

ORGANIZING AN ARMY

This newsletter is a biblical form of organization for mission work. I will not call it a blueprint but rather a collection of biblical ideas to maximize the effectiveness of mission work. Ancient Israel was given a form of organization to help lift the burden from Moses.

“So I took the chief of your tribes, wise men, and known, and made them heads over you, captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, and captains over fifties, and captains over tens, and officers among your tribes.”—Deuteronomy 1:15.

Not only was this a civil move, it was also the same structure that was used for battle.

“And Moses was wroth [very angry] with the officers of the host, with the captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, which came from the battle.”—Numbers 31:14.

The Structure

Most of our focus will be upon the captains of hundreds, fifties, and tens. The structure would be ten people, with a leader, and nine followers. Then leaders of tens would gather in groups of five to speak and plan. From this group, they would select one leader to be a leader of fifty. The leaders of fifty would converse together, so that all their plans were in harmony; and there would be a third person, a leader of one hundred. This leader is to be of the one hundred he leads, but not a leader of ten or fifty. He is to serve beside his one hundred fellows. The burden of the work would be upon the leader of hundreds because he would only have two people he was to directly lead. The captain of thousands would be over ten leaders of hundreds.

“Saul chose him three thousand men of Israel; whereof two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and in mount Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin: and the rest of the people he sent every man to his tent.”—1 Samuel 13:2.

Jonathan, the son of Saul, was a leader over a thousand. Abner was the cousin of King Saul and the commander-in-chief of his army, which was over a thousand, then Saul himself was over a thousand. Under Saul’s leadership, a thousand men were not always present with them. King Saul’s army size var-

ied. Turning our focus again to the groups of ten, Jesus sets us an example:

“And He called unto Him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits.”—Mark 6:7.

The groups of ten would be paired by twos. Therefore, a leader of ten would be over five groups of two and one group he would directly lead. This seems to also be the case in the story of Jonathan.

“Now it came to pass upon a day, that Jonathan the son of Saul said unto the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over to the Philistines’ garrison [troops to guard a particular location], that is on the other side. But he told not his father.”—1 Samuel 14:1.

The church is to be organized for work; and what better way than after the order of ancient Israel?

“We now need skilful generals to organize into working companies the Lord’s believing children. Nothing must be looked upon as too great for us to undertake, if the Captain of the Lord’s host plans the work and arranges the battle and leads us forth, “terrible as an army with banners” [Song of Solomon 6:4, 10]. Every movement will be a victory. We need Jesus as our constant leader.”—*Testimonies to South Africa*, 44.

“Young men and young women, cannot you form companies and, as soldiers of Christ, enlist in the work, putting all your tact and skill and talent into the Master’s service, that you may save souls from ruin? Let there be companies organized in every church to do this work.... Will the young men and young women who really love Jesus organize themselves as workers, not only for those who profess to be Sabbath keepers, but for those who are not of our faith?”—*The Signs of the Times, May 29, 1893, pars. 6-7.*

The Captains

The captains of fifties and above should not be young and inexperienced; they should be “wise men, and known.” These men should not be desirous of ruling over those under them.

“Let us all remember that we are not dealing with ideal men, but with real men of God’s appointment, men precisely like ourselves, men who fall into the same errors that we do, men of

like ambitions and infirmities. No man has been made a master, to rule the mind and conscience of a fellow being. Let us be very careful how we deal with God's blood-bought heritage."—*Christian Leadership* 27.2.

Leadership in the kingdom of God is not about wielding power but serving others. The captain of ten should be picked by the vote of the ten members of the group. Should problems arise with the captain, he can be voted out if needed. Or, for the purpose of gaining experience, the captain's "hat" could be rotated amongst the ten. The captain should be one who will make those under him his councilors. He should be afraid of making decisions without advice or prayer. When making difficult decisions, he should consult other captains of tens, fifties, or hundreds.

"For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in multitude of counsellors [counselors] there is safety."—Proverbs 24:6.

"Every purpose is established by counsel: and with good advice make war."—Proverbs 20:18.

The groups of ten should never fight over leadership. If something like this happens, the leader of the fifties would need to take counsel in order to find the source of the strife and remove the person or situation responsible for this.

"Wisdom is better than weapons of war: but one sinner destroyeth much good."—Ecclesiastes 9:18.

"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."—James 3:17.

The wisdom that is better than weapons of war is the six principles on which a wise choice can always be made. It is done in faith and love (obedience to the Ten Commandments)? Is it merciful? Is it the Truth? Is it humble? Does it show contempt for evil? Is it self-sacrificing? If anyone in the group of ten is showing strife and contention, they should be removed or placed under someone of experience. Loyalty to Christ and respect for leadership are the fruits of a wise leader. Such a leader would be qualified to keep an eye on troublemakers, even if it means making the person their own partner in the work.

"Now, just now, is the time when the perils of the last days are thickening around us, and we need wise men for counselors, not men who will feel it duty to stir up and create disorder, but who cannot possibly give wise counsel and organize and arrange that every stirring up shall bring order out of confusion, and rest and peace

in obeying the Word of the Lord. Let every man be found in his true place, to do some work for the Master, according to his several ability."—*Country Living*, 27.3.

The work of the captain of ten is to improve the effectiveness and practical skills of his ten. He should make opportunities to teach them new things, constantly looking for ways to support their work. Whether this be through cooking, cleanup, or encouragement, he would also be responsible for recruiting more people for any job that is too big for a group of ten. He should be a man of action that shrinks from no job or duty. It is helpful for the captain to be an elder. Thus, he could work to encourage the membership to help and even have the ability to raise funds in the church, if necessary.

The Ten

Every member's abilities should be considered; and teams of two, if at all possible, should remain together. This allows members to get used to one another's style. Membership should be comprised of Seventh-day Adventists who want to be doers of the Word. God especially wants the youth to be at the forefront [leading position] of the work. Thus, a special effort should be made to recruit them.

"As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth."—Psalm 127:4.

The groups of ten should have no more than eight young adults, preferably five. They should be partnered with older, more experienced workers. This will allow them to rapidly gain experience. The leaders of such groups should be "mighty men," strong in the faith, instant in prayer, men of principle, and men of wisdom. Groups should consist of a variety of ages and experiences.

"Let young men and women and children go to work in the name of Jesus. Let them unite together upon some plan and order of action. Cannot you form a band of workers, and have set times to pray together and ask the Lord to give you His grace, and put forth united action?"—*Youth's Instructor*, August 9, 1894, par. 3.

The groups of two should be prayer partners. The groups of ten should study the Bible together, letting the Holy Spirit lead the discussion. Friday evening is an ideal time for such a study. They should also unite in prayer at least once a week, to ask God for grace in their efforts.

It is really unnecessary that any member of the groups, other than perhaps the captains of hundreds or thousands, to be church leaders in paid positions. These positions would take more time than the average person has.

"Paul set an example against the sentiment, then

gaining influence in the church, that the gospel could be proclaimed successfully only by those who were wholly freed from the necessity of physical toil. He illustrated, in a practical way, what might be done by consecrated laymen in many places where the people were unacquainted with the truths of the gospel. His course inspired many humble toilers with a desire to do what they could to advance the cause of God, while at the same time they supported themselves in daily labor. Aquila and Priscilla were not called to give their whole time to the ministry of the gospel, yet these humble laborers were used by God to show Apollos the way of truth more perfectly. The Lord employs various instrumentalities for the accomplishment of His purpose, and while some with special talents are chosen to devote all their energies to the work of teaching and preaching the gospel, many others, upon whom human hands have never been laid in ordination, are called to act an important part in soulsaving.”—*Acts of the Apostles, 355.1.*

The groups of two should not feel the burden that they are the only ones working and that they must give their time wholly to the work of God. If a group of two is unable to complete a task or follow up with some other form of the work, they can notify the captain of ten, who can take appropriate measures. If he cannot complete the task, or find one among his ten to complete the task, he can refer it to the captain of fifty, who would see if it can be followed up through one of his other forty, and so on. In selecting a partner, also consider the location. Groups of two should be close to one another, so they can do work that is nearby during the week. Even if a church has only one group of ten, God will use such soldiers for a mighty work. Gideon only had 300 people under him, and Jonathan also led an army largely composed of volunteers in victories against the Philistines and Amalekites, but he primarily relied on his armor-bearer for assistance. The armor-bearer’s primary role is to assist in combat by carrying extra weapons and a shield.

“For there is no restraint [limit or lack of freedom] to the Lord to save by many or by few.”—1 Samuel 14:6.

The Work

All work should be started in the same way—plan, organize, and execute [carry out, perform]. The efforts are not to be focused on outreach only, but also on “in-reach.”

“To those who have been engaged in this work, I would say: Continue to work with tact and ability. Arouse your associates to work under some name whereby they may be organized to co-operate in harmonious action. Get

the young men and women in the churches to work. Combine medical missionary work with the proclamation of the third angel’s message. Make regular, organized efforts to lift the church members out of the dead level in which they have been for years. Send out into the churches workers who will live the principles of health reform. Let those be sent who can see the necessity of self-denial in appetite, or they will be a snare to the church. See if the breath of life will not then come into our churches. A new element needs to be brought into the work. God’s people must realize their great need and peril, and take up the work that lies nearest them.”—*6 Testimonies, 267.*

God wants us to take up the work that is nearest us. Groups of ten should consider methods of outreach and work that are best suited to their area—simple, helpful, and effective. They may consult other leaders of ten for methods they or others are using. The Bible gives us a blueprint for the work we are to do:

“Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?”—Isaiah 58:6-7.

“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”—James 1:27.

Ellen White says this:

“Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, ‘Follow Me.’

“There is need of coming close to the people by personal effort. If less time were given to sermonizing, and more time were spent in personal ministry, greater results would be seen. The poor are to be relieved, the sick cared for, the sorrowing and the bereaved comforted, the ignorant instructed, the inexperienced counseled. We are to weep with those that weep, and rejoice with those that rejoice. Accompanied by the power of persuasion, the power of prayer, the power of the love of God, this work will not, cannot, be without fruit.”—*Ministry of Healing, 143-144.*

The Plan

4 Planning should be thorough but not laborious [difficult, exhausting job]; it should be calculated for the task at hand. Not all members should be expected to take part in every activity. Not all work requires the planning of the captain, but communication should always be used. The fastest way to corrupt an organization is to destroy its communication. If we have cell phones, we have no excuses. The captain is there to serve and guide the ten, but not to control or command the work. He should always have tasks available for anyone who wants them. The work must be voluntary. It should ever be in mind that Christ is the leader of the work, and He can directly and individually speak to each of His workers.

If a need is not within the scope of the ten's abilities, their leader can take it to a captain of fifty. The captains of fifty should take counsel with their fellow captains, to determine what to do. The first order of planning is gathering information. The ten need to know what can be done; then they can determine what to do.

Organize

After the group has determined their needs and decided on a plan, they should be organized and assigned different duties, based upon skills, or, if the members would like to learn new skills they can volunteer. The captains group of two is to pick up the duty that nobody wants to do, if such a duty exists.

An example of outreach: One team of two is in charge of acquiring material to pass out; the next two are to map out the way, and the next two are to provide refreshments or food. If it is on the Sabbath, instead of providing food, a team can get volunteers from the membership to join. Another team can pray for the outreach.

An example for in-reach: One team makes a leaflet for church members to fill out with potential needs. The next team gathers information on those people's locations and passes it to the leader. The leader assigns teams to tasks by location, skill, or desire, and finds a supply for any missing necessities. A good captain can have his teams each assigned to a different task; since most work can be effectively split up. He should always remember to pray before they start the work.

Conclusion

"That which is needed now for the upbuilding of our churches is the nice work of wise laborers to discern and develop talent in the church that can be educated for the Master's service. Those who shall labor in visiting the churches should give them instruction in the Bible reading and missionary work. Let there be a class for the training of the youth who are willing to work if they are taught how. Young men and women should be educated to become workers at home, in their own neighborhoods, and in the church."—*The Review and Herald, May 15, 1888, par. 5.*

"As believers in Christ we need greater faith. We need to be more fervent [intensity, zeal] in prayer. Many wonder why their prayers are so lifeless, their faith so feeble and wavering, their Christian experience so dark and uncertain. Have we not fasted, they say, and 'walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?' In the fifty-eighth chapter of Isaiah Christ has shown how this condition of things may be changed. He says: 'Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?' Verses 6, 7. This is the recipe that Christ has prescribed for the fainthearted, doubting, trembling soul. Let the sorrowful ones, who walk mournfully before the Lord, arise and help someone who needs help."—*6 Testimonies, 266.*

Where are the workers? Where are the champions for God? Arise, shine oh generals; for thy light is come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. It's time to awake to action.

For a finished work



Jonathan Taylor

Wisdom is justified of all her children. -Luke 7:35

More Food for the Little Flock —