Drumbeats

In the 50s an OMF worker among the Lisu in Thailand wrote a book called, "Ascent to the Tribes" (Isobel Kuhn). In this book she gave a list of spiritual principles that should guide our relationships in team life. She called them her "drumbeats" to which she marched on her glorious road that has now ended in glory. She listed:

Humility: a practical day-by-day recognition that all our gifts and experiences are God-given and we ourselves are but fragile earthen jars to show forth the preciousness of the Lord Jesus.

Long-suffering: that bears the burden of another's failings and so ***"fulfils the law of Christ"***. (Gal. 6:2)

Love: that covers the sins, weaknesses, failings and faults of others and goes out in self-sacrificing love to help them.

Brokenness: a broken and contrite spirit. Hard-hearted workers are not much use!

Passionate devotion to things that are vital for the furtherance of the Gospel.

I agree with these five 'beats of the drum'. In this devotional I would like to focus on how to apply these well-known principles so we all keep in step as we advance together in our spiritual battle. The 'ground' is rough and tough-going. But each team is aware of the personal pain that any disruption of love causes. On top of that, there is our concern for the honour of the Lord Jesus when our team get 'out of step' with one another. High morale is very similar to faith. In our case, faith is the supreme battle-winning factor in spiritual conflict. Faith makes us spiritually and mentally fit for the fight and it rapidly restores us as the fight progresses.

In practice, 'faith to overcome' is needed to:

- Adapt to new surroundings and conditions after an 'up-rooting' that is often painful and stressful for workers new and old.
- Toughen up to meet difficult conditions and accept them cheerfully.
- Train in good teamwork between people from different cultures, languages and temperaments.
- Master the use of the weapon of prayer in our spiritual warfare.
- Be constantly alert to anticipate and remove anything that destroys unity and to remove grievances between team members.
- Positively cultivate physical, mental, spiritual and emotional well-being and to maintain a high degree of faith on the team that subordinates our personal interests to the cause which is greater than life itself. We live with the great exhilaration of living for something greater than ourselves! This is an example of the principle taught by the Lord Jesus that to find life we must lose it.

Factors that cause us to get out of step with the drumbeat

In the Napoleonic Wars the French went into battle in great columns of about 100 soldiers in the front and hundreds more in the column behind them. In the middle there were many drummers keeping the troops together and going forward as a vast group. A French column was almost unstoppable. It is helpful to analyse the factors that cause disunity on teams. There are probably three **main** factors:

1. Failure in our personal relationships leading to frustration and spiritual defeatism. Much of this is due to a lack of adaptability – a failure to understand how much God has to change us as individuals. It is also due to our failure to provide the training, orientation and experiences necessary. How much of my failure is an unwillingness to accept the problems, difficulties and limitations inherent in the situation God has placed me in – i.e. a failure to adapt. Yet it is when we

accept difficulties, disappointment and trials as the raw material of spiritual victory, blessing and fruit that we learn to adjust.

Failure to adjust and our lack of adaptability will lead to friction and frustration. So often our team members are in the battle before being prepared for the battle and soon they are back in action after the battle before they have been restored for battle.

One factor that helps is the value of cultivating and maintaining an imperturbable and irrepressible sense of humour!

2. Criticism of my teammates, of the place where I live, the team/field I belong to, the rules and policies of our company etc. is another symptom of maladjustment. In a word, this is "murmuring". This was the besetting sin of the Israelites in the desert. It cut the nerve of their spiritual power and left them impotent in the face of their foes and finally robbed them of their inheritance. Note that it was always against Moses that they murmured, never against God. We tend to do the same. We murmur against our company.

The opposite of this type of criticism is prayer and the presentation of some constructive proposals to remedy defects in a spirit of sympathetic understanding of the difficulties and an appreciation of what is already being done. Am I critical? Here is a good measuring line!

3. Inferiority leading to worry over things – often very little things – restlessness, inner turmoil. Sometimes it will be seen as moodiness, resentment, self-pity, depression, touchiness and an inability to give out.

One symptom of this is a tendency to direct everything and everyone – to dominate or to be the boss. For a leader this may be failure to delegate and then complaining that others won't accept responsibility! Do I trust others or do I try and run their lives for them? I can also dominate others either by monopolising them or just heedlessly ignoring them so they have no chance to develop. It is sad to see people stifled and frustrated because they are not allowed to be free to change and grow in the new environment/culture.

It is not only new recruits who failed to adapt. The world we live in is rapidly changing. We must ask ourselves if we have lost the ability to adapt. If so, we may be increasingly unfit to respond to the will of God in new situations of responsibility and opportunity. So how do you react to the prospect of rapid change? Is it with a sense of fresh adventure and the stimulus of the untried – the challenge of new situations and problems or is it with a sense that another upheaval is being inflicted on me? Do I moan about being disturbed out of my deeply rutted routines and feel an unpleasant jolt to my middle aged inertia?

A change may do me good! The work will demand new resources and encourage spiritual growth releasing new spiritual vision and energy. It deals a blow to my "empire building". It makes way for a new broom and allows others to develop. If I fail to adjust and become 'touchy', then every new and helpful suggestion founders on the rock of my negativity!

So let us keep our eye on that moving cloud and the pillar of fire. Perhaps our failure to do so is a cause of our insecurity. We know well the principle, ***"Without me you can do nothing"*** (Jn. 15:5). But is it a slow and hard lesson to learn that our sufficiency is not in ourselves, in our training, our qualifications, our gifts, our experience or even our ability to cope, but only in God and ***"He is able to make all grace abound towards us"*** (2 Cor. 9:8). This may be a comforting thought, but in reality we often fail to cope with people, problems and situations that seem to get more hopeless. We are inadequate, hence we feel insecure and the symptoms are observable.

So how can we be channels of confidence and encouragement to our team? How can we face problems with hope and perseverance? How can we have faith that brings the victory? ***"All power in heaven and on earth …"*** (Mt. 26:64) is invested in the Lord Jesus and He is able to make ***"all grace abound towards us"***. We know this. We must learn to apply this to ourselves and to our teams so there is effective advance of the Gospel where God has placed us.