



Foundation Stone #6: People Skills February 2007

People Aren't the Enemy

When we experience conflict with others, it is part of our fallen nature to blame them rather than looking within ourselves to determine the source of the conflict. Even individuals transformed by the Holy Spirit experience rocky relationships at times. Much of this may be attributed simply to differences in personality. In such cases, it's important to resist the urge to blame others. Instead, recognize the role that differences in personality might be playing. It is imperative you don't "go to the negative" by assuming people are the enemy. The enemy (Satan) is the enemy! Satan will often use our personality style against us, causing us to lock horns with another whose blend is different – or even *identical* – to our own.

In the Kingdom workshop, God functions as the *Master Craftsman*. As a minister, you have been called to serve as the *Master's Apprentice*. Part of your calling is to care for the tools and toolboxes within your unique workshop. Each tool has a blend of positive and negative traits. Each of God's hand-crafted tools (including you) has a distinctive function. Fortunately, each tool type has a general pattern of characteristics that can help you better understand individual tools within a particular tool type – you will simply need to take time to learn about them. Most ministries require an array of personalities – each with an array of strengths and weaknesses – to carry out the diverse facets of ministry.

Recognizing the need for such an assortment of tools is the first step toward successfully getting along with all the tools you work with as an apprentice to the Master Craftsman. Not surprisingly, Scripture has much to say about such a perspective as it places a high importance upon diversity within the Kingdom workshop. Our all-wise God gives gifts as *He* chooses. Consider these passages that speak of God's design in diversity among the body:

Romans 12:4-5: The physical body is a picture of how the Body of Christ was intended by God to carry out different functions within God's plan for His Church.

I Corinthians 12:14-18, 21: Believers are discouraged from looking upon others within the Body in disdain simply because they're different. This is our fallen nature rather than the spirituality of our new nature in Christ. This passage also teaches that no one is found in our ministry by accident. The phrase, "every one of them, just as he wanted them to be," leaves little room for misunderstanding. The most difficult person for us has a Divine purpose for being placed in our ministry. Rather than complaining or grumbling, we should seek God in understanding His purpose. As a ministry leader, these "difficult people" will often serve as God's sandpaper to sand down the rough edges of your own personality!

Ephesians 4:11-13: The diversity within your ministry is God-given so that it may be built into exactly what God needs it to be for its location and time in human history. Unity of the Body isn't simply a byproduct of learning to get along with other personalities – it's also a primary vehicle through which God grants maturity of faith. It's also the means by which we attain the "whole measure of the fullness of Christ". And if that weren't enough, our unity is also one of the greatest evangelistic tools for a lost and dying world to see the power of God within us (John 13:34-35).

Thoughts to Ponder:

- How can I *celebrate* the diversity within my toolbox rather than allowing certain tools to *frustrate* me?
- What *practical steps* can I take to *learn more* about the various tools within the toolbox that God has placed me? (consider our article from the January 2006 eNewsletter – see our website under the "ShepherdCare Newsletter")

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