

## General Principles of Human Nature

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When leading or working with people, it is important to remember that all humans were created “in the image of God.” That means that our “human nature” reflects God’s nature. Yes, our “flesh” perverts our basic “nature,” and we can restore our godly nature back to its original quality through the power of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 5:17), but that is a lifetime quest that every believer embarks on when he/she is “born again.”

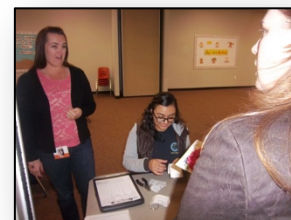


Regardless of a person’s progress in the journey toward restoration, there are basic principles of human nature that we all possess. These principles are also found in God Himself! Here is a brief list of them:

- 1. The desire to be VALUED** (for God, “above all others”) – *“I am the Lord your God...you shall have no other gods before me.”* (Exodus 2: 2, 3). Humans crave value. When we feel not valued, we can become angry, rebellious, or obnoxiously forceful to try to “be” more valuable. **Helpful Action:** To tell the challenging team member that he/she is a valuable part of the CM team. Specifically identify his/her valuable role on the team (*“You are very good with parents,”* or *“You’re always here early, and you stay late to help clean up.”*). Specifically state what that is, rather than a simple “Everyone on the team is valuable.”
- 2. The need to be RESPECTED** (for God, it is to be obeyed) – *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight”* (Proverbs 3: 5, 6). Respect is different from value. A person may feel valued, but if what he/she says is not respected, or if his/her position is not respected, then there is a sense of being discounted or “used.” **Helpful Action:** Listening to a team member when he/she suggests something is deeply important. Asking a challenging team member for his/her suggestions or ideas will often calm the team member down and make him/her more of a positive team member. Remember, you don’t have to **do** what he/she suggests, but listening with respect is critical. If you do make adjustments to the ministry that applies what a challenging team member suggests, make sure to personally (and publicly) say, “Thank you,” and invite him/her to tell you more about what he/she thinks.
- 3. The need for KINDNESS** – *“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”* (Ephesians 4:32). Regardless of what the challenging team member does or says, we are encouraged to be kind. That’s because God knows that *“a gentle (kind) answer turns away wrath.”* (Proverbs 15:1) An angry, rebellious, resentful person has probably not experienced too much kindness in his/her recent history. Being kind lets the person “put away his/her guns” and feel safe about being kind him/herself. **Helpful Action:** Using kind words, positive words, and even complimentary words changes the “tone” of any encounter with a challenging team member. Obviously, kindness “wears out” if the person continues to fight against team standards or unity; but kindness is always the best first approach to a challenging team member.



4. **The need for CONVERSATION** (for God it is through our prayers to Him) – *“If my people who are called by my name humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”* (2 Chronicles 7:14). A person who feels that nobody wants to talk with him/her becomes isolated from the group. A challenging team member may not be “attractive,” or fun to be around; so naturally, people may not talk with him/her. This isolation can result in rebellion or “acting out” to get the attention that he/she needs. **Helpful Action:** Make a concerted effort to talk with him/her each week. Ask questions about his/her job, family, or area of ministry. Swing by his/her area of service before or after each service to talk with him/her about how things went, his/her concerns, or about the latest sports scores!



5. **The need for SECURITY** – *“...those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.”* (1 Corinthians 12: 22-26) Just like children, adults need to feel secure within set boundaries. CM team standards set by well-communicated policies create a sense of security for the team members. If there is a sense of “anything is okay” regarding behavior, attire, attitudes, or comments, then there is no sense of security. **Helpful Action:** Always compliment “correct” or “good” behavior, attitudes, actions, or words. Do this publicly so others on the team are influenced by good examples. If a team member does or says something that is not within the standards of the ministry, talk with him/her privately right away. First compliment him/her for something valuable that he/she brings to the ministry, and then clarify the standard that he/she didn’t keep. Explain the foundation for the standard so that he/she understands its purpose, and then ask the team member whether he/she is able to function within that standard. State your belief that he/she will operate within that standard, pray with him/her, and then thank him/her for his/her service on the team. Look for opportunities to compliment him/her on his/her change in behavior, attitude, action, or words as soon as possible.



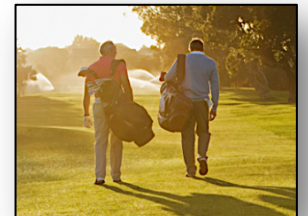
There are basic principles of how to deal with a challenging team member. These principles are based on the example of Jesus and by established good leadership practices that have been developed by respected leaders worldwide. The basic principles of dealing with a challenging team member are:

1. **“Move Toward” Them** – The natural reaction to challenging people is to move yourself away from them. You’ll hear people say something like, “I can’t stand to be around him/her,” or “I avoid him/her as often as I can.” Maybe you have felt those same “natural” feelings when you encounter a challenging person. Jesus teaches us a different approach: to “move toward” them.
  - He “moved toward” Zaccheus, a “shady” tax collector, He invited Himself over to his house for lunch. (Luke 19: 1-10)
  - He “moved toward” a Samaritan woman at a well, He engaged her and began a conversation with her that transformed her life and the lives of those in her city. (John 4: 1-30)
  - He “moved toward” Levi (another tax collector) by going to his house and having a meal with him and several of his fellow tax collectors. (Mark 2: 13-17)
  - He “moved toward” Simon the leper in Matthew 26:6. It was not allowed or advised to even be close to lepers!

Instead of being offended by a challenging team member, “move toward” the team member to increase your influence. (This is only advised if the team member is not a danger to the children. If the children are in danger from this team member, the team member must be removed from being with the children. It could be that by “moving toward” a challenging team member, you can be used by God to change his/her behavior or attitude and help him/her serve within the standards of the CM team. Here are some ways to “move toward” a challenging team member:



- Spend time with him/her before and after the service. Talk about his/her life and do all you can to get to know the person, rather than simply being offended by his/her behavior or attitudes.
- Invite the team member to join you for coffee or tea at a local coffee shop. This has to happen when it is convenient for him/her. If he/she works, maybe you can do this during his/her lunch break, etc. **If the challenging team member is the opposite gender than you, bring a fellow team member with you. Never be alone with a team member of the opposite gender!** Don’t talk about the challenging behavior or attitude, simply spend time with him/her. Let the conversation go where it does naturally. Ask about his/her life, family, work, etc. The goal is to develop a relationship that will foster a greater level of obedience and unity within the CM standards. Repeat this encounter at least twice. On the second visit together, carefully inquire about his/her views regarding the CM standards that he/she is challenging, or about his/her attitudes, words, or behavior that you find challenging. Remind him/her of his/her value on the team and encourage him/her to adjust his/her behavior or words to fit within the CM team standards.
- Spend time with him/her in an activity that he/she enjoys (golf, sporting event, hobby, etc.). **The same caution about being with a team member of the opposite gender as was given above!** While enjoying the event or activity, develop a relationship with the team member that may foster a greater level of obedience and unity within the CM standards.



If the team member’s behavior or attitude doesn’t change, you may be forced to invite him/her to serve in another ministry.

2. **Respect Them** – It is natural to want to pay less attention to challenging people. It is critical to ask God to help you fight against that human nature. Instead of ignoring a challenging team member, do all you can to show him/her respect by listening to his/her comments or ideas, and asking for his/her views on things. Your “natural” fears are that this attention will only increase his/her challenging behavior, but that isn’t necessarily true. Every effort you make to bring a challenging team member “into the fold” has a 50% chance of “working.” If your attention and acts of respect produce a higher level of challenging behavior in the person, then there may be no other choice than a clear confrontation with the challenging team member.



**3. Confront Them** – If your efforts to develop a more effective relationship with the team member, and thereby reducing his/her challenging behavior, have not affected any improvement in his/her behavior, you may need to specifically confront him/her about the issue. If the challenging behavior is NOT a threat to the children's safety, you may choose to give him/her a formal warning/challenge to correct his/her behavior, or you will have to ask him/her to step away from the CM. You may give him/her a week or two to prove to you that he/she values his/her position as a CM team member by correcting the challenging behavior. Make a specific deadline and date for the next conversation. Record your conversation and document everything about the encounter. Update your supervising pastor or administrator about the confrontation and the deadline for improvement. If, during the week or two that you have given the team member to improve his/her behavior, you see significant effort to improve that challenging behavior, make sure to personally and immediately compliment the team member. Encourage the team member's value on the team every opportunity you have. If, after the week or two period, the behavior of the team member has not improved, ask him/her to see you after the service. Invite another CM leader to be with you when you thank the team member for his/her service, and formally end his/her membership in the CM team. Invite him/her to serve at another ministry within the church. Pray with him/her and document the meeting. Update your supervising pastor or administrator about the meeting right away. The supervising pastor or administrator may want copies of your documentation. If so, send them via email.

