**Society of Mentors Meeting**

**April 5, 2022**

**Theme:**

This call centered on missionaries working together. Guest speakers were Austin Gardner and David Gardner.

**Introduction: [0:28]**

How to work together on the mission field. Sometimes the senior missionary is massively threatened by the younger missionaries. When Austin arrived on the mission field in Mexico in1987, he was clearly told what he could and could not do. They were not allowed to start new works because when they left the senior missionary would have to take over the work. There is a temptation that runs rampant. Everyone likes the new guy, and so, the old guy feels threatened because the people he led to Christ now like the new guy better. The old guy likes to throw his weight around and make sure everyone knows that he is the senior missionary and he wants to be obeyed and listened to. He has a “I know it all” attitude because he knows the culture and language.

The new guy comes onto the field and deals with culture shock and language barrier, after spending a couple of years visiting churches where he was told he was the man. So after he arrives on the field, he wants the senior missionary to treat him like who he thinks he is. So there is a clash. The senior missionary believes he is the man because he arrived first and has been there. The newbie thinks he has better ideas about how things should operate.

Missionary David Gardner: **[2:10]**

Emotional intelligence is one aspect that is not given a lot of credence but that studies have shown is very important. Emotional intelligence can be defined as knowing how to develop relationships, read a room, detect conflicts, be aware of others’ feelings and emotions, etc. If we put it into biblical terms, Philippians 2, we see not seeking our own things, but seeking things for others, not considering ourselves, but considering others, not considering our feelings, but the feelings of others, that mentality goes a long way. If you want to have a good relationship working on the field, simply be a good Christian. There will still be mistakes, but at the end of the day a lot of the selfishness, conflict, anger, resentment, hurt feelings, bitterness, etc goes away.

Many people are unaware of what goes on in a room; they don’t understand what others are thinking.

**[7:04} Recommended Book List:** See full list and links below

**[8:36]** Take into consideration the fact that you might feel in the moment that you are right and your thoughts are correct or that you are lined up correctly with what you should be thinking, saying, doing, etc. But at the end of the day we are all influenced by our circumstances/situations. So you may see things through a lens that is not right because you are going through culture shock. We are influenced through our circumstances and we see things through a lens that is tainted by culture shock, by a lack of understanding of the culture, lack of cultural adaptation, or the language barrier.

**[10:40]** Just be aware that the heart is deceitful, desperately wicked, you can’t know it, and that is why you need to be close to Jesus. You need to feed your relationship with the Lord. Missionaries who deal most with culture shock and conflict, there is a lack of time spent with the Lord. They are not reading their Bible, not being fed, and not reading other books. All of the spiritual disciplines that would help with their relationship with the Lord have been discarded because they are too busy, stressed, or don’t understand.

**[11:33]** If we look to Jesus as our example, it is the opposite. When Jesus is busy, he goes away to the desert places and prays. Before he selects his twelve apostles, he prays. So it has to start with your relationship with the Lord. If we all look like Jesus, we should not be having as many conflicts.

**[12:06]** I understand my intentions and I give myself the benefit of the doubt. I don’t always understand the other person’s intentions and I don’t always give them the benefit of doubt. So that is where a great deal of the problems come.

That is also why the Culture Shock book is so important for all of you to read. Everyone who is on their way to the mission field should go ahead and read those books. You really don’t know that you are in culture shock, and the first sign is denial. Our insecurities boil to the top; we are in a pressure cooker. We don’t understand the language. We can’t speak the language.

**[13:31}** “The one misery of man is self-will, the one secret of blessedness is the conquest over our own wills. To yield them up to God is rest and peace. What disturbs us in this world is not "trouble," but our opposition to trouble. The true source of all that frets and irritates, and wears away our lives, is not in external things, but in the resistance of our wills to the will of God expressed by external things.” - Alexander Maclaren.

We are afraid. We never want to admit that we are nervous. You are in an uncomfortable position because it is new to you. It will eventually become routine and commonplace, if you can get the victory. Many times people suffer from culture shock for years, and they don’t deal with it.

**[16:00]** In Spiritual Maturity, Oswald Sanders talks about the disciples and their change of attitude after the Holy Spirit comes. It is so interesting that all of Jesus’s ministry, the time he is training the disciples, all they do is fight, argue, fight over who will be first, but the minute the Holy Spirit comes they don’t fight anymore. We don’t see in Acts many conflicts. There are disagreements, but not the strife of who is first or their rights, and it is all due to the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works in their lives and changes their perspectives, and now they are directed toward the Gospel.

A lot of our conflicts are created because one or two of the parties are not yielded to the Holy Spirit. Whether you are the senior missionary, or under the senior missionary, we need to have a lot of grace. Even the best intentioned people make mistakes. As the senior missionary, you need to have grace. If you are under the senior missionary, you need to understand that they are not perfect. When you come down to work with them, you will see they are not perfect, and then you get disappointed. You judge people by their actions, and you judge yourself by your intentions. There has to be grace.

Give the benefit of the doubt to the other. Prayerfully consider being very careful how you hear what nationals say to you, how you accept what happens from the senior missionary, and how you keep the peace. Don’t be the divider. Don’t be the separator. Don’t cause insecurities in the ministry to rise.

**[26:40]** It goes even further than the nationals. It extends to your wife as well. The missionary wife sees her husband and he is under somebody else, and she doesn’t like that or how he is told what to do. You have to defend the other person to your wife. If you are going to work together, your wives have to have a good opinion of each other and the people they are working with.

Guard the relationship you have with the other missionary because it is important. You don’t know all of the details. Guide your wife and help them with their thought life. Conflicts in relationships can be resolved. If you let that relationship tear down, and you allow your wife to have a horrible opinion about the missionary you are working with, you won’t have a working relationship or even a friendship for very long. Help her think through it biblically or spiritually in the beginning.

**[30:06]** Go through the Bible and study the “one another” in scripture and if you live out those commands, you will almost eliminate conflict.

We are to wash each other’s feet, love one another as Jesus loved us, we are to prefer one another, not judge one another, receive one another just as Christ received us, admonish one another, and not to bite and devour one another. A lot of the trouble is that we are not living out who we are. We feel justified in biting, devouring, snapping, and berating people, and God is not pleased with that.

**[31:17]** I am a servant. Those four words can resolve almost most any conflict we have in life. If we are just servants, which in the Greek is slaves, we have no right, no reason to fight for our respect, position, ministry, our name, title, etc. I am a servant, and that is how I need to deal with things.

If I can’t get along with someone, it has more to do with me than the other person. Once again Jesus is the example. Jesus was willing to eat with Pharisees, the religious leaders who hate him, to have his feet washed by ‘a strange woman’ which was likely a prostitute, and he looks at a young man who has many riches and who says he has done everything he has asked to inherit eternal life, and Jesus loved him. You have rich, poor, religious, sinful, all kinds of people that Jesus could handle being around because Jesus was a servant. The idea is that if I can’t get along with somebody, I need to examine myself, and learn to serve and love them.

**[37:00]** I need to be examining myself far more than I am examining the other person. We are not to provoke one another, not to be jealous, we are to bear each other's burdens, forbear one another, be kind to each other, forgive each other. If we do what the Bible says, can you imagine what happens in the relationship between the missionaries.

In Colossians, it says to let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. Start every morning and get alone with God. Pray yourself happy. Read your Bible and pray. Get right with God before you get with other people. It is hard to be a servant, unless you are serving Christ. We are to edify one another, provoke one another to love and good works, and consider one another.

**[38:40]** Reprove in private. Praise in public. There is nothing a man wants more than to be respected. So if you rebuke or reprove in public, and embarrass them, that will be almost irreparable damage. So you need to reprove them in private, and praise them in public. Let people know your approval of them in public. Complement them on their language, their service, etc in public.

As the leader you feel threatened so you become reactionary with how you deal with people and conflict. You need to take some time to think about why you feel threatened. Then, you have to realize that you may feel threatened because your pride is being threatened. Take some time in prayer and meditation to understand why you are feeling threatened.

**[44:32]** How you handle disagreements will speak loudly about you, your character, and your walk with God.

Hatred stirs up strife, love covers all sin.

A wrathful man stirs up strife, but he that is slow to anger, appeases strife.

He that loves transgression, loves strife.

Cast out the scorner, and strife and reproach will cease.

Where there is no talebearer, the strife ceases.

A contentious man kindles strife.

A proud heart stirs up strife.

Culture shock causes issues. You will do some really dumb stuff because you are in shock. You will embarrass yourself. It’s normal. You feel forgotten. There is a language barrier. Your parents are upset that you are gone and have taken the grandchildren. Your wife misses her family. There is no doubt that there will be issues.

If you are working with another missionary, there is going to be strife. But if you consider him your brother in Christ, and your fellow worker in Christ, you will be able to get along a lot better than you think.

**[47:42]** There will be conflict, but these are all heart issues when it comes to why we have conflict and where it is born. Your time with the Lord, reading the Bible, praying the Bible, meditating, and reading good, spiritually feeding books is very important during your time on the mission field and working with other people. If we are servants, we want to make the other person a success. As the senior missionary, you take the role of a parent. Being a competitive parent is a problem. Give the other person a chance to share a memory verse, give a 5 minute message, or do scripture reading. There are a lot of opportunities for them to be successful, which could create jealousy in your heart. But if you want them to be successful, you will be excited for them to succeed, have friends, be loved by the people, etc. In our carnal moments we want recognition, appreciation, and love, but more than that we should want success for the other person. Every relational conflict is a heart issue: pride, stubbornness, resentment, jealousy, covetousness, etc. All of these are heart sins that we have to deal with, and it is essential that we correct that in ourselves.

**[51:20]** One key word that will help us solve problems: listen - let the other guy speak, don’t already have planned what you are going to say, stop and intentionally listen, hear what they say, what they are feeling, what they are going through, learn what is on their heart. Arguments typically happen because two people are talking, not listening. Nobody is listening. The goal would be just to listen and learn.

Gossip is rampant in churches. Many times we are gossipping when we ask for prayer requests. If you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem, if you are talking about it. Everyone is talking, but not to the right person. You are listening to others about what someone else said, and you are not checking out facts, and that causes massive trouble. Open line of communication. Not gossipping would help us solve these problems. “Whisperers separate chief friends.” The whisperer is a dishonest person, and their goal is to separate people.

**[54:31]** If you are not part of the problem nor the solution then you should not be talking about it. Humans love drama. So the more spiritual you become, the more you shy away from drama. When speaking about relationships, all of the same principles apply. People who usually do not have a good relationship with their wife, do not have good relationships with others. So it is a ‘me’ issue.

You can’t be a good leader, if you are not a good follower. We should all be very quick to humble ourselves and submit to authority. We are all under the authority of Christ even as God the father is head of Christ. So be very careful how you deal with leadership, your attitude, and your treatment towards leadership. How you deal with leadership speaks volumes about you as a Christian and as a man. If you cause problems, problems will come to you when you are in charge as well.

**[58:15]** We need each other. Sometimes we forget that when we are doing ministry. Ecclesiastes 4:9. Use this position to serve God; so we need each other. All through your life, you need others. When we are hurting, we need a friend. Biblically, we need each other. Christianity is not solo; it is a team/family thing. You can not practice Christianity alone. Build these relationships as best as you can, and keep them as long as you can because they are that important to you.

**[1:00:46]** Long lasting relationships are a benchmark of a good ministry and a man of good character. A lot of people want to be pioneers and start in a new city all alone, and do everything alone. Perhaps many of them want that because they can’t work well with people. They can’t submit to authority or listen to or work with others. That is an issue. We need pioneers. But we need pioneers who know how to work with other people and love people. It is a problem when the reason to pioneer is not a burden for the lost or leading of the holy spirit, but it is conflict with another person. Conflict follows conflicted people. You will still have issues if you do not know how to deal with conflict. We need to have the characteristic that we are willing to work with and under people.

**[1:07:48]** Conclusion:

You are both hurting by making these mistakes. I would like to challenge you to look at the situation, and resolve the problem. Go say you are sorry. Work very hard at defending the other missionary you are working with, defend the nationals, defend your friends, don’t attack them. If something needs to be corrected, correct it in private. Don’t do anything to hurt each other. That should be our goal.

For the senior missionaries who are dealing with other missionaries, many times we want leadership, but we are surprised at the cost/burden of it. You need to have the attitude of Paul. “I will spend and be spent for the Gospel’s sake.” Jesus knew he would be betrayed, and that the disciples would hurt him, and he still tells them that he will meet them on the other side. You have to work through conflicts in your relationships and in ministry. Fight for your relationships and the people who are with it. It is worth it.

**Recommended Book List:**
*A Tale of Three Kings* by Gene Edwards. [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com/A-Tale-of-Three-Kings-audiobook/dp/B004ZGYA9C/ref%3Dsr_1_1?crid=10E0GK79ASALI&keywords=a+tale+of+three+kings&qid=1650481903&sprefix=a+tale+of+three+king%2Caps%2C339&sr=8-1)

*Spiritual Leadership* by Oswald Sanders. [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com/Spiritual-Leadership-Principles-Excellence-Believer/dp/0802416705/ref%3Dsr_1_1?crid=KQXCNILKIZ2T&keywords=spiritual+leadership+oswald+sanders&qid=1650481959&sprefix=Spiritual+Leadership+Oswald%2Caps%2C350&sr=8-1)

*On Being a Leader for God* by Warren Wiersbe. [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com/Being-Leader-God-Warren-Wiersbe/dp/0801013828/ref%3Dsr_1_1?crid=1S5DATDOK799Y&keywords=on+being+a+leader&qid=1650482082&sprefix=on+being+a+leader+%2Caps%2C200&sr=8-1)

*Culture Shock* by Myron Loss. [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com/Culture-Shock-Dealing-Stress-Cross-Cultural/dp/B000O2IPU6/ref%3Dsr_1_1?crid=3UWZ2DEM6IIE&keywords=culture+shock+myron+loss&qid=1650482116&sprefix=culture+shock+myron+loss%2Caps%2C230&sr=8-1)

*Spiritual Maturity* by Oswald Sanders. [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com/Spiritual-Maturity-Principles-Believer-Sanders/dp/0802416713/ref%3Dsr_1_1?crid=8HS7VH3CR9E7&keywords=Spiritual+Maturity+-+Oswald+Sanders&qid=1650482143&sprefix=spiritual+maturity+-+oswald+sanders%2Caps%2C221&sr=8-1) *Have We No Rights*? by Mabel Williamson. [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com/Rights-frank-discussion-rights-missionaries-ebook/dp/B004TP68EY/ref%3Dsr_1_2?keywords=Have+We+No+Rights%3F+-+Mabel+Williamson&qid=1650482287&sr=8-2)

*Winning with People* by John Maxwell. [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com/Winning-People-Discover-Principles-Every/dp/B082XJC9V5/ref%3Dsr_1_1?crid=363S0MUUKYUKS&keywords=Winning+with+People+-+John+Maxwell&qid=1650482319&sprefix=winning+with+people+-+john+maxwell+%2Caps%2C268&sr=8-1)