

BUILDING A SENSE OF “ESPRIT DE CORPS”

INTRODUCTION

You can change your church leadership training work from being a mere study program to a living entity for Jesus Christ. You do it by “Esprit de Corps.” Esprit de corps is a wonderful concept. It is just pure delight for me to share with you this special lecture on “esprit de corps”. It is called “esprit de corps” and that is what we will experience in heaven. So we are talking about creating a bit of heavenly bliss for your local church here on earth.

I. WHAT DOES “ESPRIT DE CORPS” MEAN TO YOUR CHURCH?

1. *To some it just means having no team conflicts.*

No problems, everybody is happy. Everything is okay. Status quo is good. You're blessed to serve the Lord.

2. *Some said, “To wives it means whether their husband is happy or not.”*

The husband usually is happy if he likes his coach!

Is that is a good measurement of “esprit de corps”? If his wife sees that her husband is happy, or is there a little bit more to it. I think we may discover that there is a bit more to it.

3. *Several said that ‘Esprit de corps’ in the Team, Students, and Wives is a spirit of identification/ownership. “MY NLC Center—OUR NLC Lectures —OUR COURSES—OUR...”*

The idea is--we own it. We are part of it. We belong to it. This is important to us. We are willing to sacrifice for it. We believe in it. We are going to make it happen. This is valuable for the future of our people and our country.

4. *The dictionary definition of Esprit De Corps is:*

A contagious group spirit; sense of pride, honor, etc. shared by those in the same group or undertaking.



This is the spirit we sense at a year-end celebration, a retreat or what people display during a parade. But we are saying that such a contagious general feeling or attitude should constantly pervade the church leadership development ministry and become its trademark.

II. SOME PRACTICAL WAYS TO BUILD ‘ESPRIT DE CORPS’

I will just be giving you a list following the letters of the alphabet.

1. Remember, spirit begins with the team.

A provincial Training director has a vision of what he wants to see happen three years from now. What his plans are for two years from now. He should be enthusiastic about what he envisions and what things will look like in his province. How many new leaders prepared to serve Jesus Christ, how many churches started and how many people redeemed from hell. He needs to communicate this to the administrator. The administrator needs to see a vision of “This is wonderful and this year we can just do this and we will add that. We expect God’s blessing.” Then this spirit of anticipation is shared with the coaches. The coaches share this wonderful spirit of anticipation with students and so on. It is contagious.

2. Stress quality in everything you do--100%.

This is absolutely crucial for your church-based training as many people are working separately in an isolated situation apart from each other. Quality is very important. Ultimately it is quality right in the local church that makes pastors and elders successful. Quality makes a new generation think, "This is the way to prepare for Christian service."

3. Involve wives in the program.

Wives add an extra touch to a man's world. Extra in a sense of more beautiful and special than men do. Adam sensed there was something missing and God gave him a woman. A woman is always in favor of a flower or something special. Things automatically beautify if a woman is there. You want to involve women in your program. Every time you have a seminar, one of the wives comes with some tea and a tiny snack. She stays there in the sessions to listen. Next time another wife comes along. In a variety of ways you can get wives involved. They will be so excited and talk about it at home.

4. Involve students in the program.

You can involve students with very little special things. Some of them can work on the computer. Some of them could come to the main office. Others have artist's skill and can make some artistic contributions. Some maybe can contribute singing on a special occasion. Involve your students so that they get a vision of participation in this special ministry. Have a special group evangelistic activity visiting a home for invalids or the elderly or a Christian center for drug addicts.

5. Sell the privilege of attending.

Attending a discussion seminar is a special privilege. Attending leadership training right there in their own town and in their own church without having to go away is something very special. The sacrificial effort of the coach coming to minister to them is special.



6. Sell the opportunity to develop maximum potential.

How easy it is to do that through a mentoring program emphasizing academics, ministry skills and character development. Students can sense almost immediate improvement and results as they practice something and members of the congregation and other people express their appreciation. Church leaders see that the ministry is valuable and lives are changing. Wives and children and close acquaintances see his character being developed as he begins to shine and emulate Jesus Christ himself. Maximum potential is developed right in his or her own local church in a small group being trained by a specialist.

7. Enroll only those students who WANT to come.

Often we are interested in numbers and all we want is a few more. Instead of being satisfied with four eager students, we get two more. Two that really don't want to do their homework, two that really did not make a commitment. Two that don't always come when there is a discussion seminar and it drags the whole thing down. What a joy it would be to just have those four students eager to participate and encourage one another and to be ready and wanting to please the coach. Enroll only those who really want to grow for Jesus Christ.



8. Build spirit through posters.

I think this is a real need. Something that coaches do not make enough use of. It is so easy for a coach to take a large sheet of paper folded into four or rolled so that he can carry it with him very easily and put it on the wall when he has a seminar. Almost every single seminar he could have a poster there. One time he would have the lesson outline. Another time he would have a slogan for the lesson. Other times maybe a picture for a special seasonal event like Pentecost, or Christmas or Palm Sunday. An artist could make a special drawing that would appeal to the group and connect to the significance of that season and the coach could put that up. What a positive, motivational thing that is. It says, "He cared for us".

9. Build spirit through punctuality.

How *absolutely* important that is. A majority of groups meet every two weeks, if the coach misses one time it means that the group does not get together for a whole month. It follows that home assignments will not be done properly because there was no motivation and no clear understanding or instruction. The students' ministry falls down right away. It is a MUST for a coach to be there. Another element is to be there on time. A slave mentality says, "I do not get paid for that. I do not get anything extra. I am just going to be there the very last minute". Creating church leaders means students have to have initiative, and to develop initiative you must show the example. You must model it to them. You must be there thirty minutes earlier to have time for prayer, time for "a last minute" review of the lesson, time to relax and enjoy being prepared, time to focus your lesson on this group situation in this room, and time to encourage and motivate students that arrive early. Punctuality is a vital aspect of the ministry and creates a reputation of faithfulness and quality.

10. Build spirit in the bi-weekly seminars.

Make sure every student is welcomed. Have students to pray for each other. What a joy it is to come to this small family of "like-minded men" with "like-minded wives and families and needs" and have someone pray for you. What joy and privilege for a student to pour out his heart for a fellow student. Take time for personal prayer. Take time to encourage and motivate, "Yes, this time you did not do very well but last time you did and normally you do well." It is possible to encourage students so they go home feeling, "Wow, that was good this week". A student who feels like that just wants to come back. A coach who missed doing this missed the whole point of discipling people for Jesus Christ.

11. Build spirit through special conferences.

People just want to get together in some larger groups. People want to get together in some other format than sitting around a table and discussing a big topic. Therefore we have encouraged you to have conferences for the pastors. Once every two months probably is enough, four times a year or so, in different regions of your province. Invite different students to come and simply share a testimony. Maybe someone had a remarkable change in his character or personal growth. Maybe God used another student and through his group the Lord started a new church. Or a coach has motivated fifteen students to have Bible studies with unbelievers. These things need to be shared. Not high-level academic material but practical stuff. "This is what our mentoring ministry accomplishes". Have both coaches and students participate. You should also have a few workshops, probably three times a year, for the coaches and some key students. August/ September, December or January and March are good months for that.

12. Build spirit through field trips, picnics, etc.

A number of discipling ministries have done that and the results have been wonderful. I know one church team that went with their wives and children to the forest in the summer time. They bonded together in a new way as a Christian family. Some do other activities. Picnics are so easy. Just go to a little park. The wives come along with little snacks and some personal drinks that can easily be carried and share that food with one another. Bring some new dish that is a little bit unusual. Have a time for testimonies that includes the wives. Share your vision or plan and do some good singing. Form two circles right there in the park, ladies holding hands and praying and the men standing in a circle and praying. After three or four hours the team goes home refreshed and praising God.



13. Build spirit through privileges like coaching a group.

To coach a group is an honor, to be entrusted with the lives of other men or in some case ladies. To minister to them individually is a high trust. Let it be a special privilege for an advanced student to participate in coaching a group. Make it a privilege. Disciple him personally and have him ready to coach a discussion seminar. Perhaps a coach is sick or needs to be away so that he cannot lead his group. This is an opportunity for a key student to coach a group, and it is a special honor. Take time to prepare him. Take time afterwards to hold him accountable and to praise God for what happened.

14. Build spirit through awarding certificates .

Certificates can be a great ministry tool. Certificates should spell a celebration and an honor for work well completed. One training ministry gives each fruitful student a set of books for further study. This is absolutely a perfect idea, a super idea. Here is future, here is perspective and here is a vision. The coach's

thankfulness is expressed and the student is given something into which he can pour his heart. He is motivated to study further and to continue growing in the Lord Jesus Christ. There are other small things like a spiritual book of some sort that can be shared with men. But this is one of the best.

15. Build spirit by inviting wives at course end.

Yes, bring the wives in. The end of a mentoring series marks the completion of a significant step. The men have been sweating for three months. They have been sacrificing time. There have been difficulties they had to overcome. Perhaps occasionally there have been some family arguments, or other problems relating to his studies. This is victory time so bring the wives in and let them share in the victory of their husbands. Give a hand written thank you note to the wives for participating in the grade the husband has received. Then make it a party time.

16. Build spirit by attending workshops.

The leadership training workshops provide special material for people that really want to become high-level leaders in the church. Workshops are for men that want to explore this area of leadership. There are many good materials in those workshops and usually they are a highlight for everyone. We want to encourage your team and some key students to attend these workshops.

17. Build a family spirit. (Encourage older students to care for and mentor newer students.)

In many areas in your province there are new students that want to be enrolled. Possibly he was saved later or he has moved to that area or he was hindered for some particular reason. Now he wants to become a student. Yes, he has done the *Basic Christian Life* courses, which should be a beginning step. But he has missed *Galatians/Romans* and *Practical Evangelism* and *Establishing Disciples* and now he is doing the *New Testament Survey* course but without some help he is basically lost. Especially the first month an advanced student should go over once a week to give this student the help that he needs. Just help him to go through the lesson and cover it completely. The wife only had a minimal interview and she does not know any of the other wives. She does not know what it is all about. The wife of another student who has been longer in this program could make this new lady her prayer partner. They should visit at least monthly all during that first course. These two students need to meet together and develop a special bond. It will make this new student successful.

18. Build spirit through your logo

It is now possible to get logos printed on clothing. It would be very helpful to have your church logo printed on t-shirts or other clothing that students can wear. Or maybe a smaller shirt (that is cheaper) for their children to wear. These can be worn on special occasions. Maybe the logo of your Discipling Ministry is "know, be and do." You should have it printed on your briefcase. Then wherever you go people see: 'know, be and do'. It signifies, this is us, this is training workers. Have it printed on all the papers that you pass out. The logo should be on congratulation slips and on many things like that. When it regularly comes before the students it is encouraging to them.



19. Build spirit through homework to reach unbelievers.

I think there is nothing more delightful for the child of God than to find a sinner bound for hell and introduce them to the precious Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and have that person become a family member of God. Coaches always should prepare assignment opportunities for students to go out and have contacts with unbelievers and lead them to salvation.

20. Build spirit through visitors, partners, sponsors.

Yes, you have visitors. Encourage people to bring a visiting relative to sit in on a discussion seminar one time. At home they can talk about what they are doing, the value and so forth. There are other visitors like a pastor or another elder or some other leader. Maybe even a curious unbeliever. There are partners sharing in prayer, with medicines, clothing or financially, or building a church building. Make them part. Let them see different groups. Let them see your office. Spend time with them, they just want to participate, be there,

visit, see and taste. What a wonderful opportunity for your team and students to share results by the grace of God.

21. Build spirit through news bulletins.

I recommend churches to prepare a simple single sheet news bulletin. I have seen others do that and I think it is beautiful. It does not cost much because it is only one sheet. You can easily distribute them once a quarter, three or four times a year would be very appropriate. It should have the church logo, some pictures, the latest news and some prayer requests. It tells people “we are not alone” and “this is a large ministry.” It brings before the people what the church is doing, like showing a baptism of people who were reached. Cover the 3 points “academics, character development and ministry skills.”

22. Build spirit through sports.

Yes, sports can help you. Our ministry is with men, mostly young energetic men that are in their twenties or thirties. Imagine a very early spring day, this is the first warm day and you know that winter is now gone. Men come early to your seminar but it is too nice to go inside. They want to stand outside lingering. The coach brought a beanbag or ball for the men to throw around, to have a little fun activity. These men have aching muscles and they want to use those muscles. They just want to jump a little bit but need something to jump for. Tossing the beanbag around gives them a reason. They start puffing “this is just wonderful” then they come in, sit down, smile and are relaxed. A bond is being established; they pray and now are ready for a good discussion. The memory of this will stimulate the student later on in the week when at home and study again. There are other times like that during the summer or fall when a sports activity can greatly help and it is very appealing to men.

23. Build spirit through State and National Conventions.

Probably there are some other groups holding conferences in your province. On a national level there may be a denominational conference and there are other conferences. Take some students with you. It gives you an opportunity to be together on the train or in a car for many hours and you can disciple that person. Have something outlined, something prepared to share and encourage and spend time together. You have an opportunity to pray and he has the privilege of a paid trip that helps him grow closer to Jesus.

24. Love the individual



The Mentoring director should have a great love for his administrator. They should love one another as families and do some things together (go to the zoo or whatever). Together they should love coaches, especially those who live far away. Focus especially on those that are isolated or those who coach only one group, or those who don't come to all the coach meetings. Take special opportunities to love them. Then together, as a team, love the students. Make sure that your coaches regularly report how they showed love to their students. **Love is action. Love is giving. Love is physical.** Without a physical element love is no love. Make sure it happens! Make sure you are an example.

CONCLUSION

If God gives you grace to put all these principles into practice, you will have a contagious sense of “esprit de corps”. It will pervade your whole church team and membership body. Ultimately from there it will spread out to other churches. From the churches it will reach your whole province. It is God's secret to a victorious Christian life. It is God's secret for all of eternity. That's why you and I like to read the Book of Revelation so often. This book is full with tribulations but we love reading it because there is an overwhelming feeling of worship and awe and praise. Serving God and Jesus Christ forever and ever. Let's begin right now, amen.

Blessings to you, our dear friends!

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Practical assignment

Completed

- Choose two of the principles of building “Esprit de Corps” to put into practice each week. At the beginning of the week write down which principles you have chosen and how you plan to put them into practice during the next week. At the end of the week evaluate how you did and note what you could do better. Bring your notes to the next conference for accountability.

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