

# MESSAGE MINDER

January 30, 2011

The body is a unit,  
though it is made up of  
many parts; and though  
all its parts are many,  
they form one body. So  
it is with Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:12



## Teamwork

By Jonathan Stone

As an educator I have noticed there are two words that prompt a general widespread panic in a classroom faster than any others. Those two words: *group project*. From middle school to graduate school the majority of students seem to loathe working with a group of classmates assigned to them by their instructor. Why is that?

Certainly there are a number of possible contributors to this common anxiety. First, it can be difficult to work with others. It requires dealing with a different personalities, values, and perspectives. It takes time to wade through different people's ideas, and it is often a struggle to finally settle on a plan of action. Second, when we open ourselves up to a group project we lose control of the project. It feels easier to us

if we are able to make all of the decisions and not have to stop and discuss options with others. We do not have to worry about how to respond to ideas that we do not agree with.

Our spiritual journey is really no different. If there is an issue in our life we would prefer to work it out through a private conversation with God. The problem is that God has designed us in a way that we grow best in the context of community. Each of us has blind spots. That is, there are things about each of us that are quite clear to everyone else, but completely unknown to us. Some of those things God will reveal to us through others if we are willing to hear them. So the Proverb states: "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another" (Proverbs 27:17).

Of course, that too requires us to lose control. There is a terrible sense of vulnerability in allowing others to speak into our lives. However, those fears are ultimately empty threats from the enemy. The truth is that there is far more to be gained from being a part of a community than there is to be lost. True community is bound together by authentic love. And true love drives away all of our fears (see 1 John 4:18). Once we open ourselves up to others we begin to see that teamwork has even more benefits than mere personal growth. The strength of a team grows exponentially with the addition of team members. If one man can chase a thousand, then two men can put ten thousand to flight (Deut. 32:30). Great fulfillment and satisfaction comes from being a member of a strong and healthy team.

**Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work. If one falls down, his friend can help him up, but pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.**

**Ecclesiastes 4:9-12**

## Family Activities

- 1.) Explore the topic of gifts with your children. Do not be afraid to identify both strengths and weaknesses at an early age. At the same time be careful not to let those strengths and weaknesses become overly self-defining for your child.
- 2.) One way to curb your child's getting too much of a sense of identity through his or her strengths and weaknesses is to emphasize spiritual fruit. The fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22ff) is expected of every believer. It is also the way we discern the genuineness of a person. By emphasizing spiritual fruit with our children we are helping them to remember that God cares more about who we are than what we do.
- 3.) Emphasize team work with your children. Plan a game night and talk about working together. Come up with some fun activities that demonstrate teamwork.

## Gift Discernment

When a person stops to consider his or her gifts, strengths and weaknesses he or she often turns inwardly to do a sort of self-inventory. This certainly can be helpful, and self awareness in that area is an important attribute. However, it should be pointed out that one important aspect of identifying and prioritizing gifts in an individual is by paying attention to feedback from others.

As individuals we have a tendency to get lost in certain ideas about our gifts that may not be accurate. When speaking of gifts in Romans 12 the Apostle Paul instructs every one of his readers to "not think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly" (12:3). The word soberly means to see something rightly or accurately, to see it the way it really is.

Because of the tendency to get a distorted view of ourselves it is important for us to listen to the feedback that we get from the body on our gifts. As we pay attention to this we begin to sense which of our gifts are being called upon by those around us. In this way the body of Christ calls forth the right gifts at the right time from individuals. I may have rightly discerned several personal strengths that I possess. However, it is often the feedback from the body of Christ that will let me know which gifts are being summoned at that time.

