fellowship."

lived out in a fellowship with others; 'all of us are parts of one body' (Eph 4:25 N.E.B.)."[1]

Fellowship was a way of life in New Testament times. They had all things common. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayer. They enjoyed fellowship with Christ on the ground of faith. There was a "fellowship in the gospel" (Phil 1:5); a "fellowship of faith" (Phlm 6); "the fellowship of the Holy Spirit" (2 Cor 13:13); and a "right hand of fellowship" (Gal 2:9) such as was given to Paul and Barnabas by James, Peter, and John, as recognition that they were accepted as brothers in Christ. The koinonia in 1 Cor 10:16 means participation in the body and blood of Christ and therefore union with the exalted Christ. This fellowship is made possible by the new birth. It is on a high personal and spiritual level. It is not something taught by common courtesy as the right thing to do. It is something of the Spirit, part of the new creation, an identifying mark of early Christians, that united them to each other.

> Whether mother church or mission church, the life and effectiveness of the local church is dependent on the strength of its fellowship. It is said of the early church in Jerusalem that those who had separated themselves from this crooked generation; and who were baptized and were added to the church, 'devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and of prayer. (Acts 2:40-42)."[2]

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[1]John Kleinig, The Group--Its Nature and Role quoted in John Mallison, Building Small Groups (Sydney, N.S.W.: Renewal Publications, 1979), p. 10.

[2]Alan Richardson, ed., A Theological Word Book of the Bible (London: SCM., 1950), s.v. "Fellowship."

The Realization of Belonging

The realization of belonging was possible from the Fall onwards. Obviously Adam and Eve expected rejection. While they were driven from their Eden home they were not without hope of recovery. They could still sense the concern of God who suffered with them in the Fall. They had been made for fellowship with God. His also was the sense of loss. While God planned restoration man could still sense that he belonged.

Israel could rejoice in God as His chosen people, loved and wanted. The Psalms reveal that fellowship and belongingness were experienced by some in a deep and personal way, while others may not have realized their privileges.

The sanctuary and the temple were places of community fellowship. It would be well for us to remember that small groups were organized within that community. In the wilderness model, for the solution of problems, they were organized in thousands, hundreds and tens. Minor problems were handled at small group level. It is also of interest to know that there was fellowship in homes and at synogogues. "Even in the ancient Jewish church there were small societies of friends who met on the Sabbath eve for supper and prayer. Such groups were called 'chaburah'."[1]

The New Testament Model

Christ and the Twelve Apostles

The twelve apostles and the house church are the New

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[1]Mallison, p. 11.

Testament model for close fellowship centring in the fact that "Jesus appointed twelve to be with him..." (Mark 3:14).

> In the company of a small group, Jesus revealed Himself most fully. Peter, James and John were present at the transfiguration. The twelve shared the Last Supper. The three were with Him again in Gethsemane. Our Lord concentrated on the training of twelve men of no conspicuous ability. With the whole world to save He spent most of His ministry, it would seem, in private with His little group. He set out to teach those men to love one another and to pass on the good news of God's love to others. One cannot miss the significance of the twelve, in searching for ways to vitalize the church of our day.[1]

Jesus retreated with His disciples on occasions. Mark records how Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples..." (Mark 3:7). Evidently, He could do with a small group what it was not possible for Him to do with large numbers. A basic loyalty developed among the twelve as time progressed--a loyalty that finds them together at the time of the resurrection. Cohesiveness and interdependence were basic to their growth and effectiveness in mission.

"It was clearly a part of the strategy of Jesus, after the disciples had gone out by twos to carry on His ministry, that they came back together for an evaluation session" (Mark 6:30-31).[2] The text reads,

> And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.

The aim of this reporting to Jesus was no doubt for evaluation

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[1]Ibid., p. 12.

[2]Robert C. Leslie, Sharing Groups in the Church (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon, 1971), p. 188.

of what they had "done" and "taught." The retirement was probably intended to continue the process without interruption. The openness of communication indicated here was important for the growth of the disciples. Even if they experienced failure it was not something to cover up. To suppress the true report would have been to develop inhibitions and to refuse an opportunity for growth.

Mark 9: 30-37 gives another example of the priority Jesus gave to being alone with His group. The first of these verses reads: "They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he would not have anyone know it; for he was teaching his disciples." Leslie comments, "Jesus gave a high priority to the times when he could be alone with his disciples. As this verse indicates, he deliberately kept his presence a secret so that he would not be disturbed as he worked with them."[1]

An earlier verse indicates that Jesus clarified His teachings to His disciples: "privately to his own disciples he explained everything" (Mark 4:34b RSV). To His intimate friends He could say things that would not be misinterpreted. This was for His future benefit and theirs.

Not only did Jesus instruct the group, but He Himself received support from the group. After talking to them about His coming death He went up the mountain, taking His three closest disciples with Him. There Moses and Elijah talked with Him concerning "His decease which He should accomplish

[1]Ibid., p. 191.

in Jerusalem" (Luke 9:31). Jesus also looked for emotional support from the group when He went into Gethsemane. When He found the disciples sleeping although He had asked them to watch with Him, He asked, "Could you not keep watch for one hour" (Mark 14:37 NIV). The yearning for human support and companionship in His hour of trial is obvious.

Jesus and His disciples are a model which church leaders could benefit from in all ages. People need close ties of human companionship to give them the support needed to face life and to witness for Christ.

The House Church

The New Testament ekklesia called into existence by Christ and the apostles is not merely a group of "called out" ones, but a group that is called into fellowship. That fellowship centred in the temple and in private homes. Acts 2:24-47 reveals the apostles teaching "in the temple and from house to house." Acts 5:42 still shows them "daily in the temple, and in every house." Acts 20:20 speaks of Paul who said, "I taught you publickly, and from house to house." It is doubtful if this was merely evangelism. All the Christians could not meet at one time at the temple. Such gatherings would have been looked upon with suspicion by the Romans and would have disturbed the regular temple service. Quite likely the home meetings were planned, and became a representative way of life in the Christian community. The house-church then developed. Four times in the New Testament "the church in their [your;her] house," is referred

to (Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:14; Phlm 2). "Primitive Christianity structured its congregations in families, groups and houses. The house was both a fellowship and a place of meetings....The house and the family are the smallest natural groups in the total structure of the congregation."[1] There was time and opportunity for close fellowship, for an intimacy that was not possible in a large group. The house church became a centre for evangelism as well as a refuge for comfort and support. The same need and opportunity exist in our time.

Admonitions To Grow

Growth in the Old Testament

Scripture records various admonitions to grow. Growth is a divine expectation. In the Old Testament the righteous are likened to flourishing trees. "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he doeth shall prosper." "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that he planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God" (Ps 1:3; Jer 17:7,8; Ps 92:12,13). The setting for such growth and prosperity is the place of fellowship both with God and man.

Growth in the New Testament

The New Testament indicates the need for Christians

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[1] O. Michel, "oikos," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1964-1976), V: 130.

to experience spiritual growth or "growth in grace and knowledge" (2 Pet 3:18). Interestingly, there would seem to be no end to such growth. Christians are to "grow unto a holy temple in the Lord," "abound more and more," "increase, more and more," and "grow up into Him in all things" (Eph 2:21; 1 Thess 4:1,10; Eph 4:15). "The emphasis on 'giving up childish ways' (1 Cor 13:11) is a recognition of the necessity to grow in one's attitudes, responses, and personality."[1]

> The goal of growth and of growth approaches to people is defined by the biblical record as shalom, meaning whole, sound, or healthy (as well as peace). Such wholeness flourishes in relationships. In a community which develops a shalom quality of relationships, there are abundant opportunities for the free and full development of persons. In the fourth Gospel, Jesus' purpose in coming is described as being so that persons could find 'life in its fulness' (John 10:10 NEB).[2]

The parables of Jesus are also illustrations of His expectations for growth.

> Parables can indicate extensive as well as intensive growth. Quantity of believers or quality. Acts would indicate extensive. But the rest of the New Testament points in the second of the two directions. Αυξανειν in 2 Cor 10:15 means growth in faith, as does also 2 Thess 1:3, which speaks of increase of love as well. In Col 1:10f. it is increase in the knowledge of God--with strengthening in endurance and joyful patience. In 2 Cor 9:10 it is the growth of the fruits of righteousness, and in 2 Pet 3:18 growth in grace. The πληθυνειν of 1 Pet 1:2 and 2 Pet 1:2 points in a similar direction. In 1 Cor 15:58 περισσευειν is increase in the work of the Lord, with a corresponding steadfastness and immovability. In 2 Cor 1:5 it is the increase of comfort, in 2 Cor 4:15 of thanksgiving, in 2 Cor 8:7 of faith, the word, knowledge and zeal, in 2 Cor 9:8 of grace for every good work, in Rom 15:13 of hope (by the power of the Holy Spirit).[3]

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[1]Gary R. Collins, Helping People Grow (Santa Ana, California: Vision House, 1980), p. 89.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Karl Barth, "The Growth of the Community", in

Commenting on Eph 2:13-16, "that ye be no longer children" but grow up into Him in all things: one commentator says,

> It is a grievous thing to a minister of Christ to see those who for the time ought to be teachers, fit for the churches strong meat and the harder tasks of her service, remaining still infantile in their condition, needing to be nursed and humoured, narrow in their views of truth, petty and personal in their aims, wanting in all generous feeling and exalted thought....These invalids are objects full of interest to the moral pathologist; they are marked, not infrequently, by fine and delicate qualities. But they are a constant anxiety to the church. Till they grow into something more robust they must remain to crowd the church's nursery, instead of taking part in her battle like brave and strenuous men.[1]

The Bible says grow. But those in the "nursery" have always needed nurturing supporters to make growth a reality. The allēlōn (one another) admonitions of the New Testament are essential for the fulfilment of its growth admonitions.

The "One Another" Admonitions

Excluding the Gospels, allēlōn, the Greek word for "one another," is used fifty-eight times in the New Testament. Paul uses it forty times. According to Getz, when the Pauline usages are grouped together, "they can be reduced to approximately twelve significant actions Christians are to take toward "one another" to help build up the body of Christ."[2]

Allēlōn is the Pauline expression of "as you wish that men would do to you, do so to them." This is the law of

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Theological Foundations of Ministry, ed. Ray S. Anderson (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1979), p. 270.

[1]W. Robertson-Nichol, ed., The Expositor's Bible, 6 vols. (Nashville, Tennessee: Sunday School Board, Southern Baptist Union, n.d.), 6:36.

[2]Gene R. Getz, Building Up One Another (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor, 1976), p. 5.

reciprocity. It is a restatement of the principle enunciated in the Sermon on the Mount, "do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you....Be merciful even as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:30,37). It is therefore the fulfilment of the command to love as He loved, the expression of unselfish sharing, irrespective of worthiness.

The Necessity of "One Anothering"

One of the themes of Scripture that supports good human relationships is humility. In humility we are to "serve one another," "edify one another," "honour one another," "prefer one another," "tarry for one another," "submit to one another," "confess our sins to one another." The human tendency is to "bite and devour one another," "provoke one another," "grudge one another," "judge one another." The overcoming of the latter tendencies and the cultivation of the former ones is much more likely to find realization when centred in groups. Humility demands intimacy, trust, and a measure of confidentiality.

"One another" is all-inclusive. No status is mentioned, no exceptions are made. It is a consistent attitude to be shared among all believers--the only attitude that is consistent with the high calling of God. It is therefore a denial of faith to manifest anything less than the attitude of God toward any other Christian. It is a word which allows for no partiality. Allēlōn forms a basis for unity. For Christians were to be "like-minded one toward another," should "have the same care one of another," based on the fact that "we are

members one of another." To forbear one another" would indicate that differences existed, but those differences were not to bring separation. The New Testament's expectation for all believers was that they "love one another (allēlous agapan). We would be correct in saying that every use of allēlōn in the New Testament would be a revelation or a denial of love. Love is not a quality of character in isolation, it describes a relationship between people.

Four times within two chapters John records Jesus' words to the disciples to "love one another." Paul passes on the command to the Romans, to "owe no man anything, but to love one another" (John 13:34-35; 15:12,17; Rom 13:8). Then it is reiterated in John's epistle in the setting of Christian obligation, using "should" and "ought." John's admonitions are based on the fact that "He (Jesus) gave us commandment." He further expresses the assurance that we "know God," have been "begotten of God," and "God dwells in us" when we share love with one another. (1 John 3:11; 4:11; 3:23; 4:7,12). Indeed Paul reveals that we are "taught of God to love one another" (1 Thess 3:12; 4:9).

The application of this principle is always relevant, because of the emotional needs of people and the unchanging nature of the gospel. We are therefore admonished to "receive one another as Christ has received us," remembering that "we are members one of another," (twice repeated). "Bearing one another's burdens" was especially a call for the "spiritual" to help the weak, but the effect of this service reached to people like Paul who was "refreshed" and "encouraged" by

others.

These details imply that no one is to be treated without respect and appreciation. People are in need of "significant others" who will support them in the conflicts of life. To fulfil the "one anothering" task so clearly committed to Christians will demand a tender heart more than a clever intellect. People in need of support, hope and encouragement need to know that others care. Peoples' needs are met most effectively by supportive people who have learned simply to "bear one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal 6:2). "We exist in and from and for one another."[1]

Apathy--a Peril Then and Now

Apathy is an indication of self-satisfaction and a denial of the claims that others have on professing Christians. It is also disobedience to the command of Scripture and indifference to the spirit of Christ, who was filled with compassion. It would indicate a stagnation of life rather than its stability. For real stability is seen when people have confidence and security to share themselves. While the typical Laodicean would say "I have need of nothing," the Christian would say, "I have need of you and you of me." The Christian conception of people in the family of God forbids indifference. "A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Luke 12:15), but it consists in relationships. A deep sense of human worth would be sufficient

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[1]John B. Cobb, Theology and Pastoral Care (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), p. 11.

motivation to arouse us from apathetic attitudes toward people.

A United Church Prepared for Proclamation

In "One Accord"

The "one accord" condition of the early church was attained through a group of people meeting together in openness. "Putting away all differences, all desire for supremacy, they came close together in Christian fellowship."[1] The condition of "one accord" could only be attained when people involved experienced forgiveness and acceptance not only with God, but among themselves. Accusation, selfish ambitions, and jealousies had to be abandoned. Each saw in the other a chosen vessel awaiting the infilling which their Lord had promised. Their preparation made Pentecost possible.

Often Pentecost is sought without the needed preparation, with disappoionting results. An independent spirit which sets people apart by themselves often without regard for other people, is quite contrary to the unifying process that changed the disciples. Possibly the "one accord" experience needs to be traced back to the three and a half years spent with Jesus. The training He gave in communication surely had much to do with the preparation for Pentecost.

Following the transfiguration experience Jesus and the disciples went to Capernaum. On arrival Jesus asked, "What were you discussing on the way?" "But they were silent;

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[1]Ellen G. White, Acts of the Apostles (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, 1911), p. 37.

for on the way they had discussed with one another who was greatest" (Mark 9:33-34). Jesus brought things out in the open and taught His great lesson on humility using a little child. Without such open discussion, understanding cohesiveness and interdependence could not have developed. No doubt recall of these incidents and the development of openness and trust continued in the pre-Pentecost meetings. These experiences must be included in the unified condition that we find in Acts.

Witnessing

Facing the challenge of world evangelism where every Christian is to witness from personal experience, there still exists the need for unity based on trust. Suspicion of motives or insistence on uniformity, imposed from without, makes unity an impossibility and talk of Pentecost a dream of past glory. There is need for mutual supporting. "Teaching and admonishing one another" cannot be interpreted as suspecting and judging one another. "The presence of Christ in the community is to be manifested in mutual edification as each member contributes to the higher life of all."[1]

Such vision has been maintained to some degree throughout the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. There has developed a broadening concept of mission. Missionary endeavour is broadly based and wide-spread. However, there does exist some dissatisfaction with available avenues

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[1]George Arthur Buttrick, ed., The Interpreters Bible, 12 vols. (New York: Abingdon, 1952-1957), 11:221.

of witnessing in a meaningful way among church members, and a desire for closer fellowship. There is a need to provide for satisfying fellowship and purposeful living.

> The individual is not lost in the crowd. Neither is he an isolated unit separated from others. The individual is the centre of our concern, but he is less than a person if he is not related to other persons in a group, bound together by a common cause and interest.

The author then refers to some young men who, after escaping from East to West Germany, asked to return. Why?

> They knew there was no freedom in the East, but they could not live without a cause, and as far as they could discover, there was in the West no cause to live for.[1]

The Christian is called to purposeful living. Participation "in the Spirit...in the same mind" (Phil 2:1,2) indicates that there will exist a common love, a common ardor, a common purpose. This perfect unity will come about only when people are inspired by the same disposition.

To be urged to win souls is a hindrance to soul winning. It may increase resistance and guilt. Witnessing is not something imposed on another person. It is a disposition and a relationship that motivates the Christian to reach out and share.

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one for another" (John 13:35). But how can people in the world witness this love if they do not have close association with Christians in communion? It is the thesis of this paper that the easiest and most effective contact is in the homes of Christians. Such contact in a

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[1]Theran Chastain, We Can Win Others (n.p.: Judson Press, 1964), p. 101.

group setting is both enjoyable and attractive to non-Christians.

Division is often the result of not knowing or understanding the other person. In a home environment people are known more intimately, are understood more completely, and are loved more fully. Perhaps that is the insight that inspired the following comment:

> By being social and coming close to people you may turn the current of their thoughts more readily than by the most able discourse....The presentation of Christ in the family, by the fireside, and in small gatherings in private houses, is often more successful in winning souls to Jesus than are sermons delivered in the open air, the moving throng, or even in halls or churches.[1]

The following statement expresses some similar thoughts:

> A whole series of studies shows that if one wishes to change attitudes and the subsequent behaviour of a group, discussion and decision where all members participate as directly as possible tends to be more effective than enlightenment or persuasion by the lecture method.[2]

There is no "one and only" method of witnessing. Each Christian has his calling. Each is equipped with gifts for service. "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given unto us" (Rom 12:6), we are called to witness. However, it is usually conceded that many gifts are lying dormant. Therefore it is the conviction of the writer that one way of motivating members to become more outgoing in life-style and witness is to have them participate in a group

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[1]Ellen G. White, Gospel Workers (Washington D.C.: Review & Herald, 1948), pp. 192-93.

[2]Mallison, p. 9.

sharing process which they will find enriching and stimulating.

It is a fact of Scripture that the witness in the world was not committed to an exclusive, professionally trained, few. Pastor-teachers exist for the purpose of training and mobilizing the members of the body. Just as it is obvious that the building up of individual members was committed to the members, not just to those especially ordained.

The evangelist and pastor of the apostolic church were to do more than proclaim the gospel. They were "to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Eph 4:12 NIV). The commission remains unaltered.

There was an age when people were accustomed to listening to proclaimers (Admittedly, people of genuine conviction will still be heard). However, this generation is more inclined toward discussion and action.

Gordon Moyes offers many suggestions of the growth of an Australian church. The suggestion which relates to this paper is "Churches grow in direct proportion to the number of face to face, small groups involving non-church people." And further, "Churches begin in homes. That is the basis of the New Testament house-church principle."[1]

This setting is therefore presented with a conviction that an effective witness will be given where Christians feel most secure.

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[1]Gordon Moyes, How to Grow An Australian Church (Australia: Schurmann Trevlyn, 1975), pp. 33-34.

Churches meet the need for belonging, but it is often felt that the need for intimacy on the level needed for effective witness is deficient. Groups help supply what is lacking.

Conclusion

The basis for applying the principles given in this chapter is to be found in groups which develop meaningful fellowship. The restoration of the image of God is encouraged through fellowship in the Spirit and with fellow-Christians. Growth is the natural result. "Bearing one anothers burdens" is made possible because members of a group move close enough to each other to understand the burdens that are being borne, and support is given. Those outside of Christ are given maximum help and encouragement within the group and Christianity becomes attractive.

We shall now investigate the dynamic forces that operate within a Christian Growth Group.

CHAPTER II

GROUP DYNAMICS

A group may be identified by the characteristics so clearly listed by Wegmeyer:[1]

1. Definable membership--it is known who is in or out of the group

2. Group consciousness--the members think about "we" and they have a conscious identification with each other

3. Shared experience--group members have at least some common idea of why they are doing what they are doing

4. Meeting of needs--this specific collection of people, either by who they are or what they are doing together, meets some needs of the group members

5. Interaction--persons within the group communicate with each other and influence each other

These characteristics need to be present before people can identify with each other and experience effective interaction. Such interaction is known as group dynamics.

Dynamics have to do with communication within a group. Through interaction, qualities of trust, empathy,

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[1]Norman E. Wegmeyer, The Art of Christian Relationships (Mineapolis: Augsburg, 1967), p. 78.

openness, love, and cohesiveness develop. Group members lose their sense of aloneness. Independence is absorbed by a group consciousness that all members are one.

These dynamics are like lines of communication established between group members. People are united to each other by unseen, but very powerful bonds. These bonds are communication factors--emotions, attitudes, desires, feelings--expressed by the language of body and mind. The result is the development of intimate relationships. There may be resistance to the development of such relationships because of negative social feelings (infra), but unless resisted the outcome is a satisfying sense of belonging.

Because every group is different it is not possible to specify the dynamics which will predominate. Each member brings into a group his/her accumulated experience. Authentic expression is encouraged. Individual ideas, needs, and feelings may be expressed which call forth a response from group members. Consequently, dynamics are constantly changing. Yet in most groups there will be a magnetic field which holds members together. While groups may differ it is possible to identify some dynamics that are generally present.

Specific Dynamics

Interdependence is a key factor that draws a number of individuals into one group. Interdependence is similar to what is called "group solidarity in some more organized groups. It is the sense of unity and integration felt by

the group."[1] Instead of "I" a "we" feeling develops. No-one is in the group merely for himself. Each becomes interested, even engrossed, in the other person. Sharing takes place, and by sharing the whole group benefits. It may truly be said of a group as of life, "you get out of it what you put into it."

Interdependence is observed when membership changes. When someone is away there is a sense of loss. Everyone notices it. When a new person enters the group members feel a certain uneasiness, the reason being that members have become comfortable with each other and a feeling of belongingness has developed. The new person tends to draw attention to himself simply because he creates a difference. A process of integration recommences until the person and group are at home with each other. Then further growth can take place.

Two studies indicate that there can be interdependance which facilitates, and interdependence which can hinder. One is promotively interdependent and the other is competitively interdependent.

> In a division of labour, interdependence exists to the extent that the task performance of each person serves as a means for the performance of tasks by others. Facilitation occurs to the degree that each person, when performing his task, allows others to perform their task; when persons perform their tasks successfully, paths are opened for the movement of others towards completion of their tasks.[2]

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[1] Lall & Lall list its components as: (1) internal cohesion; (2) unification of interests--the direction of all attention toward common goals; and (3) the extent to which the individual identifies with the group. Bernard M. Lall and Greeta R. Lall, Dynamic Leadership (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, 1979), p. 194.

[2] D. Cartwright and A. Zander, Group Dynamics: Research and Theory (Evanston, Illinois: Row, Peterson, 1960), p. 450.

So it is in groups: one person's contribution enables another person to make theirs.

Alienation is a well-known feature of ordinary living. In a group, that alienation is dissipated and vanishes. Hurts, disappointments, and childhood training may develop attitudes of isolation. This breaks down when people meet in group discussion in order to help each other.

Interdependence is the result of personality influences that cause members to conform to group expectations. It is also the result of facilitating forces within the group that set people free so that they are enabled to support and motivate each other. Most members would agree that they are more conscious of the sense of freedom and support than they are of group compliance.

Interaction and interdependence are closely linked, as are other aspects of group dynamics. It may even be said that many contributing personal forces of communication combine to make up a group dynamic. It is the interaction of individuals in the group that establish the quality of dynamics. Passivity is challenged, initiative encouraged, and positive sharing motivated.

Baird and Weinberg suggest six common characteristics of groups. They are;- perceptions, motivations, goals, organization, interdependence and interaction.[1]

Interaction takes place with more intensity and

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[1]John E. Baird, Jr. and Sonford B. Weinberg, Communication: The Essence of Group Synergy (Dubuque, Iowa: WCB, 1977), p. 4.

concentration in a problem-solving situation. A member may express a need or reveal some concern over a problem situation. A group dedicated to growth of members will immediately be motivated to support and help in this problem-solving situation. Applbaum in his chapter, "Problem Solving," says,

> A group's ability to develop a dynamic interaction will be directly related to its problem-solving behaviour. A related principle--"the other side of the coin"--could be stated like this: A group's problem-solving ability is directly related to its ability to develop a dynamic interaction.[1]

Naturally, the early stages of group life will have less in-depth interaction. But as trust develops and empathy is deepened, so interaction is concentrated. A high level of self-realization is achieved through relationships with others. "Skills in relating well to others do not just 'happen.' People have to *learn* how to interact, with one another....Our society teems with 'parallel' learning, 'parallel' living."[2] In a group the 'parallels' disappear.

Goals inspire the dirction toward their fulfillment. Each member must accept the group goal as his own. There are personal goals and task goals. A personal goal relates to the felt needs of members, whereas a task goal is service-oriented.

If a group accepts a goal of helping each other increase their sense of acceptance in the family of God, then

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[1]Ronald L. Applbaum, et al. The Process of Group Communication (Chicago: Science Research Laboratories, 1974), p. 94.

[2]Gerard Egan, Face to Face (Monterey, California: Brooks/Cole, 1973), p. 2.

there is a conscious effort put forth in that direction. There may be exhilaration and satisfaction as a member is helped, or frustration when someone cannot grasp the help offered. A member may agree to a suggested goal but through insecurity, sit and contribute nothing to discussion, reveal nothing of his own felt needs, and hinder the progress of a group. Goals must be owned by each member. Members, according to the extent of their commitment to these goals, will be motivated to contribute to fulfilment in the group.

Trust is a basic quality that enables people to relate. It facilitates by dismissing fear--the fear of rejection, the fear of not being understood, the fear of being authentic. People in a group treat each other as important and genuine. Hypocrisy is foreign to real group experience because masks are taken off, and a new self-image is formed. Being one's true self at that moment is encouraged. As a member of one group expressed it, "Three years in a group has helped me in my search for meaning, enabling me: (1)to see me (self-understanding); (2) to free me (self-acceptance); (3) to be me (self-love)."[1] Osborne expressed it well when he said,

> When you can reveal your true self, however slightly, you will find yourself accepted and loved at a new level. In addition you will come to know yourself, while revealing yourself to others, for our fear of being known by others is no greater than our fear of knowing ourselves.[2]

It takes the development of trust to enable a person

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[1]Cecil Osborne, The Art of Understanding Yourself (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1967), p. 226.

[2]Ibid., p. 22.

to risk himself, his deepest thoughts and feelings to other people. But the satisfaction and security that result, and the people-dynamic which is established makes it worth the risk involved.

Self-disclosure creates group dynamics. New attitudes toward people and interest in them reaches new heights when an individual is free to disclose how he feels or thinks in certain life situations.

Self-disclosure is not an invitation to reveal the history of the past and its darkest secrets. What is said about oneself should encourage others to "come in." It constitutes a kind of invitation to be involved with one another.[1]

There are two sources of self-revelation. Firstly, what is going on inside me (as interaction within a group is taking place), that is, how I feel, what I think about myself and the other members of the group. Secondly, what my experience and behaviour in the past has been.

Three important considerations are discussed by Egan.[2] He challenges the idea that "a person who cannot love cannot reveal himself," with the opposite--"a person who cannot reveal himself cannot love." The very sharing of the human condition--in whatever condition--pulls people together and enables love to grow. Egan also recognises that

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[1]Gerard Egan, Encounter: Group Processes for Interpersonal Growth (Belmont, California: Brooks/Cole, 1970), p. 56.

[2]Egan, Face to Face, p. 41.

trust is essential for disclosure to take place, but again indicates that no trust can be built up in a group if the participants feel that there are members who are keeping things to themselves. The silent member and the guarded one seem to hang like a dead weight around the neck of the group. It is extremely difficult to risk trusting the silent or the overly-guarded member. Egan's third observation is that self-disclosure should be organic, i.e., related to the goals of the group. The depth of a person's self-disclosure should be related to the process of establishing and developing relationships and should arise naturally from the give and take of the group process.

Self-disclosure not only reveals the authentic person, but helps that person feel at home with himself. There is hypocrisy and pretence under masks that are commonly worn. There is natural beauty and attractiveness in the person who is willing to reveal himself and accept himself as he is. Others, then, are motivated to interact with him. When all do this, a new dimension in group dynamics is experienced.

Empathy is seeing a situation through the eyes of fellow-members. It facilitates deep communication. It creates an understanding of the message behind the words. There is in-depth sharing. Egan quotes Moyeroff who says:

> To care for another person, I must be able to understand him and his world as if I were inside it. I must be able to see as it were, with his eyes what his world is like to him and how he sees himself. Instead of merely looking at him in a detached way from outside, as if he were a specimen, I must be able to be *with* him in his world, "going" into his world in order to sense from "inside" what life is like for him, what he is striving

to be, and what he requires to grow pp. 42-43.[1]

An understanding of feelings and experience must be communicated. In this way the other person senses acceptance and support. In a problem-solving communication a person is also encouraged with hope and motivated toward a possible solution. In a group setting all are moved toward the person speaking when empathy is present. Assurance is received that group members are "for" him. They care. They value that person as a fellow human being. If there is pain, comfort is communicated. If there is guilt, forgiveness is assured. If there is concern there is a caring group to help bear it.

Negative dynamics are often present in groups. Feelings of fear, distrust, or inhibitions may be hidden beneath the surface from childhood. Such things prevent open communication and prevent group dynamics from working. Osborne asserts that self-understanding is the result of self-revelation; that which we conceal from others we conceal from ourselves.[2] But self-disclosure acts like a catalyst for the releasing of other forces within a group. However, if negative feelings dominate they hinder expressions that increase positive dynamics.

Change of membership increases negative dynamics. Missing members or addition of visitors can drastically change the dynamics that operate. There will be an

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[1]Gerard Egan, The Skilled Helper (Monterey: Brooks/Cole, 1975), p. 76.

[2]Osborne, p. 226.

uncertainty and an uneasiness because members are not sure how to relate to the newcomer.

Size of the group can also have a negative effect. If too large, e.g., above fifteen to twenty, there will be a lessening of concentration of the energy spent in communication. If the group is very small there may not be sufficient interaction to motivate a group dynamic. Size of the room and closeness of the people involved may also influence the group. If there is too much space there is likely to be less closeness in fellowship. If space is too limited there may be an invasion of privacy. Everyone has a certain distance to the next person that is psychologically comfortable.

Cohesiveness is a force by which group members are attracted to each other, motivated to remain together and to share a common perspective of the group's activity.

Shepherd defines group cohesion as "the quality of a group which includes individual pride, commitment, meaning, as well as the group's stick-togetherness, ability to weather crises, and ability to maintain itself over time."[1] Cartwright and Zander are more succinct, stating simply that "group cohesiveness refers to the degree to which the members of a group desire to remain in the group."[2]

Baird and Weinberg list several factors that seem to

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[1]Clovis R. Shepherd, Small Groups (Scranton, Pennsylvania: Chandler, 1964), p. 133.

[2]D. Cartwright and A. Zander, Group Dynamics, 3d.ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 91.

contribute to the development of group cohesiveness. They are listed under three general categories as follows:

1. Interpersonal factors which describe relationships among the group members: (a) attractiveness of the members (b) homogeneity of the members (c) interdependence (d) atmosphere

2. Group factors which include: (a) group size (b) group goals (c) group activities (d) group history (e) group leadership

3. Group environment factors such as: (a) intergroup conflict (b) group status.[1]

Cohesion is the result of these factors which are important for the growth, stability, and enjoyment of the group experience.

The consequences of cohesiveness are the maintenance of the group, increased productivity, identification, less anxiety and more security, and an increased satisfaction with the group. Studies by various researchers indicate that participation was more frequent and more evenly shared in cohesive groups, that members use more first-person pronouns, give more praise, act in a more friendly manner, and engage in more co-operative communication than do members of non-cohesive groups.[2]

All this indicates the desirability of achieving cohesiveness, which then becomes a basis for the operation

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[1] Baird and Weinberg, p. 4.

[2] Ibid.

of group dynamics.

Confrontation does not mean "telling the other off." Confrontation is employed to motivate a person toward change. Two rules are worth memorizing. They are: (1) confront only if you care about the other and your confrontation is a visible sign of that care (2) confront in order to get involved with the other, as one way of establishing and developing a relationship with him. A reminder is given that it is possible to confront another with respect to his unused strengths as well as his demonstrated weaknesses. Confrontation is most helpful when the other person is led to confront himself. If support is lacking the process is devastating. But if ministered in a spirit of love it can facilitate growth.

Our tendency is toward self-defense. A growth experience takes place when the confronted person can say in effect, "What you say disturbs me, but I think I should explore it with you and the others here. If what you say is true I will need support to change."

Conclusion

It can be seen very readily by the factors mentioned, that they develop group dynamics of differing intensity and nature. The list is by no means exhaustive, but awareness of these factors enables the participants to interact effectivly.

Groups create an awareness of the other person. There is some truth in Norman Cousins' statement:

The highest expression of civilization is not its art

> but the supreme tenderness that people are strong enough to feel and show toward one another...If our civilization is breaking down as it appears to be, it is not because we lack the brainpower to meet its demands, but because our feelings are being dulled. What our society needs is a massive and pervasive experience of re-sensitization.[1]

> In the small, sharing group lies the power which enables persons to love more fully and live more creatively. This is the PEOPLE DYNAMIC. THE POWER WE HAVE TO RECREATE EACH OTHER AND OURSELVES THROUGH CARING AND SHARING. Growth groups offer a means of releasing the people dynamic to help humanize personal relationships and to help create a world in which every person will have the opportunity to develop his full unique capacities.[2]

The statement may seem humanistic, but the One who was "moved with compassion" toward needy people would also challenge us to be "fully human." Small groups offer a setting where encouraging dynamics can operate, thus augmenting the relationships and satisfying the needs of the individual life.

Before research confirmed the influence of small groups Ellen White said, "By being social and coming close to people, you may turn the current of their thoughts more readily than by the most able discourse."[3]

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[1]Norman Cousins, Saturday Review (23 January 1971) quoted in Howard J. Clinebell,Jr. The People Dynamic: Changing Self Through Growth Groups (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. vi.

[2]Clinebell, p. viii.

[3]Ellen G. White, Gospel Workers (Washington D.C.: 1948), p. 193.

CHAPTER III

CHRISTIAN GROWTH GROUP REPORT

The group idea was promoted in the Hillview Seventh-day Adventist Church by announcements before the divine service and in the church bulletin each Sabbath of April, 1981.[1] Some people responded to the announcements, but most of those who enlisted for the ten week programme were spoken to personally by the young couple who requested it, or by the writer.

Preliminary Meeting

A group of nine met as advertised, but as two young couples had previous engagements, it was decided to make this a preliminary meeting and not to present the material already planned for the first night.

At this meeting we shared our names and a little about ourselves. Group dynamics were discussed and the following goals were suggested:

1. To develop warm, accepting attitudes toward each other
2. To deepen our relationship with God
3. To share our love with fellow Christians
4. To develop confidence to share our faith outside the group

Motivation for personal growth and outreach was thus provided.

[1]The operation of a group on Friday nights had been requested originally by a young couple in the church. See appendix I for the bulletin announcements and promotion.

We read 1 Corinthians 13, and all prayed in a meaningful chain prayer.

I asked how people felt. Three single members said, "A little strange"--one of them, a new Christian, was quite open, yet a little embarrassed about the past. There was a reticence to leave which indicated some enjoyment in being together.

Instruments of Measurement Used to Determine Group Effectiveness

The following methods were used to measure personal and relationship growth:

1. The Johari Window was used on the third and last nights of the group.[1]

2. On the tenth night a questionnaire evaluated members' attitudes "three months ago" and "now" in relation to the goals of the group.

3. A questionnaire was used to test leadership, communication, people, group function, and feeling, on the first and last nights.

4. A questionnaire of eleven questions sought information on communication, personal change, estimate of the group's value, satisfaction with subject matter and relationship to group members. This was filled out during the last week by most members.

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[1]The Johari Window measures "openness to feedback" and "willingness to reveal." In other words, whether people are guarded and defensive or whether they are open and outgoing. Both are important in communication.

5. Two recordings were made which indicated the amount of communication by different members and the contributions made by each. These are good indicators of the dynamics present in the group.

Subject Matter and Its Presentation

There was an endeavour made to present matter on the horizontal and vertical planes--to encourage growth in human relations as growth takes place in relationship to God. As indicated in Chapter One, man was made for fellowship with God, but at the same time he was made a social being. This human and divine relationship is emphasised in Scripture with the clear indication that people cannot have one without the other. "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen" (1 John 4:20). The words of Jesus also indicate the double relationship. "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matt 5:23,24).

The topics for discussion were so combined that the social and spiritual subjects related as follows:

1.	Know Thyself	-	Knowing the Unknowable
2.	Hearing and Listening	-	He's Listening, Pray
3.	Accepting Others	-	I Will Accept You
4.	I Am Not Worthy	-	God's Estimate of Men
5.	I Love You	-	God is Love

6.	Depression	-	Christian Liberty
7.	Frustration	-	God's Will, How To Accept It
8.	Loneliness	-	God Is Now Here
9.	Change	-	I Am The Lord, I Change Not
10.	Apathy	-	God's Challenges
11.	Appreciation	-	Praise Ye The Lord[1]

Spontaneous statements made as the series progressed indicated that the subject matter was relevant to personal needs. The discussion questions which involved everyone enabled them to discover truth for themselves. A worthwhile contribution to the group was made as the sub-groups reported on their discussion.[2]

Size and Composition of the Group

A group of eleven people, mainly between twenty and thirty years of age, pledged to meet for ten weeks. The size of the group seemed ideal. It was the same size as the group of disciples that Jesus had chosen. Egan says that "laboratory groups usually range in size from 8 - 16 members, but optimal size is determined by the nature of the group and its goals.[3] Other researchers (or writers) very slightly.[4]

Membership of the group consisted of the writer, with

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[1]For details of the subjects presented see Appendix 4.

[2]The format of the meetings is included in Appendix 2.

[3]Egan, Face to Face, p. 10.

[4]Joseph Havens suggests between 6 - 15 people in William B. Ogleby, Jr. ed., The New Shape of Pastoral Theology, (New York: Abingdon, 1969), p. 251. Richard Wilke says, "The maximum size for random individuals is about ten; for couples'

a background in evangelism, teaching and pastoral ministry, as the facilitator; the writer's wife, a nurse and mother; and four other couples--a physiotherapist whose wife was an active primary teacher; a high school science teacher, whose wife was also a teacher; an electrician, married to a stenographer; and a theology student married to a primary teacher. The single members included a divorced young woman whose marriage broke up through lack of communication; a carpenter who was doing a year of biblical studies; a labourer working on a poultry farm--converted two years ago after three years on drugs; and a teacher who was at the time a computer operator. The group manifested differences of personality and levels of intelligence, but were similar in Christian faith.

Description of the Overall Programme

FIRST NIGHT--Hope, apprehension, passivity.

Topic: Know Thyself--Knowing The Unknowable.

The input, at first, tended to be somewhat educative. The introduction to self-knowledge included:

1. A statement to the effect that all needed to be authentic. That the mask we wear is sensed by others and hinders communication, increases suspicion, and destroys the prospect of intimacy.

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groups it should be slightly larger--about five or six couples plus the counsellor." The Pastor and Marriage Group Counselling (London: Constable, 1969), p. 201. Kathleen Heasman suggests that "a fairly comfortable size is about a dozen to fifteen people." An Introduction to Pastoral Counselling (London: Constable, 1969), p. 201.

2. A quote from Cecil Osborne:

> When you can reveal your true self, however slightly, you will find yourself accepted and loved at a new level. In addition you will come to know yourself while revealing yourself to others, for our fear of being known by others is no greater than our fear of knowing ourselves.[1]

3. "Why am I afraid to tell you who I am....I am afraid to tell you who I am because if I tell you who I am you may not like who I am, and that's all I have."[2]

4. Rabbi Zusya was on his death-bed. A fellow Rabbi asked, "Are you ready for the world to come?" He replied, "Yes! for in the world to come I will not be asked, 'Why were you not Moses?' I shall be asked, 'Why were you not yourself.'"[3]

This input was given, as indicated, to show the need and the advantage of self-disclosure, both for each person and the group.[4]

Members contributed to the Bible discussion from verses assigned to them the previous week.

SECOND NIGHT--Passive, timid, desiring.

Topic: Hearing and Listening--He's Listening, Pray.

There was a significant addition to our group this night. A new couple joined us. One tended to be intellectual and indicated a need for recognition. He looked in my

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[1]Cecil G. Osborne, The Art of Understanding Yourself (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1967), p. 22.

[2]John Powell, Why I Am Afraid To Tell You Who I Am (Niles, Illinois: Argus, 1969), p. 12.

[3]See Muriel James and Dorothy Jongeward, Born To Win (Reading, Massachussets: Addison-Wesley, 1971), p. 1.

[4]See above p. 37 for a discussion of self-disclosure and its importance for group dynamics.

direction to see if he had made an impression after some contributions. The wife was warm, bright and outgoing. They manifested a genuine affection for each other and an interest in the group.

Contrary to what could have been expected (that their inclusion would retard progress) they merged into the group, were well received, and contributed positively.

There were four people who were retiring, shy, perhaps inhibited, and made little effort to contribute. They needed support and encouragement until they could be sure it was safe to share. There seemed to be no difficult members.

The discussion in the Bible study segment was more evenly distributed than the first night. This time we had three groups that discussed the questions assigned to them. All enjoyed the smaller group setting of four or five members. They were also discussing something with which they were familiar. Reports were given from each sub-group to the main group.

An announcement was made before the meeting closed. "At the next meeting all will be given opportunity to say one thing they like about themselves." (This was delayed for three weeks).[1] One member's response to the idea was, "Just one

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[1]It may seem a mistake to have made the announcement beforehand; but it was a means of discovering group feeling. A phone call on the Sunday following indicated that the host couple felt it would be difficult for some to say what they liked about themselves. This needed some thought. Perhaps the acceptance of each other and cohesiveness of the group had not developed sufficiently to expect even positive self-revelation.

thing? Fifty would be more difficult." The inference seemed to be, "I have a very high self-image," but it may have indicated some apprehension.

THIRD NIGHT--Encouragement, acceptance, relief.

Topic: Accepting Others--I Will Accept You.

Three members were missing this night. It created a question in my mind--were they missing because we were to say something we liked about ourselves? Two were sick. (We accepted this at face value). One member was absent and offered no apology.

This night we were to discuss acceptance of others and the biblical topic, "I Will Accept You." We also planned to do the "Johari Window" questionnaire in order to gain an indication of the openness of our lives toward others and ourselves.

Group members were not asked to reveal what they liked about themselves, but discussed their willingness to reveal who they really were and their openness to feedback about themselves.[1]

Following the Johari Window we spent half an hour, first in groups, then together studying acceptance with God --this was encouraging to many.[2]

We spent a short time reflecting on any experience of rejection and how we felt. We also related experiences of acceptance and how we felt. In this atmosphere we prayed.

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[1]See Appendix 5 for details on the Johari Window.

[2]See Appendix 4 for an outline of the topic.

All prayed but one, who may have been concerned about his low Johari Window.[1]

The divorced young woman missed this meeting and had reported to a friend in the group that she felt uncomfortable in the group. We invited her with a friend home for lunch the next Sabbath.

A new member was present that night. He was a teacher, presently employed as a computer operator. He was a brother of the wife in whose home the meetings were being held. His presence improved the dynamics as he was known, accepted, open, friendly and relaxed.

In preparation for discussion at a future meeting, a handout on prayer was distributed. Each member was to quote one statement that appealed to them. It was taken from Mallison's book on small groups.[2]

The group decided to state one thing each liked about themselves next week. (We bi-passed it this night because of the Johari Window and because the next week it would introduce the topic very well).

FOURTH NIGHT--Acceptance, sharing, caring.

Topic: I Am Not Worthy--God's Estimate Of Man.

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[1]This same person had prayed on previous nights and also on succeeding nights. Following the meeting he had said, "What am I worth seeing I have done many bad things? How can you forget what you have been?" Two years ago he had been living with his girl friend and for three years had been growing marijuana.

[2]John Mallison, Creative Ideas For Small Groups In The Christian Community (Sydney: Renewal Publications, 1978), pp. 131-33. See also Appendix 3.

This programme was designed to help people whose self-esteem was low. However, the person who asked about worth the previous week was absent, as were the theology student and his wife. This was disappointing, but the discussion produced very positive dynamics. Contributions to the discussion and expressions of gratitude in prayer indicated that this was a very helpful night.

A school teacher recalled her efforts to help a child who felt he was a "nobody." Real concern was expressed and felt. From a consideration of God's creation and redemption, and our helpfulness to each other, a new awareness was awakened and higher self-worth realised by group members.

The Bible study discussion revolved around such questions as, does unworthiness mean worthlessness? Is humility self-humiliation? Does sinfulness indicate insignificance? Does self-denial mean putting yourself down? Is our idea of unworthiness Jesus' idea?

Cohesion, trust, intimacy were developing. Some were reserved, partly because of not knowing what to share that would help toward the fulfilment of goals.

The discussion was lively and some were helped as was obvious from later comments. The next day at lunch, my wife asked the member who felt uncomfortable if she had noticed more warmth in the church. She responded, "Yes, especially among the group members." Commenting on the sense of belonging she again used the words, "Yes, especially last night."

Positive group dynamics increased considerably.

People realized a responsibility to contribute to the group. They endeavoured to express themselves and not wait for the facilitator to make something happen.

One person was open enough to ask for prayer for himself and mentioned his struggle to make Christ real in his work-a-day life. Such a disclosure was helpful to himself and to others.[1]

FIFTH NIGHT--Spontaneity, freedom of expression, bursts of laughter, agreements, accepting comments.

Topic: I Love You--God Is Love.

This night began well with all contributing something they liked about themselves. While some statements were not very revealing, such as "I like the fact that I can accept myself as I am," there was still a warmth and acceptance of what each person expressed. Some contributed to a second round stating something they liked about others.

In the first round, self-acceptance or openness to others was the predominant theme. One said he used to like his hair. Now it is greying and thinning and he feels more relaxed just accepting himself as a person. In doing so he is very open to others and accepted by them.[2] The group made

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[1]Paul, we had decided, lost nothing by saying he was the "least of all saints" (Eph 3:8). In actual fact his self-esteem was high for he did not consider himself inferior to the chief apostles. (Gal 2:6).

[2]His actual words were, "I usen't to like me at one time and I was trying to change myself. But I've come to the conclusion that that's what I've got--there's certain things you can change, but not much. God accepts me as I am, and if He can accept me, then I should do it too. I like me."

various statements which indicated their interest in others, their ability to accept people as they were, and their satisfaction in sharing their fellowship.

Harmony of the spoken and the unspoken message was demonstrated.[1] Open discussion centred around words that expressed love--like, affection, fond, appreciate, admire, relate, care, respond.

The Bible discussion began with 1 Corinthians 13 and the question was asked, "What makes the love of God known?" The group divided into four for the discussion of verses that demonstrate the love of God. When reporting to the group the sub-groups expressed what love meant to them in the setting of the verses they had studied.

In conclusion I quoted Crabb who said that all have two basic needs: (1) security, (2) significance.[2] Security is based on love; significance on worth.

Prayer time was longer and very meaningful. It was encouraging to hear our divorced member thank God, "especially for tonight."

When I arrived home I wrote, "There is more reaching out to others. They are learning to trust each other on a deeper level. But still an attitude persists, I will go no

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[1]The facilitator and his wife demonstrated this by words and expression. Communication must be genuine. Words, voice and expression must agree. If they are out of harmony with each other, the person addressed receives a contradictory message. Often the unspoken message is received rather than the spoken.

[2]Lawrence Crabb, Effective Biblical Counselling (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1977), p. 72.

further than you! However, when compared with the first two nights, there is noticeable improvement in communication."

SIXTH NIGHT--Harmonious, free-flowing and liberating.

Topic: Depression--Christian Liberty.

This evening began with Scripture songs. These were enjoyed. Members were reminded that everyone was here as a helper. The goals were read with the question, "Are we on course?"

The topic of freedom and Christian Liberty was introduced with reference to the statue of Liberty--305 feet high, overlooking the entrance to New York harbour. It stands for the basic freedoms of the nation.

We concluded that we need freedom from fears and inhibitions, doubts, suspicions and inner conflicts, and we can encourage each other in attaining and enjoying such freedom.

The biblical segments were first discussed in subgroups and then presented to the whole group.[1]

It was noted from the biblical discussion that freedom was not absolute in Eden. The restriction was designed to keep men dependent on God. Further, the Ten Commandments were given when God brought man out of bondage and the law was a "law of liberty" and "not grievous." Jesus' freedom was freedom from the control of sin and a healthy independence from legalistic tradition. Liberty to Paul was from human efforts to earn acceptance and fulfil God's promises. This attitude could be equated with "works of law." While there was some

[1] See Appendix 4 for details.

intellectualizing, there was an enjoyment of the realization that Satan binds and Jesus sets people free. The discussion was free-flowing and meaningful.

SEVENTH NIGHT--Warm, friendly, spontaneous.

Topic: Frustration--God's Will, How to Know and Accept It.

The evening began with Scripture songs. Frustration on the human level and with God's will was the topic for discussion. For input a diagram of cattle trying to obtain food that was just beyond reach represented frustration. Add stimulus to try to obtain it and the frustration would increase.

It was suggested in the discussion that frustration occurs when we have a goal, but cannot attain it. It can happen in day-to-day goals or in long range goals. It was agreed that self-centredness increases frustration. The need for tolerance and understanding with others was pointed out by a teacher who needs patience with slow-learners. We concluded that life can be frustrating when our own plans and desires are not fulfilled. At times submission is necessary.

This became the setting for the discussion of God's will.[1] Sub-groups were used once again to encourage total participation.

Through that evening's interaction it was obvious that nearly all felt at home with each other. There was good motivation. The hand out, "Please Hear What I Am Not Saying,"[2] had a profound affect on some members. One of

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[1] See Appendix 4 for outline of discussion.

[2] See Appendix 6.

teachers said, "Whenever a person passes me I tend to think of their deeper needs behind their spoken words." She related this to life outside the group. There were times of intense concentration and intimacy when we were trying to understand each other.

EIGHTH NIGHT--Security, intimacy, harmony.

Topic: Loneliness--The Presence of God.

The input for discussion surrounded the word "lonely" and other words it suggests, with a reference to the comic strip "Ziggy." Tom Wilson, the creator, has Ziggy standing on a hill looking at a flower. Ziggy says, "Little flower, you look so lonesome up here on this hill all alone...all the other flowers grow in clusters in the valley...on the other hand up here you never have to worry about growing in anyone's shadow...and you're closer to the sun than they are! But then you have no one to talk to or to share with...I guess that's the price one pays for solitude and independence."

Members were reminded of a communication exercise used at a social evening at our home. Mixed pieces of a square were handed to each person. These could only be given away as the other person's need was observed. No one could ask for missing pieces. They were to wait for others to supply their need. It was a good lesson in caring and sharing. Life is like that.

The discussion followed the questions: when do we feel lonely? What is it like? "Loneliness is a sense of inadequacy--a feeling of not being sufficient by yourself." "Loneliness is a feeling of isolation--maybe just feeling

different." Most agreed that at times Christians experience loneliness. The need for groups and an experience with significant others was mentioned. The realization that worldly people also sense alienation and need caring people was a challenging thought.

Bible discussion followed in dyads (twos). There were six groups of two. On the average, more work would be done by each person. But in some cases there was less enjoyment of the fellowship.[1] Members were conscious of the presence of God and experienced a deepening appreciation of His presence.

NINTH NIGHT--Concern, support, satisfaction.

Topic: Change and Stability--Man and God.

Even in a growth group change can be a frightening experience. To change one's personality seems to bring a loss of identity and security. Nevertheless most could say, "I desire change."

The input for discussion was as follows: Change sometimes indicates fickleness and instability. It is possible to be so changeable as to be unreliable. It is possible to change for the worse. Why do some people feel threatened by change? The answer seemed to be that in routine there was security. The past seems secure. There is fear of the unknown. The need for continuity is ever present.

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[1] That was particularly so in husband-wife dyads. One wife reported that she knew what he would say! At group meetings she preferred to discuss questions with others. Thus the group would remain a unique experience to her.

We discussed some things that are always changing. The seasons--changing colours were mentioned; the sea and the tides; the sky and sunsets; the moon--(the crescent was seen that night); people--John's gospel records changed names when mature people were in a process of change.

Each member was invited to write down on a card his need and desire of change. When it came time to report, some reserve was still evident. "I will tell what I wrote down if you do," was directed at me. My response was, "I would like more spontaneity and less reserve." The response was immediate. "I have seen growth in that direction." "I remember when I first met you," etc.[1] My daughter commented on the spontaneity in our home and the openness in our family. I asked, "Have you noticed any reserve?" Some had. I then gave a little background to my life. I was a shy country boy. Four of us were to sing at the first Anzac Day concert at my school. Sports ended. The concert was to begin. I hid in the hedge. As I related this, they understood. I asked,"Am I more or less acceptable because I have needs?" One reply was, "If you had said, 'I have attained,' we may find it hard to accept you." This self-disclosure evidently helped members realise that it is safe to admit that you have needs. Afterwards, there was deep understanding and support for those who expressed themselves. Typical statements were, "I would like more confidence in myself. I know I have the ability to

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[1]Evidently, the person speaking had considered me as being quite reserved. As I remember our meeting, I had thought of him as being overpowering in his enthusiasm.

do things, BUT...." A visitor on his second night said, "I would like to understand my feelings." It was difficult for him to understand himself. Shock treatment had followed a nervous breakdown. But the group saw genuineness in his desires and gave him good support. Each sensed his need.

As a transition from the human to the divine, I read, "The Old Fisherman." He was always seeing the sea and the sky and the beach changing. He thanked God that He never changed.[1]

Three groups discussed the stability of God. Texts and guiding questions were written out on cards. The assignment was to state clearly how change takes place and why it is desirable. Some had experienced radical change and expressed themselves. We were brought face to face with 2 Corinthians 5:17, when old things passed away and all things became new, and agreed it was real and desirable. It seemed that there was more than a human dynamic present as we experienced spiritual renewal.

TENTH NIGHT-- Confrontation, insight, reality.

Topic: Apathy, Passivity--God's Challenges.

The topic for this night was appropriate even though it did not appear to motivate the same enthusiasm in communication between the group members as did other topics. The visitor from Sydney was back in hospital for further treatment, the theology student was to preach the next morning and another couple were away at Pathfinder meetings. (This

[1]See Appendix 7 for the complete essay.

was the fourth time in succession that this couple had been absent).

The subject was introduced by referring to Dr. Allen Walker's lectures at Monash University. The report in the student newspaper was that his topics did not meet their needs. It further stated, "Our concern is apathy." Another member responded, "I read something this week that is relevant, 'Change--that's the only permanent thing in life.'" But that statement was not referring to apathetic attitudes that tend to ignore the need for change. Rather, it was referring to instability, which is not a desireable change.

Motivation, interest in life, no time, the fear of disorientation, self-discipline, and priorities, entered into the discussion. It climaxed with reference to the church and the statement, "If we are dissatisfied, then we are more likely to seek a solution."

The discussion was fairly open and well distributed, with only one person without input. A pattern was developing with this young person that needed investigation.[1] The Bible study segment was designed to motivate members to respond to God's challenges.[2] He has challenged us to witness, to Christian living, to love as He loved, and to grow in Christ.

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[1]This young man had been quite open and uninhibited. It became obvious that there was now some problem. He had taken a personal interest in the divorced young woman--had always transported her--and had been a very supportive friend. From private conversation, I was to find that her problems had burdened him. The change in his life from working to student life also lowered his self-esteem.

[2]See Appendix 4 for the outline.

NIGHT ELEVEN--Alive, moving, thrilling.

Topic: Appreciation--Praise Ye The Lord.

The overhead projector was used for input to generate discussion.

The evening opened with a statement by the facilitator, "Often we hide our feelings because we are ashamed to own them or afraid that others won't understand our expressions of them. Childhood training tends to repress emotions. Society deepens that repression. Perfectionistic attitudes in the church re-inforce the resulting inhibition."

"All unexpressed emotion poisons the mind."[1]

A Force Field Analysis was then projected and discussed.[2] Discussion was very free and uninhibited as cards were given out and people responded to the following:

I FEEL. . . . . .

BECAUSE . . . . . .

AND I WANT TO . . . . . .

Some expressed negative emotions like frustration. Others were quite positive. The young man about whom I expressed concern on the previous page said, "I feel contented because I'm working again. At College I felt upset...re my self-esteem.... I felt self-conscious around people. I haven't been working." Good interaction followed.

The divorced young woman reported, "I feel unsure

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[1]Paul Tournier, The Adventure of Living (London: S.C.M., 1966), p. 88.

[2]See Appendix 8 which describes the inhibiting and facilitating forces.

of myself, because of letting people down." This again generated helpful interaction with seven members contributing directly to help the young lady concerned with her problem.

The contributions motivated personal discussion. The interaction was between people addressing people. Members were not merely throwing ideas into the centre to be picked up by anyone who may desire to contribute to the discussion. Responses were not being addressed primarily to the facilitator as in the earlier meetings. There was more direct interaction. Texts and testimonies on praise and gratitude were shared as a combined group and a meaningful prayer session followed.

The college professor who is also the Hillview Church pastor visited the group on that final night. He reported how he came feeling very tired, but went feeling greatly refreshed in body and spirit.

It was agreed to meet the following Saturday night for tea and recreation. Half way through the series we had spent a Saturday night mainly working on communication and what may be described as fun games. Both nights were most enjoyable. At the end of the series it was decided that the group would meet every second Friday night. It was further decided that they would study the books, "Basic Christianity,"[1] and "Building Up One Another."[2]

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[1]John R. W. Stott, Basic Christianity (Leicester, England: Intervarsity, 1978).

[2]Gene A. Getz, Building Up One Another (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor, 1976).

Dynamics Within the Christian Growth Group

Interaction within this group at first centred in the subject matter. The first three nights indicated that they were looking to an authority figure to make things happen. Nearly all comments were referred back to the facilitator. Questions asked to begin discussion within the group were directed back to the questioner most of the time. The sociogram indicates the development of interaction between members.[1] It is noticeable that with general input the facilitator's conversation went to the centre of the group and was taken up and returned by different members. As time went on the conversation was shared by more and more people talking personally to each other, while the whole group gave keen support.

The discussion was more evenly distributed in the biblical section when, after the first night, we broke into sub-groups to discuss topics which had guide texts and questions. Discussion was quite free and the reports back to the group were fairly open. At early meetings input was directed toward the facilitator. They seemed to be looking to me for approval. It was good to see this change.

Interdependence developed gradually. It seemed to continue development throughout the meetings. By about the sixth night there was a sense of helping one another in a growth process. We were enjoying each other's contributions to discussions and taking a particular interest in each other as individuals.

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[1] See Appendix 12 for two comparative sociograms.

The night a visitor was brought to the meeting--the one who had had a nervous breakdown--it inhibited the group dynamics. He did not communicate. Members were not sure how much they ought to involve him. He felt strange and so did others. However, the next week he was encouraged to communicate, expressed some needs, and members responded positively toward him. Interdependence had been restored and with it other dynamics such as trust and empathy, were released.

Cohesiveness was realised by the group. The host couple drove back from Sydney to be present at one meeting, though they really wanted to remain in Sydney for the week-end. After the meeting they commented, "We are so glad that we returned." Another young man phoned from Canberra to wish everyone a good night when he was away for the week-end. When members were absent the other group members missed them and signed a card to send to them. This seemed quite a spontaneous act. When someone was missing the loss was experienced by all members. It was more than the loss of a physical presence. There was a greater closeness between group members than between members and other people. This also could be illustrated by our visitor referred to above.

The liking for the group was strong enough to motivate all but two young people to continue after the ten weeks had concluded.[1]

At the beginning of the next series the new group

[1]As the Appendix and the outline of topics indicate, the ten weeks was extended to eleven so that it could end with praise.

took as one of its aims to encourage other people to begin study groups of a similar nature, indicating their liking for the group and their desire to share the group experience.

Trust developed with other attitudes. A fifth night statement suggests that a group grows together. One member said, "I will reveal myself if others do the same." She would not be the only one. Members needed to see that if they revealed their needs or problems it would not diminish the respect that others had for them. All had needs. When this fact was accepted it could then be demonstrated that all have support. When the young man stated that he wanted to understand his feelings and develop more confidence, the group helped him understand and gave him encouragement and support. The risk factor was lowered and the trust factor raised.

Negative dynamics were present at the beginning and it was found that they could not be eradicated by advice or theoretical understanding. They only disappeared as they were replaced by positive ones. Fear, as with the divorced young lady, was being overcome, as the concluding nights demonstrated. Self-disclosure took place particularly as people saw the need for, and safety in being open and trusting each other.

Conflict may have positive or negative results. It can generate interaction or create fear and withdrawal. As would be expected, there was little, if any, real conflict in our group. Differing opinions surfaced on a few occasions, but nothing that created ill-feelings or misunderstanding.

Freedom of expression and spontaneity developed. These were displayed in discussion and laughter. Comments

made when incidents were related demonstrated that the group could enjoy each other's experiences. At other times there was intense earnestness and genuine concern.

Content influenced the group dynamics on occasions. Some topics were meeting more needs and generating more interest than others. But it could also be observed that people felt more attraction for each other and were more eager to communicate--whether to help another person or to share their own ideas and experience.

Confrontation was experienced on a few occasions but not in a fault-finding way. Any confrontation was from a desire to be involved with the other person and thus give support. Believing Clinebell's statement, that the most effective confrontation is self-confrontation,[1] preserved the group from traumatic experiences.

Conclusion

It was with a sense of accomplishment that the group said farewell on the final night. The science teacher confirmed and clarified my thoughts when he said, "When I heard of a pastor running a group I thought, 'Why are they becoming involved in our field? I felt some resistence to the idea. But I have enjoyed the group. It has been a help to me.'" All but two, the college student and the divorced person were to continue in another series.[2]

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[1]Howard Clinebell Jr., Basic Types of Pastoral Counselling (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon, 1966), p. 227.

[2]It may be of interest to note that the divorced person

Leadership in the future was to be shared. However, all agreed that the presence of the original facilitator would help keep them on course.

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three weeks previously had suggested that the group function over a longer period as she felt shy and it takes longer for her to become open with people.

CHAPTER IV

EVALUATION OF THE CHRISTIAN GROWTH GROUP

Evaluation of the group involved the use of the Johari Window,[1] the Small Group Evaluation Sheet,[2] a questionnaire testing the fulfilment of the four goals of the group,[3] and a questionnaire designed by the facilitator to assess various attitudes of members and the influence of the group experience.[4]

Some subjectivity is inevitable in an evaluation of any group experience. For example, possible bias toward improvement of group interaction could affect responses to some questions. Circumstances also affect results. One member of this group was not well when she did the second Johari Window. She indicated afterwards that her condition probably influenced her answers. Nevertheless, members endeavoured to be honest and the evaluation sheets agreed with other observable factors, such as participation in discussion and non-verbal indications.

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[1]The Johari Window was developed by Joe Luft and Harry Ingham. It assesses "Willingness to Reveal" and "Openness to Feedback"--both important in interpersonal relationships. See further Appendix 5.

[2]This evaluation sheet was prepared to test performance at particular meetings. It was used on the third and tenth nights. See Appendix 9.

[3]See Appendix 10.

[4]See Appendix 11.

Johari Window

The results of this indicator are as follows: The group average "willingness to reveal" on the third night (first test), was exactly 50%. "Openness to feedback" averaged 60%. The two lowest scores were 26% and 28% for "willingness to reveal." The same members scored 38% and 52% for "openness to feedback." Seven weeks later on the tenth night the group average had risen 6% which is a significant improvement. The member who was 26% rose to 48% for "willingness to reveal" and from 42% to 62% for "openness to feedback." The member who registered 28% rose to 46% and from 38% to 44%.

Those who were quite outgoing and non-defensive at the beginning remained about the same on the second test. One who was 72% and 78% on the first test remained exactly the same. Others rose slightly. It is likely that their attitudes and contributions had a positive affect on other members who had achieved only low scores.

There was one person who was quite outgoing at the first testing who dropped 24% on the second on "willingness to reveal." Some fall could have been expected due to his lack of sharing during the last few nights of the group. However, it was not due to group influence, but possibly to his inability to help the divorced young woman with whom he was friendly. It seemed that he had made her problems his own. His "openness to feedback" remained the same.

One quiet person who had been away for four weeks with Pathfinder outings and had returned on the tenth night when

we conducted the second test remained exactly the same.

The group leader's conclusion concerning this evaluation is that the group experience was a considerable aid to those who were shy, lacked confidence, or needed friendship. For those with higher self-esteem and fewer personal problems the group became a place of fellowship and a centre of ministry. The facilitator's own shift in "willingness to reveal" from 60% to 83% is also evaluated on this basis. A lead in openness was given and the result was observed on the second testing. This indicates that the group experience provided an opportunity for leadership growth as well as participant growth.

The Small Group Evaluation Sheet

This sheet was used on the third and tenth nights.[1] It measured leadership, communication, an estimate of the personality of members, and personal feelings. It also asked members to evaluate the climate of the particular meeting and to describe it in one word.

The variation in grading indicated a fairly high degree of subjectivity in some areas. However, when averaged the results seem fairly accurate and in harmony with the facilitator's personal observations.

1. The Leadership grading seemed inconsistent. Four members indicated that it "centred in about half the group," and six that it was "dominated by one person." The early part of the discussion was dominated by the leader with the

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[1] See Appendix 9.

biblical discussion reasonably well shared. However, even in the biblical discussion there was a tendency for members to refer discussion back to the facilitator. On the part of the facilitator there was a tendency to contribute more than was necessary at this stage. It may have been possible to use more silence, which would have generated more input from members, instead of having them rely on the leader.

Marking the results from 1 to 4 across the page--from the less to the more desireable--the total score on the third night was 45%. This shifted to 75% on the tenth night, on the second comparative scoring. On the tenth night two still rated the "group-leadership" as "dominated by one person." This seemed out of harmony with facts as the sociogram would indicate.[1] There could have been a misunderstanding of the word "dominated." By that time leadership had developed a much lower profile.

2. Communication, by the third night, had increased considerably. The total score was 67%. The second testing on the tenth night revealed a shift to 85%.

There was much better participation in the first part of the programme the night the first evaluation was made. This pleased members. The scoring was much higher than it would have been on the first two nights. The sense of improvement may have raised this score a little above reality. At this stage most members would not have been aware that there was potential for so much more improvement. This could

[1]See Appendix 12.

also have raised the scoring.

3. Membership rating gives a clear indication that group members were satisfied with each other. The score rose from 79% to 90%, possibly as a result of knowing and trusting each other on a higher level. Better communication was an observable result. A comparison of Sociograms is a clear indicator of this progress.[1]

4. Goal accomplishment by the group was noted as 73% at the first testing and 89% at the second.[2] Two who marked "working hard at its task" on the first assessment, may have been influenced in their assessment by their own performance. Lack of experience--not knowing how much more improvement could be made--possibly influenced some to mark a little higher than they would have done otherwise.

5. The Affective area (group personal feelings--marked "I felt" on the sheet), indicated that most folk on the first assessment, were integrating and feeling quite at home with each other. The evaluation sheet rises from 80% on the first grading to 90% on the second. It is noticeable that four still marked the "somewhat accepted" area on the tenth night in preference to "completely accepted and understood by the group." Yet the group was very accepting. These may have been ones who were more retiring in nature--thus they were unable to grow as others had grown in their feelings of acceptance.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] See Appendix 10.

6. The one word to describe the climate of this meeting changed considerably on the second assessment. The words to describe the first evaluation were: "reserved," "progressive," "anticipation," "slightly tense," "a little unsafe," "warm," "hopeful," "cautious," "friendly" (twice). The words used to describe the second evaluation were: "helpful," "warm" (twice), "interesting," "relaxed," "wonderful," "friendly" (three times), "genuineness." The group had moved from a tentative, expecting attitude, to a more satisfied fulfilment of their hopes.

7. Suggestions were invited for future groups. Few answered this, which could be taken to indicate satisfaction or apathy. One suggested "more time looking at individual member's and experiences." This person may have been more secure than other group members. However, some personal problems were surfacing and members were finding support from each other as the meetings progressed. The suggestion may have been based on the fact that we cannot "bear one anothers burdens" if we do not know what the burdens are.

A suggestion to "direct more questions to the quiet people" may have been better phrased "become more involved with the quiet people."

The same person who suggested on the first evaluation, "we need more than ten weeks," stated on the second evaluation, "I feel that we're just getting down to the essential levels of communication that is needed in this group. Every week I feel that we are growing more supportive and accepting."

Evaluation In Relation To Goals[1]

The questions on each goal were, "In relation to these goals, where do you think you were three months ago? Where are you now?" On a scale of one to five (registering less to more desirable), the significant details are as follows:

Goal One: To develop warm accepting attitudes toward each other. All moved from two to three three months ago, to four at the end of the programme.

Goal Two: To deepen our understanding of God in personal relationship. The group members shifted from one to three, or two to three, or from two to four. One remained on two.

Goal Three: To share our love with fellow Christians. Most members moved from two to three, or from two to four, or three to four. One person remained on two and one moved from one to five. The latter being a very significant and meaningful change.

Goal Four: To develop confidence to share faith. The results here were that three moved from one to two, two stayed on two, one moved from two to four, and one from two to three, one from three to four, one from four to five, and one from two to five.

On a separate questionnaire,[2] to the question, "How

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[1] See Appendix 11.

[2] Ibid.

well do you think we have met our goals?," the answers were all positive, except for one person. He was not present the first two nights when the goals were decided or the sixth night when they were reviewed. (This may indicate the importance of being sure that the goals are understood, accepted, and reviewed by all members). The comments ranged from "yes" to "exceptionally well." One comment, recognising that the fourth goal registered least progress for some, said, "We haven't invited others in, but we needed to get to know each other first."

For the time the group was functioning there was good progress made toward the fulfilment of the goals. However, each member would have admitted that no one experienced the ultimate realization, for progress has no limits.

Information--Please Answer These[1]

This sheet was to be answered during the last week. It gave room for an overall impression of the programme. The following comments are of interest.

The first question on communication was marked "fairly open," "more open," "very open," "free flowing." No one felt that the communication was just "fairly open." The question on "changes in yourself," was marked in all three places by some. the two most marked alternatives were "more openness" or "more interest in others." The third question on what you would miss if you dropped out of the group, the

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[1]Ibid.

two most marked were "fellowship" and "interpersonal warmth." "Chance to grow," was marked once, and one person marked all four possibilities. The fourth question resulted in having all areas marked--some marking up to three areas. The question relating to self-acceptance met with a positive response.

The "human level topics" were evaluated in the sixth question. "Self-acceptance," "loneliness," "love," "freedom," "self-worth," were listed as most helpful.

The "biblical discussion" topics were evaluated in the seventh question. One said they "helped her get a lot out of a few texts." Another, "They've been very personal and relevant to our relationship with God and relationships with people." Another had seen "new aspects to various topics."

One person had felt more distant from one member of the group, but explained that "she was away (for four weeks) when the rest of us became very close."

Conclusion

I agree with Alfred Jacobs who said, "The research on personal growth groups suggests that homogenous groups composed of friendly, expressive, and person-oriented members are consistently more effective than homogenous groups which lack members with such attributes."[1] He then suggests "empathy and warmth" as "two important ingredients in the process." We were fortunate to have some such members in our group and much of the enjoyment and growth of the group was due to them.

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[1]Alfred Jacobs and Wilfred W. Spradlin, The Group As Agent of Change (New York: Behavioural Publication, 1974), p.329.

CONCLUSION

The group from the Hillview Church demonstrated that deep satisfaction was experienced by those who met together for Christian fellowship. Having been promoted by the church, the group experience united people to the church rather than fragmenting their interests. There were no signs of dissatisfaction, no criticism no conflict.

The group validated the fact that man is a social being. He functions best in community. While isolation and independence hinder growth, a group experience gives incentives to develop and to serve Christ unreservedly.

Two months after the completion of the first series of topics the two members who did not continue in the group still lean toward group members. One has expressed his intention to attend future meetings. The other has expressed appreciation of the experience.

It was in the mind of the facilitator that closer bonds of love and fellowship would develop. Thus groups could become a means of preserving membership from apostasy. This conviction has been deepened by seeing the firm bonds formed between members. Contrariwise, it would seem that with more time groups may become effective centres for evangelistic outreach.

The group learnt to trust and share openly with each other. They experienced love, concern and understanding.

Their knowledge and appreciation of biblical subjects increased and they became more friendly toward each other. Some experienced better relationships with others outside the group.

As facilitator, I learnt to trust God to guide in a group process. To endeavour to control the process would have been to destroy it. The dynamics experienced were the result of free interaction. I observed how people help each other to share and how people in a group become very empathetic. I saw how cohesiveness develops with interdependence. The facilitator grew together with the group. Part of the enjoyment of the group experience was to see people liberated and contributing freely.

People in every congregation are lonely and unfulfilled. There are also people with potential for leadership who need opportunities for sharing. There are youth on the verge of discovery--the discovery of themselves, of life's meaning and purpose, of God's open door of service for them. My future ministry will include groups that become growth centres for such people. Different kinds of groups will be needed to meet the needs and interests of people.

It is still my conviction that where groups are fostered by the church, members will grow and become more closely united to that church. A church that trusts members and allows them freedom to explore the depths and the wide horizons of truth will be rewarded with loyalty. Campbell Morgan asserted that "The moment men try to cramp the church's operations within rules and regulations they cripple and spoil

her."[1] Groups tend to set people free. I trust that facilitators will be found and trained so that more people may enjoy the freedom that God believes in.

Thus, in summary, we have found that the small group process significantly met the problem (outlined in the introduction) concerning unfulfilled social needs among some members in a congregation.

In relation to the purpose and importance of the study, it was found that fellowship needs were adequately fulfilled; spiritual awareness of God's provision and of our responsibility was heightened; relationships and influence of members within the church increased; personality improvement was observed among some members--they received the support needed for problem-solving and the encouragement needed for Christian witnessing.

The study was important to the facilitator as it gave him experience in group leadership and taught him the value of groups in ministering to people's needs. He saw how small groups provide enjoyable fellowship and growth for an important segment of our church. He was convinced that such groups could be used more widely.

There are two recommendations that result from this study: (1) That a comparative study be made with an older age group (2) That the facilitator be prepared to stay with the group for a longer period of time. This would ennable him to

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[1] G. Campbell Morgan, Living Messages of the Books of the Books of The Bible (London: Fleming H. Revell, 1912), p. 87.

encourage members in witnessing and to train potential leaders.

As facilitator of the group, I was encouraged by the participation, the Christian spirit, and the satisfying friendships that remain to motivate me in future group ministry. Further, I assure those who read this report that the small group experience offers them similar rewards in growth and service if they understand and apply the principles and dynamics of small group relationships.

APPENDIX 1

Christian Growth Group Promotion

Promotion

Lay Activities Segment 4th April, 1981

Church gatherings are very important, but small group gatherings are also important. The New Testament church life was close and personal. Fellowship was a caring, warm, accepting experience. There was no such thing as independent living in the body of Christ, but there was a close communal spirit where each encouraged the other.

I have often quoted, "We do not use the social talent as we should." Then I read in Gospel Workers, page 193, "Preach less and educate more, by holding Bible readings, and by praying with families and little companies. By being social and coming close to the people, you may turn the current of their thoughts more readily than by the most able discourse. The presentation of Christ in the family, by the fireside, and in small gatherings in private houses is often more successful in winning souls to Jesus than are sermons delivered in the open air, to the moving throng, or even in halls or churches."

Both for our own spiritual growth and for bringing others to personal faith, we are beginning what we may call Christian Growth Groups, where in a warm, accepting environment we will dicuss topics of personal growth on an interpersonal and spiritual level.

Geoff told of his sense of need, seeing he can't get to prayer meeting, and that he would be sure to attend if he could have a meeting in his home. He invited others to join them each Friday night.

I quoted Heb 10:24-25 and challenged members to encourage one another.

Jesus knew what He was doing when He chose twelve "to be with him...." Our first ten-week series will begin near the end of this month. If you sense a need and would like to attend, just see Geoff or Sheryl today and we will give more information to that group next week.

(Each name used in this appendix is a pseudonum (the writer excepted).

Announcement in Hillview Church Bulletin

11th April, 1981

CHRISTIAN GROWTH GROUP

As Pastor Martin announced last Sabbath he will begin a discussion and Bible Study Group near the end of this month in Geoff's and Sheryl's home. People will find openness and acceptance, a close human bond and a new spiritual awareness, resulting in a support system that will build confidence before man and God.

When we cease to grow we begin to die!
Be "like a tree planted by the waters." GROW!
See Geoff and Sheryl for more information or
Phone Pastor Martin on 73 2362.

p.s. This group will be suitable for all faiths or for those with no faith at all.

Announcement in Hillview Church Bulletin

18th April, 1981

CHRISTIAN GROWTH GROUP

The Bible says, "Grow!" What we may not have realised is that growth takes place best in groups where acceptance, understanding, and encouragement is offered and support given.

Biblically, we will enjoy the reward of discovery and application. It may sound different, even new, but really it is what the early Christians did. They met at the temple or synagogue, but enjoyed closest fellowship in their homes.

You will be welcome next Friday night, 7 o'clock at Geoff and Sheryl's home.

Announcement in Hillview Church Bulletin

25th April, 1981

CHRISTIAN GROWTH GROUP

WHY? A growth group is designed to facilitate growth. People with problems find support and acceptance. Seekers find answers. The lonely find that here they are loved and are really significant. Security develops. Joy is increased as friendships grow and all discover that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Non-Christians entering such a group find warmth and understanding and want to belong. New Christians

find belongingness. Mature Christians find reward in sharing and even they learn and grow. A Christian life is dynamic--growth continues for life.

A FINAL WORD NEXT WEEK

Lay Activities Segment 25th May, 1981

The parables indicate extensive as well as intensive growth. Acts indicates extensive--the gospel spreading out. The Epistles of the New Testament indicate intensive growth --the gospel growth in the life.

The Epistles speak of growth in the following ways:
growth in faith
increase in love
increase in the knowledge of God
strengthening in endurance and joyful patience
growth in fruits of righteousness
growth in grace
increase in comfort
increase in the work of the Lord
increase in thanksgiving
increase in hope

A new dimension to personal growth is experienced in small groups. Clyde Reid who wrote "Groups Alive--Church Alive" was talking to a men's club on the value of small groups. An elderly man stood up at the back of the room and cried out, "We don't need any such thing in this church! I was in the hospital for six months this year, and I want you to know I twice received a personally signed card from our minister. Not only that, but the mens' club even sent me flowers." Clyde Reid commented, "For a human being to be content with so little of the milk of human kindness speaks of a life-long starvation."

I predict that this will become one of the strongest units in the Adventist Church and one of its most successful evangelizing agents, because people are looking for more than truth, they are looking for warmth, acceptance and love.

Before committing yourself to growth through this group it would be good if you checked out some of the topics and the type of programme that is proposed.

So we invite you to come to the Pastor's study at the close of the service and you can then tell Geoff and Sheryl if you plan to come next Friday night at 7 o'clock. (We can accept another six at the most).

. . .

Note: This announcement may have been more effective if a couple of questions had come from the congregation such as:
"Will there be Bible study and what topics?"
"Will this group finish in ten weeks? Or is it something that will continue?

APPENDIX 2

Typical Outline of Programme

Typical Outline of Programme

Input:	Sometimes preceded by Scripture Songs Some statement, experience, or diagram that would awaken discussion of the human aspect of the topic.
Discussion:	This was designed to involve as many of the group as possible.
Bible Study:	Twice all studied together Twice in dyads Seven times in sub-groups of three or four.
Reports:	The sub-groups then reported their conclusions to the whole group.
Prayer:	Usually all prayed briefly.

Drinks were served.

APPENDIX 3

What Prayer Is

What Prayer Is

Prayer is listening. It is being still to know that God is God.

Prayer is contemplation. It is thinking about God in long periods of silence.
It is deep thought and meditation with expectation.

Prayer is a fleeting thought directed to God.

Prayer is a deep unuttered desire within a human heart.

Prayer is talking to God. It is a "child" talking to a loving Heavenly Father.

Prayer is an instantaneous cry for help.

Prayer is conversation. It is both talking and listening.

Prayer is communion. It is a meeting between two who are in love. The Eternal Source of all Agape Love reaches down to touch a human being who makes an inadequate response.

Prayer is the faltering words of a person with no faith probing for God of Whom he is uncertain, in a search for reality and meaning.

Prayer is a grain of faith moving a person to ask and expect miracles.

Prayer is breathing, spiritually. "It is a Christian's vital breath, the Christian's native air."

Prayer is affirming God. It is bringing delight to God--making Him glad.

Prayer is saying, "I'm sorry" to God and asking for grace not to repeat the failure.

Prayer is asking forgiveness for God's sake as well as for our sake.

Prayer is bringing the big challenges and responsibilities of life to God and receiving His divine enablement.

Prayer is having faith to bring the mundane "non-event," the cares for insignificant "lilies of the field," the "birds of the air" and how much more for us.

Prayer is both asking and receiving.

Prayer is bringing to God my deep concern for those who are near to me, my family, my close circle of friends.

Prayer is acknowledging my membership in this global village and praying as specifically as I can for my brothers and sisters in this world who are unknown to me by name.

Prayer is laying before God a concern for our enemies.

Prayer is the way to inner serenity--it is the calm found in the "eye" of the hurricane, not an escape from the turmoils of life.

Prayer is where I meet my risen Lord--where I learn to know Him and the power of His resurrection.

Prayer is a child's simplest form of communication with God.

Prayer is an art which none of the saints felt they had fully mastered.

Prayer is praying when we don't feel like talking with God because we believe He is always loving us, always listening, always wanting to bless us with His grace and love.

Prayer is a family conversing with God. It is the deepest of human fellowship.
Prayer is keeping my contribution short when praying with others to help their concentration and giving them a fair share of the conversation with our Father.
Prayer is honesty and openness with God, both when I pray in solitude and when I pray with others.
Prayer is work.
Prayer is believing the "Holy Spirit within us is actually praying for us in those agonising longings which never find words."
Prayer is where our hope is confirmed, our faith strengthened, our love enriched, our authenticity increased, and a depth and sensitivity given to life which can be found nowhere else.

John Mallison, "Creative Ideas" pp. 131-133.

APPENDIX 4

Outline of Overall Programme

FIRST NIGHT

Knowing Yourself

Input: Everyone has a need to be authentic. The "cover" to how we feel is sensed by others. It hinders communication, increases suspicion (for others don't understand what they sense) and destroys the prospect of intimacy. But "...when you can reveal your true self, however slightly, you will find yourself accepted and loved at a new level. In addition you will come to know yourself, while revealing yourself to others, for our fear of being known by others is no greater than our fear of knowing ourselves." Cecil Osborne, "The Art of Understanding Yourself," p. 22.

"Why am I Afraid to Tell You Who I Am?"

"I am afraid to tell you who I am because if I tell you who I am you may not like who I am, and that's all I have."

Rabbi Zusya

Rabbi Zusya was on his death bed. A fellow Rabbi asked, "Are you ready for the world to come? "He replied, "Yes! for in the world to come I will not be asked 'Why were you not Moses?' I shall be asked, 'Why were you not Zusya?'"

Sharing

We know ourselves and others know us when we share our inner selves--when we take off our "masks."

My Personal Profile System

Indicates a lack of dominence. I feel that this may be because I was the sixth in the family with four big brothers. I would rather be led than to lead.

Does anybody else share these feelings?

Discussion: how to understand ourselves.

Knowing God and Discussion

1.	Job 23:3	The human search
2.	Jer 31:34; Heb 8:11	The Divine Promise
3.	Ezek 6:10,13: 7:24: 29:38	Known by Actions

4.	1 Cor 1:21	Worldly wisdom insufficient
5.	Phil 3:7-10	Paul's thirst
6.	John 17:3	Its importance
7.	John 14:7-9	Known through Jesus
8.	1 John 4:16	The place of love
9.	2 Tim 1:12	It is personal
10.	Jer 29:13	The condition--seek

Assignment: Our Bible assignment for the next week is to compare the Lord's Prayer with the Pharisee's and the publican's prayer.

SECOND NIGHT

Hearing and Listening

Input: I saw a comic strip. Two people were talking together. On one chair there was only an ear. The person belonging to it was behind the chair wondering what to say next.

It is important that we really listen to each other--even understanding what the other person is feeling behind what he is saying.

It shows interest in and respect for the other person.

Discussion: Has anyone ever sensed that they were not being listened to?
How did you feel?
What would you say would help us to listen to each other?

He's Listening, Pray

Bible Discussion:

(Group 1) Is it good to pray "Lord make me worthy?
Did the tax collector know that he was justified?
cf. Lord's Prayer and Tax Collector's Prayer.

(Group 2) Was the Pharisee "like other men?" Luke 18:9-13.
cf. Rom 11:32
Upon what two things did he base his self-concept. cf. Luke 17:11.
cf. with the Lord's Prayer.

(Group 3) What was the reason behind the parable?
What attitude does God look for?
Is humbling yourself, self-depreciation?
cf. with the Lord's Prayer.

THIRD NIGHT

Accepting Others

Discussion Questions: Have you ever felt rejected?
How did you feel?
What did you do?

Johari Window

Results: The "openness to feedback" average score was 30, while the "willingness to reveal" average was 25. The two losest scores, both men, were 21 and 13, and 19 and 14.

Discussion: How can we accept and face our strengths and weakensses? Do we tend to hide from ourselves? Why?

"I Will Receive You"

Bible Discussion:

(Group 1) What does it mean to have Christ's righteousness imputed to you? Study Romans 4.

(Group 2) What is our response to God's reconciliation? Study Rom 5:10-12.

(Group 3) How are we accepted by God? Study Eph 1:4-8.

FOURTH NIGHT

"I Am Not Worthy"

Input: Self-concept and self-image include the thoughts, attitudes, and feelings we have about ourselves. Self-esteem means something slightly different. This term refers to the evaluation that an individual makes of his or her worth, competence and significance. Whereas self-image and self-concept involve as self-description, self-esteem involves a self-evaluation.

Causes of Low Self-esteem

1. A faulty theology. Humility is equated with self-condemnation, unworthiness is equated with worthlessness, sinfulness is equated with insignificance, that normal self-love is sinful, that feelings of inferiority are desirable for committed Christians, and that self-

crucifixion means put yourself down--or up on a cross.

2. Sin and guilt destructive to self-worth.

3. Past experience of willfulness and failure.

4. Parent-child relationship.

5. Unrealistic expectations.

6. Faulty thinking.

7. Community influences.

Discussion: Self-disclosure--a circumstance where I felt inferior. How it made you feel. What you did to overcome it.

God's Estimate of Men

Bible Discussion: (In Dyads).
1. Rev 4:1; 5:2-4,9,12. Does unworthiness mean worthlessness?
2. Matt 5:5,24,25. Is humility self-condemnation? John 13:13. Is humility humiliation?
3. Luke 5:8,10; Mark 12:7. Does sinfulness indicate insignificance?
4. Matt 22:39. Self-love is sinful.
5. Gal 2:20. Self-denial means put yourself down. Matt 16:24. Self-crucifixion means put yourself down.
6. Luke 7:4-9 That our idea of unworthiness is Jesus' idea.
7. Eph 3:8; Gal 2:6. That comparison with others reveals our worth.

Biblical Reasons for Self-worth

1. Made in the image of God.
2. Redeemed at infinite cost.
3. Loved while enemies and sinners Rom 5:6-19.
4. We are sons of God John 1:12.
5. God has a purpose for us.

How do you feel about that?

Prayer of thanks.

FIFTH NIGHT

I Love You

Round about: Say something you like about yourself.
Say something you like about somebody else.

The spoken and unspoken message must agree.

Words that express love.

God Is Love

Read 1 Cor 13.

Bible discussion:

(Group 1) Read 1 John 4:8,16-21. What can you discover about the love of God and its results?

(Group 2) Read Rom 5:6-10. How would you answer a little child who said, "If you are naughty God will not love you." Does our sin influence the degree of God's love?

(Group 3) Read John 3:14-17. Does condemnation or sacrifice demonstrate love? Apply this to our living.

Reports from groups.

Conclusion: Crabb said that all have two basic needs: (1) Security (2) Significance. Security is based on love. Significance is based on self-worth.

Prayer Circle.

SIXTH NIGHT

Freedom

Scripture Songs.

Reminders: That everyone here is here as a helper
Our Goals.

Input: The Statue of Liberty is 305 feet high overlooking the entrance to New York harbour. It stands for the basic freedoms of the nation.

Discussion: Does freedom have guidelines?--safety checks? Does freedom offer incentives? Does freedom offer development? Does freedom mean responsibility?

Christian Liberty

Bible Discussion: (In groups of three and four).

(Group 1) What freedom did man enjoy before sin? God gave man a free will--how free? Did God give man a free will so he could fail? Gen 3:1-5.

(Group 2) Discuss: Do the Ten Commandments restrict liberty? Ex 20:1 indicates that Israel was brought "out of bondage" and given the Law. James 2:10-12 speaks of the Law of liberty and 1 John 5:3 that "His commandments are not burdensome."

(group 3) What is the significance of Jesus' statement, "If the Son shall make you free you shall be free indeed"? It was suggested that Jesus offers personal freedom from the burden of sin and guilt.

(Group 4) Gal 4:21-51. What do these verses mean? What liberty is offered? Abraham tried to fulfil God's promise by his efforts. Is this a type of legalism?

Conclusion: Set me free and I will love you: restrict me and I can't.

Prayer Circle.

SEVENTH NIGHT

Frustration

Input: Overhead Projector--Force Field Analysis. Cattle are hindered from reaching their food. If a stimulus is added, the frustration is multiplied.

Cards were distributed:

I feel. . . . . .
Because . . . . . .
And I want to . . . . . .

Discussion:

1. What is frustration?
2. When does it occur? It was decided that frustration occurs when we have a goal, but cannot attain it. It can happen in every day life or in life goals.
3. Does self-centredness increase frustration? How?
4. Do others cause frustration? How do we deal with it? Understanding, love and patience.

God's Will

Bible Discussion:

(Group 1) Are there times when we see frustrating circumstances as hindrances to God's will and endeavour to change them? Matt 19:26. Consider in church situations and evangelism? 2 Cor 12:7-9.

(Group 2) Are there times when we submit to frustrating circumstances--believing this is God's will? Examples of Moses and Israel--Life today. Consider Gethsemane. Mark 14:32-39. Jesus' attitude John 5:30. Paul's attitude 1 Cor 4:19.

(Group 3) Is God frustrated by evil? Does He reveal impatience? Ps 78:22,41. God was limited. Gen 6:5-7. cf. 2 Pet 3:9.

Think: Is it possible that doing something you don't want to do could be frustrating? What did God have to do? What does God want to do for us? "Thy will be done."

EIGHTH NIGHT

Loneliness

Input:

1. Loneliness--What words can you see in it? "one", "only", "alone", "no-one." In the comic strip "Ziggy" by Tom Wilson, its creator, has Ziggy standing on a hill looking at a flower. Ziggy says, "Little flower, you look so lonesome up here on this hill all alone....All the other flowers grow in clusters in the valley...on the other hand, up here, you never have to worry about growing in anyone's shadow...and you're closer to the sun than they are! But then you have no one to talk to, or to share with...I guess that's the price one pays for solitude and independence."
2. Communication exercise: Squares cut into different shapes, mixed and shared. Each person must observe the pieces needed by others. No one is allowed to ask, but must wait to be offered the missing pieces. Each must observe the needs of the other person. Life is like that--it can only be given away.
3. When do we feel lonely? What is it like?

4. A believer is never alone.

The Presence of God

(Group 1) Find an assurance of God's presence in Psalm 23. What are the results? "I will fear no evil."

(Group 2) Scan Joshua 1. What does God's presence do? Joshua was told to "fear not" and to "be of good courage."

(Group 3) In Acts 17:22-28 Paul reveals the presence of God. How?
"He is not far from every one of us."

(Group 4) Read John 14:16-18. Share your thoughts on the presence of Jesus.
The Holy Spirit was to be a "helper", "comforter".... He reveals the truth about God.
He comes and we are not alone.

(Group 5) Share with us from John 16:31,32. What assurance did Jesus have when He was to be forsaken?
He faced a trial of loneliness when the disciples would leave Him, believing He was not alone.
"My God, why has Thou forsaken me?" This phrase was discussed.

(Group 6) What difference does Matt 28:20 make to the gospel commission of verses 18 and 19?

(Group 7) Gen 28:15,16 indicate that Jacob was surprised he discovered that God was with him. Why don't we experience more of God's presence? He is near.

Sharing.

Prayer Circle.

NINTH NIGHT

Change and Stability

Input: Change sometimes indicates fickleness, instability. In Gen 49:4, Reubon is mentioned as being "unstable as water"--(not knowing his mind). Is it possible to be so changeable that we are unreliable?

Is it possible to change for the worse. Why do some people feel threatened by change? People feel security in routine. The past was secure (presuming the past was right)! Fear of the unknown. Need of consistency--constancy, stability.

Can you think of some things that are always changing? Seasons, colours, sea and tides, sky and sunsets, the moon.

Write down your inner need and desire for change.

Some people see change as "change and decay..."

Transition: "The Old Fisherman." (See Appendix 7).

Man and God

Biblical Discussion: The everlasting gospel and covenants.

(Group 1)
Stability.
Mal 3:6 The unchanging God.
Heb 13:8 The unchanging Saviour.
What may we understand by the unchanging nature of God?
How does this understanding affect us?

(Group 2)
Effective change is beyond man.
Study Jer 13:23 (the leopard cannot change its spots).
Heb 12:17 Esau could not repent.
Why is man unable to change?
(1) Man is not spiritual.
(2) He is bound by fruits of past actions.

(Group 3)
Study 2 Cor 3:18. Does this text indicate growth? State why the change is desireable? Is there a relation between this verse and Rom 12:2?

Have we all experienced 2 Cor 5:17?

Prayer Circle.

TENTH NIGHT

Apathy--Passivity

Input:

1. Have you ever known anyone who is like a sponge? Irresponsive, unappreciative.
Why may they be like that? What can be done for them--or us?

2. The Laodicean Problem. I am rich--increased with goods. I have need of nothing. What did they lack? Self-understanding, spiritual appreciation.

God's Challenges

(Group 1) God's challenge to witness.
Jesus' challenge to preach the gospel.
Matt 24:14; 28:18-20; Rev 14:6; John 12:32.
Is this a challenge to move out and associate, or to separate and isolate?
Does Jesus' challenge motivate you?
Apply it in prayer.

(Group 2) The challenge to Godly living and genuineness.
2 Pet 3:11,12; 1 Thess 1:7,8.
Does this motivate you?
Apply it in prayer.

(Group 3) God's challenge to love as he has loved.
John 13:34,35.
How has He loved? "He gave of Himself to people."
Who are we to love? (One another).
1 Thess 4:9. Is it right to inhibit love?
Does this motivate you?
Apply it in prayer.

(Group 4) The challenge to growth.
1 Thess 1:3; 3:6; 4:1,10 (more and more).
2 Thess 1:3 (faith grows exceedingly).
Does this motivate you?
Apply it in prayer.

Prayer Circle.

FINAL NIGHT

Gratitude and Praise

Input: Expressions of appreciation often embarrass people. Why? Is it right for a person to accept praise? Praise is beneficial to mind and body.

Bible Discussion: The whole group together. Luke 15:7,10 (rejoicing is similar to praising). Ps 150 (everything is to praise God. Rev 5 (Praise is the atmosphere of heaven).

Expressions of praise.

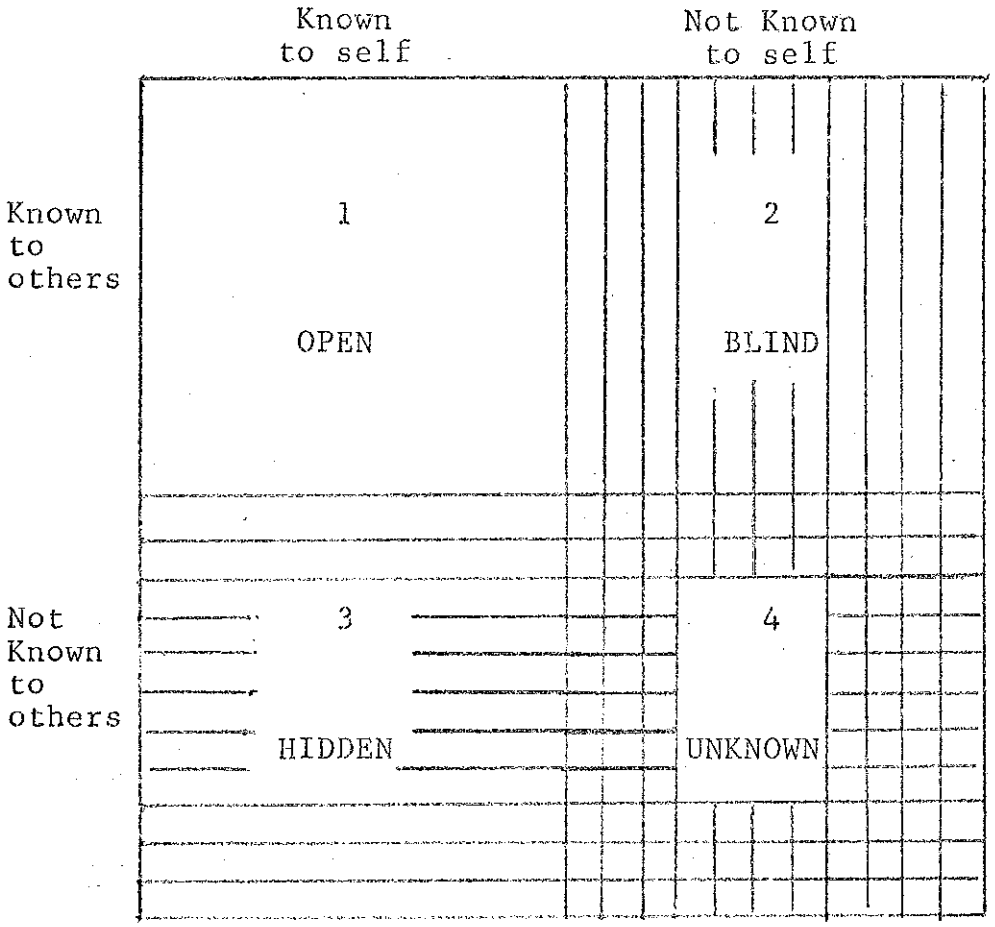
Prayers of praise.

APPENDIX 5

Johari Self-awareness Model

NOT FOR CIRCULATION

Johari Window



The purpose of the Johari Window is to reveal to the individual the extent to which he is willing to reveal himself to himself and others, and the extent to which he is open to receive feedback from others.

Positive group experience which increases acceptance and trust, and which overcomes inhibited tendencies increases the area of free activity and decreases the hidden and unknown areas.

APPENDIX 6

Please Hear What I'm Not Saying

Please Hear What I'm Not Saying

Don't be fooled by me.
Don't be fooled by the face I wear.
For I wear a mask, I wear a thousand masks, masks that I'm afraid to take off, and none of them are me.
Pretending is an art that is second nature with me, but don't be fooled, for God's sake don't be fooled.
I give you the impression that I'm secure, that all is sunny and unruffled with me, within as well as without, that confidence is my name and coolness is my game, that the waters are calm and I'm in command, and I need no one. But don't believe me. Please don't.
My surface may seem smooth, but my surface is my mask, my ever-varying and ever-concealing mask,
Beneath dwells the real me, in confusion, in fear, in aloneness.
But I hide this, I don't want anybody to know it.

I panic at the thought of my weakness and I fear being exposed.
That's why I frantically create a mask to hide behind a nonchalant sophisticated facade, to help me pretend, to shield from the glance that knows,
But such a glance is precisely my salvation. My only salvation. And I know this...
That is, if that glance is followed by acceptance, if it's followed by love.
It's the only thing that can liberate me from myself, from my own self-built prison walls, from the barriers that I so painstakingly erect.
It's the only thing that will assure me of what I can't assure myself, that I'm really worth something.
But I don't tell you this, I don't dare. I'm afraid to.

I'm afraid your glance will not be followed by love and acceptance.
It's the only thing that can liberate me.
I'm afraid that you will think less of me, that you'll laugh and your laugh will kill me.
I'm afraid that deep down I'm nothing, that I'm just no good, and that you will see this and reject me.
So I play my games,--my desperate, pretending games with a facade of masks, and my life becomes a front.
I idly chatter to you in the suave tones of surface talk.
I tell you everything that's really nothing, nothing of that which is everything, of what's crying within me.

So when I'm going through my routine, do not be fooled by what I'm saying.
PLEASE listen carefully and try to hear what I'm NOT saying, what I'd like to be able to say, what, for survival, I need to say, but I can't say.
I dislike hiding. Honestly I do.
I dislike the superficial, phony game.

I'd really like to be genuine and spontaneous, and me, but you've got to help me.
You've got to help me by holding out your hand, even when that's the last thing I seem to want or need.
Only you can call me into aliveness.
Each time you are kind and gentle and encouraging, each time you try to understand because you really care, my heart begins to grow wings, very small wings, very feeble wings, but wings. With your sensitivity and sympathy and your power of understanding, I can make it.

You can breathe life into me. I want you to know that. I want you to know how important you are to me, how you can be a creator of the person that is me, if you choose to.
Only you can wipe away from my eyes the bleak states of the breathing dead.
Please choose to. You alone can remove my mask, you alone can release me from my shadow world of panic and uncertainty, from my lonely prison. So do not pass me by.

Please do not pass me by. It will not be easy for you. A long conviction of worthlessness builds strong walls. The nearer you approach me, the blinder I may strike back.
It's irrational, but despite what the books say about man, I'm irrational.
But I'm told that love is stronger than the strongest walls, and there lies my only hope.
Please try to beat down those walls with a firm hand, but with gentle hands for a child is very sensitive, and I AM s child.
Who am I, you may wonder? I am someone you know very well. For I am every man you meet and every woman you meet.

Ronald B. Adler & Neil Towne, Looking Out/Looking In.

APPENDIX 7

The Old Fisherman

The Old Fisherman

The old fisherman lived on a deserted stretch of beach. He had always lived there. His face was leathery from years of exposure to the sun and wind; his hair was white and his beard thick and bristly; his eyes were deep grey, and his hands gnarled and knotted like the driftwood that lay scattered along the sand.

One morning the old man sat on his over-turned row-boat on the beach watching the sand that shifted in the gentle breeze. He thought of the now-vanished imprints left by hurrying feet the previous evening and said, "Sand, why are you so capricious, always changing, never the same?"

As the morning wore on, the old man fished from his boat. The water sparkled and rocked the little boat gently. He thought how the day before the sea had been angry and tossed, pounding and howling like a small child having a tantrum, and he said, "Sea, why are you so capricious, always changing, never the same?"

Afternoon came, and the old man continued to fish. The sky became grey and sad. He thought how in the morning the sky had rejoiced, celebrating with bright blue and gold, and he said, "Sky, why are you so capricious, always changing, never the same?"

That night the old man gazed up into the heavens, past the patches of clustered stars, into the darkness as if to penetrate it and see God, who is so powerful and great, yet such a kind and understanding Friend. He thought how years before God had been so powerful and great, yet such a kind and understanding Friend, and he said, "God, You are not capricious, but never changing, always the same!"

The old fisherman turned and went into his cottage and lay down and slept while the ever-changing sand blew and drifted and changed the topography of the beach, the ever-changing sea sighed and sang restlessly, and the ever-changing sky blinked lights on and off.

And the never-changing God kept watch.

Anonymous.

APPENDIX 8

Force-field Analysis

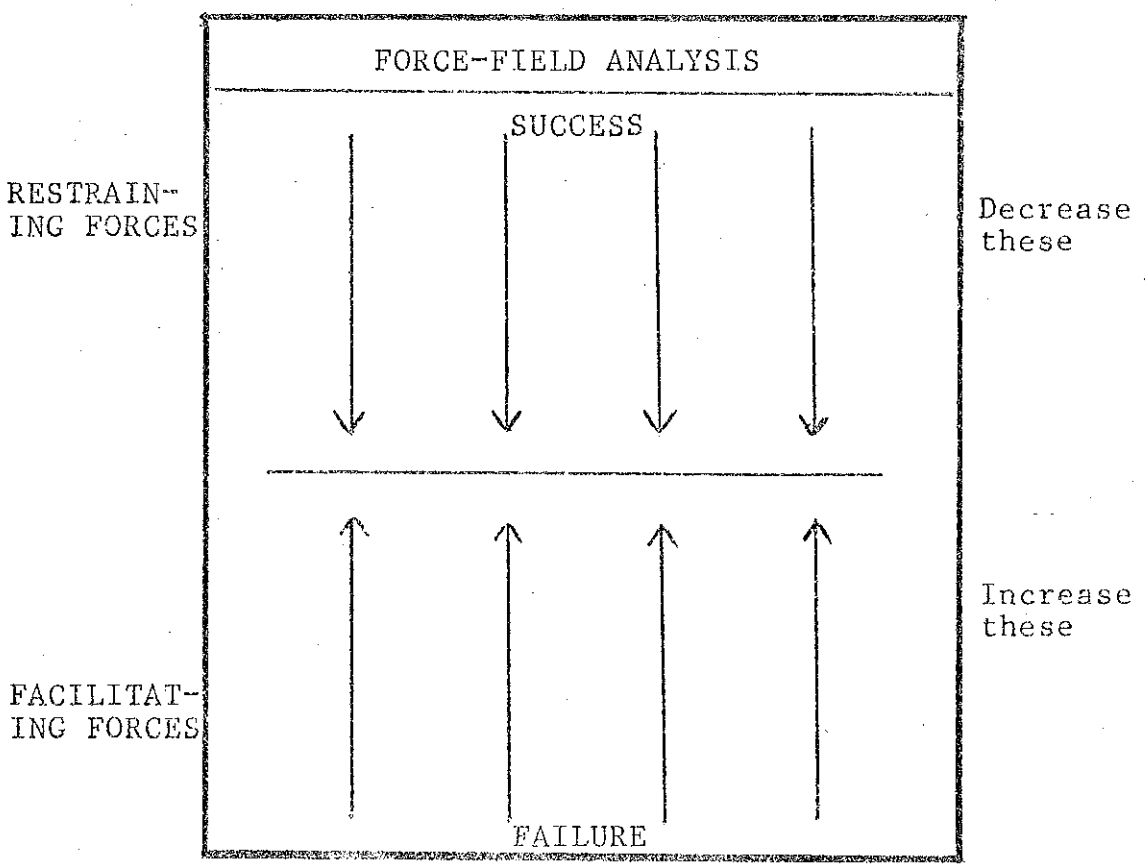
Force-field Analysis

(From over-head projector)

OFTEN WE HIDE OUR FEELINGS BECAUSE WE ARE ASHAMED TO OWN THEM OR AFRAID THAT OTHERS WON'T UNDERSTAND THEM. CHILDHOOD TRAINING TENDS TO REPRESS EMOTIONS, SOCIETY DEVELOPS IT AND PERFECTIONISTIC ATTITUDES IN CHURCH RE-INFORCE THIS INHIBITION.

(You are not supposed to feel this way).

"ALL UNEXPRESSED EMOTION POISONS THE MIND." Tournier.



APPENDIX 9

Small Group Evaluation Sheet

Small Group Evaluation Sheet

(Circle one category for each statement)

In this meeting:					
1.	LEADERSHIP WAS	Dominated by one person	Dominated by a subgroup	Centered in about half the group	Shared by all members of the group
2.	COMMUN-ICATION WAS	Badly blocked	Difficult	Fairly open	Very open and free-flowing
3.	PEOPLE WERE	Phony	Hidden	Fairly open	Honest & authentic
4.	THE GROUP WAS	Avoiding its task	Loafing	Getting some work done	Working hard at
5.	I FELT	Misunder-stood & rejected	Somewhat misunder-stood	Somewhat accepted	Completely accepted & understood by the group

6. The one word I would use to describe the climate of this meeting. . . . . .

7. Suggestions: . . . . . .

APPENDIX 10

Goal Attainment Evaluation Sheet

Goal Attainment Evaluation Sheet

In relation to these goals, where do you think you were three months ago? Where are you now? Please tick.

1. Develop warm accepting attitudes toward each other.
   (3 months ago) 1. . . 2. . . 3. . . 4. . . 5. . .
   (Now) 1. . . 2. . . 3. . . 4. . . 5. . .

2. Deepen our understanding of God--relationship.
   (3 months ago) 1. . . 2. . . 3. . . 4. . . 5. . .
   (Now) 1. . . 2. . . 3. . . 4. . . 5. . .

3. Share our love with fellow Christians.
   (3 months ago) 1. . . 2. . . 3. . . 4. . . 5. . .
   (Now) 1. . . 2. . . 3. . . 4. . . 5. . .

4. Develop confidence to share faith outside the group.
   (3 months ago) 1. . . 2. . . 3. . . 4. . . 5. . .
   (Now) 1. . . 2. . . 3. . . 4. . . 5. . .

Do you have any personal goals that you would like included in the next series? Please list.

. . . . . .

. . . . . .

. . . . . .

APPENDIX 11

Assessment Questionnaire

Assessment Questionnaire

Please answer these questions:

1. What changes have you noticed in the group communications? Is it fairly open? More open? Very open? Free flowing?

2. What changes have you noticed in yourself? More confidence? More openness? More interest in others?

3. What would you miss if you dropped out of the group? The outing? Fellowship? Chance to grow? Interpersonal warmth?

4. How has the group contributed to your spiritual life? Know God better? Seen new truths in Bible? Found God waiting for me to reach His way? Longing to learn more?

5. How has the group contributed to your self-acceptance? I understand myself more. Accept myself knowing I will grow. I see more purpose in my existence.

6. In what ways have the human level topics been a help? Have you been able to accept yourself as you are? Are you able to accept painful memories? Are you more able to identify your feelings? What topic did you think was best? . . . . . .

7. In what ways have the Biblical discussions been helpful? . . . . . .

8. Do you feel more distant from any member of the group? If so, do you know why? . . . . . .

9. Is there any aspect of our meeting you would like to change? . . . . . .

10. How well have we met our goals? . . . . . .

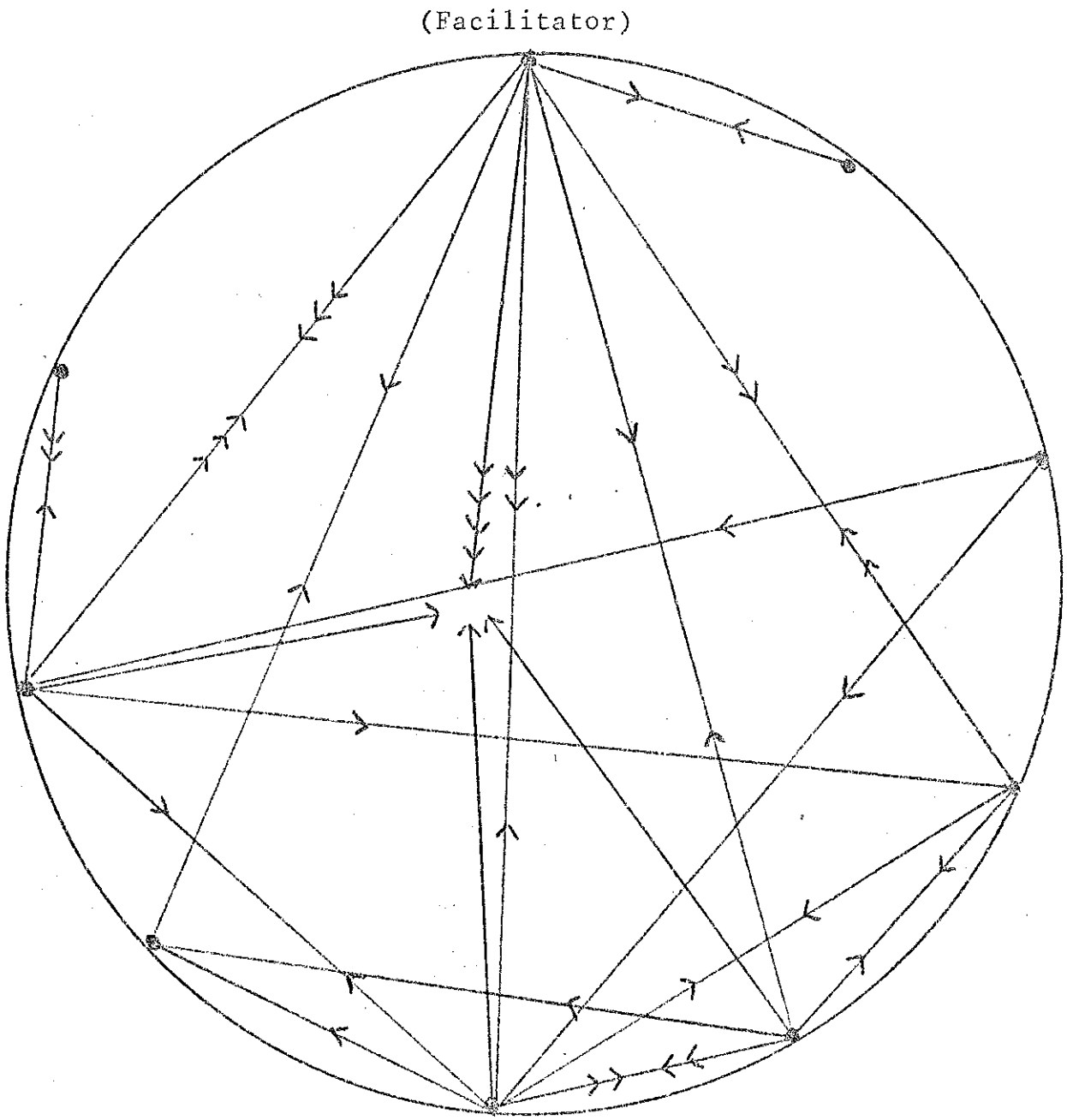
11. What have you done to prepare someone else for an invitation to join our group? . . . . . .

(Please write on the back of this sheet if you have any suggestions for the conducting of my future groups.

APPENDIX 12

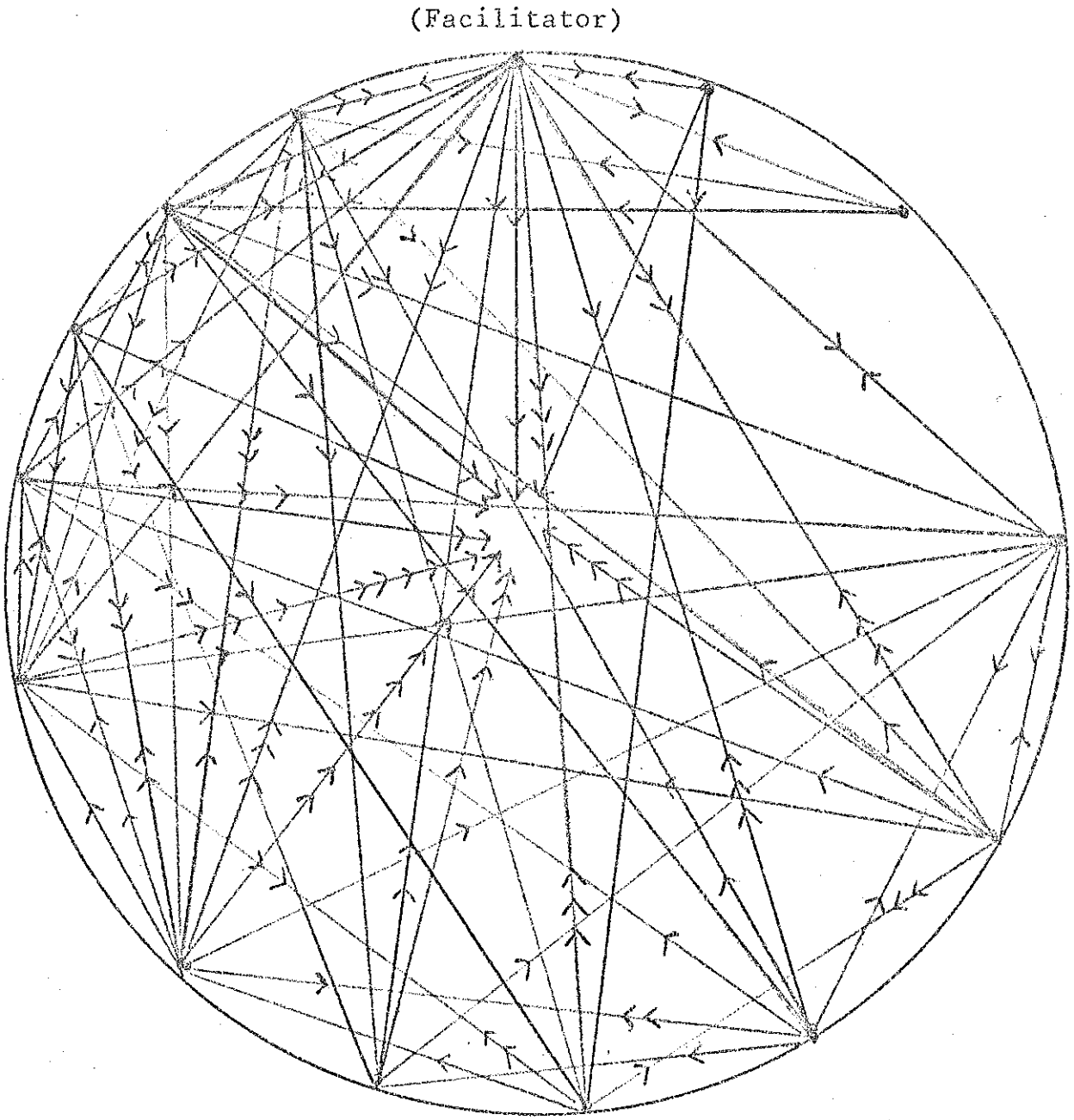
Sociograms

Sociogram



(This sociogram was taken on the third night, which indicates the flow of inter-action).

Sociogram



(This sociogram was taken on the tenth night, which indicates the improved free-flowing inter-action).

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