

Purpose in Groups

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I. Introduction.

- A. Philips Brooks: *“Do not pray for easier lives, pray to be stronger men...pray for tasks equal to your powers, then the living of your life will be no miracle, but you shall be a miracle.”*
- B. The burden of every group should be trusting God for miracles in men
- C. As the individual matures, the group occurs.

II. The first distinctive of a group: people.

- A. Involves people who are different.
- B. Differences account for dynamics and distinctives of the group.
- C. We must become students of our message and students of men.

III. The second distinctives of a group: purpose.

- A. Much of ministry is characterized by the slimy ooze of indefiniteness.
- B. Without clear objectives, you are just as foggy with groups as you are with preaching.
- C. Your objective must be more sharply focused than spending time with men.
 - 1. What are your objectives within a group?
 - 2. Example of a group that the speaker left because no one was aware of the purpose.
 - 3. Do not multiply meetings; make them meaningful.
- D. Goals must be:
 - 1. Well formulated
 - 2. Clearly understood.
 - 3. Embraced.
- E. Evaluation of a group.
 - 1. Do your group members understand the purpose?
 - 2. Do they feel that the purpose is important?

a. If you cannot convince a man that the group is worthy of a night of his week, you are culpable before God for wrenching him from his home.

b. Every man needs a cause.

3. Do they feel that the purpose can be achieved?

F. Three characteristics that test an objective.

1. It must be brief enough to remember.

a. If you cannot remember it, you will never accomplish it.

b. Personal example of a pastor who wrote “What are you doing to these people?” on the pulpit to focus his objective.

2. It must be clear enough to be written down.

a. A pencil helps you think clearly.

b. Generalities are the sign of a weak mind—Socrates.

c. Personal example of speaker requesting a wife to write down the reasons that she wanted to divorce her husband.

3. It must be specific enough to be achieved.

a. It must have realism to it.

b. It must ideally have some bite sized elements.

c. Doing this tells you where you are going.

e. The reason that you are able to do certain objectives at the secondary level is because you have achieved objectives at a primary level.

G. Purpose always determines procedure.

1. As the group changes, your objective changes. As your objective changes, your procedures change.

2. The biggest challenge of education is not teaching truths but dislodging lies.

3. Repeated exposure must be emphasized at each level.

a. Focus on quality rather than quantity.

b. Make sure that the student knows the basics well before they move on to new material.

H. Stages in receiving an idea.

1. Rejecting the idea.
 - a. Expect resistance in sharing your principles.
 - b. Personal example of speaker convincing an elder to pray for a group that he was resisting; a horse cannot pull a cart and kick at the same time.
 - c. The church is overrun with self-appointed fruit inspectors.
2. Embracing the idea - people become passionate when they get involved.
3. Maintaining perspective.
 - a. You need to maintain perspective.
 - b. Example of seminary students returning from internships.

IV. Answers to audience questions.

- A. It is always important that you know where you are going.
- B. If your disciples go through the process, they are most interested in carrying it out.
- C. Helping a person discover gifts concerns:
 1. Teach him the Scriptural teaching concerning gifts (Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4).
 2. Expose him to a variety of experience.
 - a) Just because someone has a gift does not mean they can use it at every level.
 - b) A personal example of a teacher who could not teach younger children but was effective at teaching college students.
 3. Tell him to seek the recognition of spiritual gifts by Spirit-controlled men.
 4. Tell him to trust the leadership of the Holy Spirit in his life.

V. Different groups take different purposes and, therefore, require different procedures.

- A. Some groups need information to be given.
- B. Other groups need information to be sold.
 1. You want this group to interact more.
- C. Other groups still are focused on problem solving.

Application questions:

1. What is the purpose of your ministry?

2. What are the objectives of your ministry? How do they measure up to the three tests the speaker offers? Be specific.

3. If the purpose of your ministry has been focused, ask yourself what procedures should follow. List some of your procedures and discuss them with others. Will these procedures accomplish your objectives?
