

Lessons on Life and Leadership

Lesson 10...Keep a High View of the Body of Christ

Myopia is the medical term for being near-sighted—the ability to see clearly things that are very close but the inability to see objects at a distance. As humans we grow up with what I call “practical myopia.” For children, their world consists of a few people in the physical confines of their home and neighborhood. As we mature, our horizons expand to our city, college, or perhaps our country.

Spiritually, we are also incredibly conditioned by our experiences. Growing up in a church environment conditions us to see primarily that context. Growing up in The Navigators conditions us to see spiritual life in a Navigator context. Other experiences, good and bad, determine our view of the broader family of God. When a local church disappoints us, we bear that scar. When The Navigators disappoint us, we have that memory. We meet people in other organizations with other viewpoints and we invariably compare them with what we believe, experience, or value.

All this happens with little biblical input. We mentally acknowledge what Paul teaches in I Corinthians 12 on the Body of Christ, but in practice, we live within the constraints of our own perspectives. Then, as we move into new situations and experience wider horizons, we develop a more expansive view. We encounter realities beyond our local congregations and our Navigator community. External influences in the broader culture impact us. We discover new realities that stretch our faith, different expressions of the people of God.

Unless their efforts are actually diluting or damaging the Gospel, we must not denigrate such work. Their methods may well differ, often running counter to what we Navigators have found to be effective. However, if such laborers are preaching Christ, we can rejoice—Philippians 1:18.

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 (I Corinthians 12:12). To counter these tendencies in myself, I try to practice several principles:

1. Never speak badly of others (persons or organizations) in the family of God.
2. Believe in my heart that God is really powerfully using others.
3. Believe in my heart that the purposes of God are far broader and deeper than any ministry of The Navigators.
4. Speak well of others, even when I see their weaknesses (as though I had none!).
5. Actively pray for, support, and affirm others in their efforts.

God will not bless us if we think or act arrogantly, or if we succumb to pride. We should be fully committed to our calling—excited about our part, convinced of its worth and effectiveness—but humble about how it fits within the broader work of God.

The vast majority of believers will continue to organize themselves in visible local congregations. Most of our fruit will continue to serve Christ in such contexts. As new ways of being in biblical community emerge, we must continue to hold a broad and supportive view of the diversity of ways in which the Spirit leads the people of God—and to do all that we can to nourish any faithful expression of the Gospel.

Our Ninth Core Value states it well: “Interdependent relationships in the Body of Christ in advancing the Gospel.” We are privileged to be a part of God’s powerful and exciting work within His family.