

Forming Fruitful Teams

By Maria

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Dearest Family,

I LOVE YOU so much! Peter and I are praying desperately for each of you and your Homes, as we work together to turn our Family around. It's a lot of hard work for all of us, but we're making progress!

2. Following is a message that the Lord showed us was important to get to you right away. We received it in answer to a question that one of you sent in, asking if the Lord had any guidelines and counsel about forming new Homes and teams. Many of you are probably praying about and feeling challenged by this aspect of the restructuring right now. By January 2005, all FD Homes must have a minimum of six members over the age of 18. There is also the concept of Home accountability, and come April 2005, Homes will be judged as a unit—which means that each person in the Home will be held accountable for the spiritual and physical standard of each member in the Home. So you really want to wind up with people that you can bond with and help each other and all pull the load together. The Lord is expecting each Home to become a winning team.

3. So that's a good question: How can you find a winning team? What are important qualifications to consider? What positions and qualities need to be filled in order to be a well-rounded Home? How can you find people who are on the "same page" spiritually? How can you know whether you should accept someone into your Home or whether you should join a certain Home?

4. Later on this year, and into next year, Peter and I will be putting together more material on some of these topics and questions, including the importance and role of the Home teamwork, working together, etc. And each board will also be publishing the criteria for its pillar, which will give you more of an idea of what it means for a Home to be well rounded. You'll see that it takes a good team of quite a few members all working well together in order to cover all the bases—care well for your children, keep a good educational standard in the Home, pour into and

train your JETTs and teens, establish a lasting, fruitful missionary work, have a good Home teamwork and loving give-and-take shepherding for all Home members, etc. So the board criteria, plus the other GNs that Peter and I will work on, will help to fill in some of these blanks more completely. But for now, here is a message that Dad gave that at least gives some general direction and criteria to base your decisions on, because you really need to be moving on this now in order to be ready by January 2005.

5. By now you've probably received and read the message in "Renewal: A Gift of Love for the Children," where the Lord encourages all our Homes to invite big families and good childcare help and establish a working, efficient, good-standard childcare setup as one of the main focuses in your Home (ML #3491:32–50, GN 1075). —Training those young disciples, and helping them to be part of your witness and ministry! I also want you to know that Peter and I and our WS Homes have all of you big families that are looking to relocate or searching for a team to work with, on our daily prayer list, and each prayer morning during this time of restructuring we're dedicating some time to praying for you and your needs.

6. This is another plug, dear Family, to examine this aspect of your Home or team, and seriously consider and pray about whether the Lord might want you to expand the borders of your tents in this way. Find those big families that can round out and complete your Home, and invite them to join you! It's an extremely important part of being a well-rounded and effective missionary team for the Lord.

7. Okay, here's the message the Lord gave through Dad with tips and insight on looking for a team, or members to complete your team. I pray it's a blessing to you and gives you some helpful food for thought as you pray about your personal situation and the options you have, and find the Lord's highest will for you.

8. (Dad:) Well, dear Family, with all the changes happening these days as part of the restructuring and renewal, I guess you can tell it's still a Revolution for Jesus! Hallelujah! Change is good, and good for you, as it leads to progress and all sorts of wonderful fruit—as these changes certainly will. Thank You Lord!

9. During this time of change, as many of you are closing old Homes and opening new ones, or looking for new teams, or enlarging your present Homes to become more effective, a question that often comes up is how to know who to work with. If you're in a Home that needs personnel, how do you know who the right personnel are? Or if you're someone who needs to find a new Home, how do you know it's the right Home? How do you know you'll fit together well, work together well, and make your Home all that the Lord wants it to be and needs it to be?

10. We haven't talked about this much in recent years, but the main qualification for any person or any Home is still the same as when I talked about it years ago at the beginning of the Family—love! The love of Christ must constrain you!

Let me emphasize here that the pre-eminent requisite for any such team—or for any team, for that matter, or for anyone in the Revolution—must be the same driving passion which motivated the apostle Paul and all the apostles and all the martyrs and every great man or woman of God!—In fact, that irresistible compassion which should motivate every child of God in everything they do, everything you say, everywhere you go, with everybody, and which that great fanatical apostle summed up in these few famous and ringing words which have cried out from the heart of every true Christian in every true good deed he has ever done, and for which indeed he is willing to die: “The love of Christ constraineth us!” (2Cor.5:14.) (“Reading, Pin-ups, Mistakes, and World Conquest—Through Love,” ML #151:46, written January 26, 1972.)

11. Now don't sigh or roll your eyes! I know some of you are thinking, “I thought Dad was going to tell us something practical or give us some good tips, and here he's getting into love.” Yes, I'm going to talk about love, but you're very mistaken if you think it's not practical and doesn't include good tips! Love is manifested in loving actions by loving people that result in loving Homes, and those are just the sort of winning teams you're looking for and are trying to form.

12. Love is a very practical thing, because when you love the Lord and love your neighbor, that love moves you into action in all sorts of ways, and that's the standard by which you can judge the people joining your Home—or by which you can judge the Home you're thinking of joining.

Questions to Ask Yourself—and the Lord!

13. Ask yourself how much love that person has, or how much love that Home has. Is it the sort of love that lays down its life for the brethren? Is it the sort of love that not only loves God, Whom you haven't seen, but loves your brother or your sister or their rowdy children who you have seen? Is it the sort of love that motivates you to feed His sheep, to lovingly care for them, whether inside or outside the fold? Is it the sort of love that looks for the good and possibilities that others cannot see? Is it the sort of love that prefers the happiness of others to your own? Is it the sort of love that loves the unlovely—that's patient and understanding with those you don't normally get along with? Is it the sort of love that overlooks faults and casts a veil over flaws and failings for the sake of unity? Is it the sort of love that doesn't get weary in well-doing, but that's willing to go the extra mile, to humble itself, to cooperate, to yield, to give, and give, and give, again and again?

14. (Mama:) These are important questions; they make clear some of the most important criteria to judge by. But in many cases, you probably don't know the prospective team members, or Home you're considering joining, or personnel you're considering taking in, well

enough to answer those questions accurately or confidently. So, ask the Lord! Ask Him what those people's hearts are like. He knows, and if you're really open and humble and desperate before Him, He'll tell you in a way that will not only give you insight and understanding, but in a way that will help you see them as He sees them—without any self-righteousness, pride, or preconceived ideas.

15. As Dad goes on to say, there are always going to be rough spots in any team—because when you're forming a team, it's like you're forming a spiritual marriage. And what marriage doesn't hit rough spots? None. Just like marriage, success doesn't mean getting through without any difficulties, but it's knowing how to work through the difficulties and adjust in a way that you bring out one another's strengths and minimize each other's weaknesses. Because we all have them!

16. So, besides asking yourself all of these questions and giving them thought and prayer, I recommend you also ask the Lord—even if you think you know the person or Home or team well. You don't know them as the Lord knows them, and the insight He gives you will be extremely helpful to you in knowing whether they're the team for you, and if they are, how to bring out their strengths and support them in their weaknesses, which is what it's all about.

17. (Dad continues:) If you're looking for new people for your Home, don't just seek those who have the right practical skills, although those are important. Look for those who have the right amount of love as well. Ask yourself if those people love the Lord so much that they want to give Him their all in diligent, dedicated service. Ask yourself if they love Him enough to obey Him even if it's tough for them and requires unselfishness and sacrifice. Ask yourself if they love the Lord enough to want to stay close to Him by reading His Word daily, faithfully, really trying to feed from it and apply it to their own life. Ask yourself if they love the Lord enough to want to stay close to Him by hearing from Him regularly, frequently, and keeping a close link with Him, an intimate connection. Ask yourself if they love the Lord enough

to be led by Him in their choices and decisions, or if they go with what's easier or less demanding.

18. Ask yourself if they love their neighbors enough to esteem them better than themselves, to put their needs and the needs of the work above their own, to live "One Wife." Ask yourself if they love others enough to take on the form of a servant, as Jesus did, to lay down their lives in loving cooperation, in yieldedness, and in unity, even when they don't get their own way. Ask yourself if they love the lost enough to be willing to go out and reach them or follow up on them day after day, week after week, year after year, to faithfully give them Jesus and His Words and message of love even when they're tired. Ask yourself if they love the lost enough to learn their language, their customs, their attitudes, and the best way to reach their hearts and change them. (And it wouldn't be a bad idea to ask the same questions about yourself, of course!)

19. So when you're evaluating new personnel, when you're counseling about them and praying about them, think and discuss and pray about how much love they have, not just their qualifications in the physical. I'm not saying the physical skills and abilities aren't important. Nor am I saying that these people have to be models of love and perfection. I'm just reminding you that "the greatest of these is love."

20. And you who are thinking of joining a new Home can evaluate it in the same way, in how loving the people are, demonstrated by all the things I just mentioned, and how much they love the lost, demonstrated by the quality of their outreach, whatever it is. Do they love the lost enough to witness, win souls, and gain disciples? Do they love and trust the Lord enough to obey Him and get out and create a church of believers, not just raise funds and make a living? Do they love the sheep enough to get the *Activated* mags and tools to them and follow up on them so they can grow and become soul winners and shepherds themselves, real mature Christians who can work alongside them? Do they have the vision and faith to build the sort of work that others will recognize as a genuine missionary work, that they'll want to get in-

volved in and join? Do they have enough love for the lost that they're willing to reach not just the poor but the rich and educated? Do they love the Lord enough to want to change the world for Him, one heart at a time, day after day, or are they just struggling to make it through the day and survive?

21. These are all things you need to think about, to discuss and counsel about, to pray about, whether you're a person or a family looking for a Home, or a Home looking for a person or family to come help you and live with you.

The Blessings of Families!

22. And by the way, folks, remember that families can be some of the best and most wonderful additions to your Home, and just what you need to make it a good, well-rounded, winning team! So don't go turning away families, even if they're large ones, which many of our families are, or you'll be the loser in the end! We are the Family and we're made up of many families, and we're supposed to be known for our love. It's "The Family of Love," remember, not the Family of selfishness or of, "Sorry, no room in the inn."

23. Maybe you're objecting that you don't really need another family so much as you need someone to help with your outreach. Well, you'll find that kids can be some of the best and most effective witnesses there are, if you train them right and then let them do it! My kids were the ones who got us started, and your kids can really get you started! Teach them to witness, to sing, to perform, to help you in your work, and you'll find that they enhance your witness, touch even the hardest hearts, open doors that would otherwise have remained closed, and magnify your efforts, not burden you or hold you back.

24. Kids are work, yes, but maybe you're looking too much at how much work they are and not enough at how great a blessing they can be—to you, your Home life, your sample, your well-rounded work, your witness and testimony, as well as a source of joy and happiness and blessing—if you train them right and invest all you should in them and get them out helping you. They're the proof of the pudding, the demonstration that our way of life works

wonderfully, the heritage of the Lord, the hope of the future! If you think your Home would have too many of them, just remember the Lord's promise: "As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that has his quiver full of them!" (Psa.127:4,5). Hallelujah!

Inasmuch As You Have Done It to the Least of These ...

25. Please don't go turning the older folks away either, even if they have a few health problems. That doesn't mean they're washed up, useless, or no good. If they still have the burden and desire to serve the Lord, they'll find a way! Look at me during my last years on Earth. I was often sick and afflicted, and I almost went Home to be with the Lord a number of times, but I kept going and He kept me. Would you have turned me away from your doors, even though I was in poor health? Or what about Mama, who could hardly open her eyes without pain for years, who lived and worked in a darkened room, had to be carried up and down stairs, and was practically an invalid? Would you have turned her away from your doors because she couldn't play much of an active role in your Home?

26. You say, "But you and Mama are different, Dad! We'd never turn you away at the door." Well, when you're making decisions about who you'll let join your Home, remember that those older or weaker Family members at your door are those who've devoted their entire lives to me and Mama and the Family. They've given all they have to the Family and the Lord, often for decades now, at great personal sacrifice. You might think they're lacking in some ways, but they might bring with them just what you need to complete your Home and make it a true Home of love and fulfillment.

27. Remember His Words that, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." And sometimes it helps to think on the rest of this admonition too, on those who weren't open and willing, who asked, "Lord, when saw we Thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or sick, and did not minister unto Thee?" And He replied, "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of

these, ye did it not to Me” (Mat.25:40,44–45). That’s a principle it’d be good for us all to remember.

There Are No Perfect People!

28. You’re never going to find just the perfect person for your Home, because there are no perfect people! People come with imperfections, flaws, faults, sins and problems. That’s just the way life on earth is and the way the Lord made mankind. Goodness, look at the first two people that God made, Adam and Eve, and put in the most perfect environment on earth, the Garden of Eden. Even they disobeyed God, covered up, and tried to justify their sins.

29. So all have sinned, and all are sinners. What matters is that the sinners repent, turn back to the Lord with heart and soul and mind, and keep going for Him. That’s what makes the difference, both in the life of every great man and woman of God throughout history, and in the life of every man and woman in your Home or who wants to join your Home. What’s important is that you keep repenting, keep going, keep growing, and keep seeking to become men and women after God’s Own heart, as King David of old was.

30. So don’t be expecting sinless saints in the new people you’re thinking about taking in, because to be frank with you, you don’t fit the bill yourselves, ha! And you who have very high standards for the sort of Home you want to join or live in would also do well to remember that. Sometimes, instead of looking for those who would meet each of your high standards and live up to all your expectations, you might do well to look for those who would be willing to put up with you.

31. The point I’m trying to make here is that both you Homes who are looking for new people and you people who are looking for new Homes can be a little self-righteous at times, to put it bluntly. You need to get over it by taking a good look at yourselves in the mirror from time to time, and I don’t mean the magical fairytale mirror on the wall that tells you you’re the fairest of them all. I mean the one that shows you as you really are—a weak and fallible Family member who can do nothing without the Lord

and His help, who knows that every good and perfect gift comes down from above, and doesn’t think of himself more highly than he ought to.

Upholding the Standard of the Word Without Self-Righteousness

32. Now, having said that, I realize there are differences in personal standards. The true standard is the Word, but some people don’t apply it to their lives as they should. Some do more and some do less. The reason problems arise is when people who are doing less than they should don’t want to bring their standard up when gently and continually prodded to do more; instead of yielding, they often start kicking against the pricks, get rebellious, cause problems, and want to give their 30-day notice and move on. Either that or they continue to scrape by with the bare minimum, frustrating those who really want to move forward. Another reason problems arise is when people who have a high standard are confronted by a low standard, and when they try to change things, they’re met with resistance, get frustrated and self-righteous, and want to move on—or to move on the person with the lower standard.

33. The problem here isn’t the standard. Look, folks, the standard is crystal clear in the Word nowadays. If you read “What Is Full-time Discipleship?” and other recent Letters, they’re very clear and explicit about what is right and what is wrong, what is discipleship and what isn’t, and what’s permitted in each circle of membership. If someone keeps pointing out that you’re not quite up to snuff in some area of your walk with the Lord, that’s probably the case, and you should get desparate with the Lord and seek Him about it. Hear from Him in prophecy, study the Word, and counsel with others. If you think the person is interpreting the Word incorrectly or you have questions, ask the Lord about it in a spirit of openness and humility. Ask others how they see you and be willing to receive and consider what they say, even if it differs from the way you see yourself.

34. What’s needed is a lot more yieldedness and cooperation from all concerned. If your Home receives a person with a lower standard, a standard lower than the Word indicates, you

need to work with that person and help him or her along. Gently shepherd them, invest in counseling them, in loving them, in trying to help them, in encouraging them to learn and grow and change. That's what we've always done in the Family because there have always been differences in standards. We don't generally reject people just because their standard is a little lower than ours or because they have areas of their life they need to work on a little. We help them.

35. In saying this, you have to understand that I'm talking about people or situations where there's a relatively small difference of some sort in standards, or personal quirks and viewpoints, not people with one foot in the Family and the other foot on a banana peel of sin or disobedience! In other words, if someone doesn't quite make it in some way, but they're not the type that's going to lead to your Home being reclassified, then don't say they can't come or can't stay. It's better to help them make it, to help them raise their standard and make progress. That just requires putting forth the effort, being willing to help someone in your Home the same way you'd help your new disciples or sheep or lost souls on the street, and being willing to persevere in a good cause.

36. It also requires yieldedness and cooperation from the person or people with the lower standard, of course. Maybe it's a newcomer who has the lower standard, or maybe the Home they've moved to has a lower standard than they do—and again, when I talk about the lower standard, I'm not talking about some form of personal righteousness or pet peeves, but about not meeting up to what is clearly and explicitly set down in the Word. The person or people with the lower standard need to be willing to be open-minded, to go to the Word together and see what it says, and be willing to change. Being willing to change is a prerequisite for being in the Family at this point in time. A lot is changing, the Lord is moving everyone forward, and there isn't a single person who is up to snuff in every area.

37. And you who are trying to lift up others, please try not to do it with the lever of self-righteousness, the attitude of conceit, or the implication that, "You need to come up to my

level." There's no "my level" and "your level" when it comes to the Lord's standard—there's only His level. That's what you're supposed to be aiming for—in love!

38. We should all be striving for a higher standard together, in unity! There shouldn't be the attitude that, "Hey, this person just doesn't cut it; he's out of here." Or, "This Home is hopeless; I'm on my way elsewhere," without trying to make it work. We should all be willing to help each other, to bear with each other, to yield to each other, to grow and to change, to bear each other's burdens, to become homes of hearts!

39. You with the higher standard should be willing to gently and lovingly help those along who need it—not reject them or kick them out just because their progress is slow. And you who have it lovingly pointed out to you that your standard is a little off should be willing to take the hint, to listen to the examples and specifics, to search the Scriptures to see if these things be so, and to grow and change as necessary. Having come so far and having given so much of your time and life to the Lord, will you hold back now, just because it's a little uncomfortable or painful? Will you tell the Lord, "Thus far and no further," after all He's done for you?

40. You're all your brother's keeper, and what you have to realize is that at times he'll be keeping you and at other times you'll be keeping him. We're all in it together, working together, pulling the load together, because we need each other.

41. These are all things you need to remember when you're looking for a new team to join, or when you're a Home looking for new people to join you. Judge by love, not just by practical skills and gifts. Be led by love to take in the families or single parents or older Family members who need help. Yield to each other in love to lift the standard together. As you do these things, you'll be the Family of Love the Lord needs, in order to show His face to the world. Love is a major ingredient in becoming a winning team. I love you! (*End of message.*)