

# ABUNDANT LIVING

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**A Trackage for Fellowship (Week 39) - There is a way to get along with people, and that way is God's way.** That way is written into the constitution of our relationships and is definable according to certain well ascertained laws of association. As you begin corporate living, let it be burned into your consciousness that life is social and that there are definite laws of association and corporate living. You can make a trackage for fellowship. Corporate living requires intelligence as well as good will.

**(1) You must not try to dominate the group.** —That is fatal, for it begets the same thing in others; and the stage is then set for clash and strife. **At the threshold of corporate living is self-surrender.** "I cannot dominate her mind," said a bewildered man who was dealing with a strong-minded woman in his employ. I told him he had to give up the desire to dominate and begin to cultivate the will to cooperate. That changes your attitude and allows you to see the truth in the other person's position rather than to be always trying to get your position across.

**(2) You must not try to use the group.** —It can be sensed at once if you are trying to use the group for any ulterior purpose: self-aggrandizement, self-display, business, social climbing, a desire to stand in.

**(3) Acquire and cultivate the power to put yourself in the other person's place.** —That imaginative sympathy is the key to life, in fact, is life itself, for life is sensitivity. One of the secrets of Jesus' power over us is just this quality of imaginative sympathy. But it is not just sympathy in imagination; it is sympathy in fact, or, literally, "suffering with." Our hunger becomes his; our bondages are his very own: "I was hungry and you gave me food, . . . in prison, and you came unto me" (Matt. 25:35-36). **To the degree that we acquire and cultivate this spirit of imaginative sympathy, we are Christian and can get along with other people.**

**(4) Determine to hold no secret criticism of one another.** —A motto in our Ashram says: "Fellowship is based on confidence; secret criticism breaks that confidence; therefore we will renounce all secret criticism." If there is no outer criticism, then we know there is no inner criticism; so the fellowship is relaxed and unrestrained. We must welcome the mutual helpfulness of constructive criticism, for the best of us are only Christians in the making. **If we are afraid of criticism, we are living on the defensive, living by fear rather than by faith.** Let us lower the barriers and welcome the worst, and we will probably find the best!

**(5) Don't look for perfection in people.** —You have to get along with yourself in spite of yourself, so make up your mind to get along with others in spite of themselves.

**(6) Look on others, not as they are, but as they can be.** —That was the secret of Jesus' influence on people. He believed in them when they couldn't believe in themselves, for he saw them, not as they were, but as they could be by his help. **That attitude will give you, not a querulous mood of dissatisfaction with others, but a constructive mood of expectancy of possibilities.** I find myself responding to Jesus' faith in me when I have no faith in myself. I have faith in his faith!

**(7) Determine to settle differences as they arise; don't let them get cold.** —Most misunderstandings could be dissolved by quick action. If you let them go, they fester. "Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him" (Matt. 5:25 KJV).

**(8) Refuse to look for slights.** —Those who look for them usually find them. Have a great purpose that absorbs your attention so that you will actually not know when you are slighted. As someone says, "Having a share in shaping the world is much more important than our private happenings."

**(9) Don't allow yourself to become petty; keep big.** —When some elements in Israel would not acknowledge Saul as king, "he held his peace" (1 Sam. 10:27). A smaller man would have gone into a fit of temper. Saul was never

more kingly than in that silence under provocation. "I'm not big enough, or those things wouldn't hurt me," said a missionary with a sigh, as he found his majestic lifework spoiled by allowing trivialities to upset him.

**(10) Look for privileges of service rather than for your rights.** —The person who goes around insisting on rights never gets them. **For rights are not something that can be given; they have to be earned. And they are earned as you give service to others.** Those who serve others get more rights than they know what to do with.

**(11) Don't try to do people good; love them.** —If anybody wants to do me good, I feel like dodging around the corner; but if anyone loves me, I'm conquered at once. A loving attitude opens all doors, anywhere in the world.

**(12) Often decide with the group against yourself.** —For the group can see more objectively than you can. Keep the power to say, "I'm sorry." Those who are always right are always wrong. By their very attitudes they are always wrong.

**(13) If there is any basic injustice in the relationships in the group, don't counsel patience only; right the injustice.** —It is impossible to have real fellowship over and around a basic injustice. That basic injustice will plague your fellowship and spoil it. Right the injustice, and fellowship will come naturally.

**(14) Don't try to have fellowship; work together for great ends and fellowship will follow.** —If you try to have fellowship, you will achieve only stilted niceties. But if you work for great kingdom ends, the fellowship will come as a byproduct. Don't work for fellowship, but fellowship for great causes.

**(15) Remember, we are organs for one another.** —This conception of Paul (see Rom. 12:4; 1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4) will keep us from jealousies. If we are organs for one another, then the other person fills out and complements me where I am weak. If a person can sing better than I can, then that person is my organ of song, and I am complemented by that strength. If another can manage things better than I can, then I must not be jealous, but recognize my organ of executive ability in that person. Perhaps there is something I can do better than the others; I am the organ in that particular thing. Such an attitude will cause us to be filled, not with jealousy, but with pride in the others' abilities.

**(16) Expect the best from others.** —If you expect the best, you will probably get it; if you expect the worst, you will probably get that. "According to your faith, be it to you" (Matt. 9:29).

**(17) Help others to help themselves; don't smother them by being overanxious to help. Be a maker of persons.** —Developing others is the only success. Don't be a benevolent tyrant. Let people around you grow.

**(18) Keep your power of laughter.** —When things become tense, burst out laughing on general principles. Practice laughing at yourself before the looking-glass. If you lose your power to laugh, you are sunk. Make your voice smile when you talk. Voice cultivation is cultivating the voice to express love.

**(19) Keep the thought ever before your group that the group is disciplined by something beyond itself: the kingdom.** —The group must never become an end in itself; it must remain a means to the ends of the kingdom. If it becomes an end, it will become self-righteous and "more holy than thou" in its attitudes. It must have a constant sense of accountability to the kingdom.

### General Thoughts on Group Living

(1) God abides in and uses group life especially. "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20). **It is safer for God to use a group than to use an individual.** Use of an individual may result in individualism in society, but use of a group results in corporate emphasis. Individuals find themselves in that corporate living.

(2) **The group life must be organized around embodied objectives and not around hazy ideas, if it is to survive.** The Redemptionists at Jerusalem lived on in the movement of Jesus because they were organized around the idea of equality to all. That idea is fermenting in the world and may yet save it.