

Heart to Heart

A quarterly newsletter of Open Hearts Ministry

Fall 2004

When Are You Ready to Lead?

by Mark Bonham, Executive Director

"Who am I that I should lead others?" "What if they don't find me credible or listen to me?" "I am not a gifted speaker." "I am sure that others could do it better. Please ask someone else!"

Have you ever said or thought these things? You are in good company. Moses, the one who lead the captives out of Egypt, said the very same things to God when he was called to lead. God told Moses, "I will be with you...I have sent you...I am (everything you need)...Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say." (Exodus 3:12-4:12) When Moses still resisted, God gave him a co-leader. Aaron, his brother, had some abilities Moses didn't have. God promised, "I will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do." Moses ran out of arguments and reluctantly agreed to lead.

Are you a reluctant leader? I work with those who train leaders to lead, and I don't know of anyone who feels fully adequate for the task. Most of us readily admit that we have flaws, weaknesses and fall short of all that is required to address the pain of the wounded. I have observed that the people we train at SALTS who seem gifted and able often don't end up leading back home. And the ones that we think are least likely candidates have gone on to be highly successful group leaders. Along the way I have made a few observations:

- In this ministry weakness is an asset, not a liability. The ability to honestly recognize where you are in your own process of recovery and the ability to wrestle honestly with change is a model that serves others well. People that seem to have it all together are not safe people for those who know they, themselves, don't have it together.
- In this ministry being way ahead of others makes it difficult to be a fellow traveler. But people who are still discovering issues and growing as they offer direction are seen as insiders with something to contribute.
- In this ministry messes are not avoided, but entered. What is happening in the present and the way we are responding gives valuable insight to the way we see and respond to life in general. It will reveal where we are wounding others as we cling to unhealthy coping patterns and it will reveal where repentance and change is needed. When this happens, angels rejoice!

"People that seem to have it all together are not safe people for those who know they, themselves, don't have it together."

A Look inside...

Good Fences Make Good Neighbors.....	2
SALTS Scholarship Report.....	2
Notice to SALTS Alumni.....	2
What to do If You Become the Object of Someone's Tranference.....	3
Important Dates and Information.....	4

Our Mission:

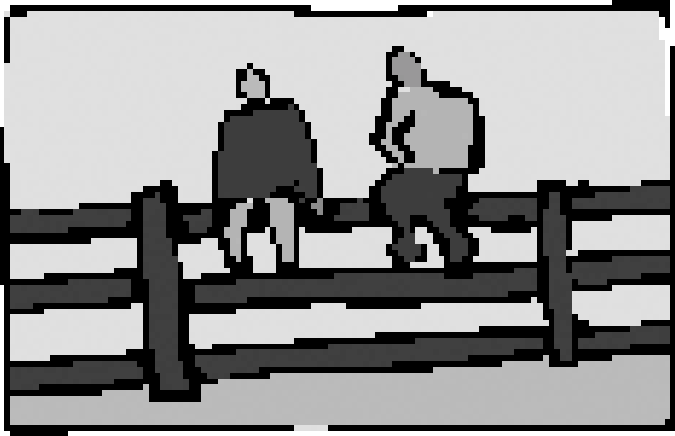
"Ministering to the abused through the love of Christ and equipping others to do the same."

(cont. on page 4)

Good Fences Make Good Neighbors

by Sandy Burdick, Ministry Director

This is an old saying but so true. Today, we call this concept boundaries. Good boundaries help us love one another in truth. What are boundaries?



"When we know what we want and do not want, what we are for and against, what we love and hate, what is "me" and what is "not me," we are setting boundaries." Boundaries Face to Face by Cloud and Townsend.

This new book by the boundary experts is a must read. The principles apply to your personal life and to you as a leader. As small group leaders, we need to be clear and direct with our co-leaders and our group members about what we are willing to give in the areas of time, phone calls, counseling and friendship.

Keeping the time frame, starting and ending is a must. Families are waiting for members to come home, rides are waiting. We don't want to be guilty of stealing anyone's time. As leaders, you are the time keeper. For example: Be clear about the starting time and give a 15 minute reminder at the end that you will be wrapping up on time. You can simply say; time is up. You can stand up and go to the door to say a kind goodbye. But keep your promises.

Notice to SALTS Alumni:

- Visit our website to order your materials for your small group.
- Starting a group in the fall? Check the "Locations" screen on our website to make sure your small group is listed and that your contact information is correct.
- Taking a sabbatical? We can also remove your information from the website.

Website: www.openheartsmintistry.org

Decide ahead of time how many phone calls you will take and how long you will talk. It is not rude to say, "I have 5 minutes. I will be glad to talk to you now or you can call back later." When we have a time crunch and are not clear about what we are willing to give, we do not give our best as we are feeling pulled, irritated and thus unable to love well. If you are the caller, simply ask, "Is this a good time to talk?"

Use your caller ID or answering machine to screen calls and choose what time of the day is best for you to talk. You then can give your undivided attention and enjoy the call. Make phone appointments when it is going to be a long call.

If group members feel they need extra counsel before the next meeting, be clear about what you are willing and able to give. It could be no calls, only group time. It may be one call a week. It is kind to let people know what you can give. They will feel better about what you give and so will you.

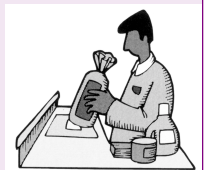
Many groups really bond and that is what we are looking for. The difficulty is that you may not have time for the investment in people's lives that a friendship deserves. It is good to encourage group members to connect with each other. As a leader you can chose if you want to be in the loop. Because there often is a deeper level of connection in the small group, people are awakened to desires for more. You can talk about this in the lesson on disappointment. For example, what will you do with the longing for a deeper connection? Don't intimate or promise that you will be there for the person if you don't intend to keep that promise.

How will group members deal with their disappointment? That will be worth talking about. Be aware that your role as a leader who is kind and loving surfaces desires for connection with you. You can give a taste of community and that is desirable. Looking for more is about their journey. Our privilege as a leader is to model loving involvement made possible with good boundaries.

SALTS Scholarship Fund Report

Thanks to your participation in the **Meijer Community Rewards Program** we have raised almost \$100.00 per month. Thank you for taking the time to enroll and use your card at Meijers!

- Join Meijer Community Rewards at Meijer.com/rewards or pick up an application at your Meijer store.
- Use the code assigned to OHM: **378921**.
- Swipe your card whenever you shop at Meijers.
- We receive a percentage of your purchase totals and these funds will be used for SALTS Scholarships.
- Encourage friends, relatives, local group members to join.



What to do when you become the object of others transference?

by Mary Jane Hamilton, SALTS trainer and OHM mentor.

What exactly is transference?

“The term means literally to convey information or content from one person, place or situation to another. The usual pattern is for a person (you) in the present to be experienced as though he or she (you) were a person in the past. Thus...transference is basically a repetition of an old object relationship in which attitudes and feelings, either positive or negative, pertaining to a former relationship have been shifted onto a new person (you) in the present. This is to say that a mode of perceiving and responding to the world that was developed and appropriate to childhood is inappropriately transferred into the adult context.”
Sheep In Wolves' Clothing, Valerie J. McIntyre, Baker Books, 2002.

For example, transference occurs when you remind a group member of the good parent that they have been looking for, or you do something that reminds them of a bad parent and they are ready to project their negative feelings toward you. It is important to realize that an effective group leader will become the object of transference. It will surface when a participant's need is met with understanding, kindness and affirmation. There is no solution to this dilemma other than to accept it as reality and learn to deal with it wisely. Transference starts with warm and likeable emotions toward you as the group leader. After a few sessions these feelings can turn to negative and sometimes irrational emotions.

Here is how this happened to me. I was perceived as a strong and capable leader with a compassionate heart as I listened and responded to a participant's story. She was open and eager to hear my words and by all appearance respected and liked me. So I was surprised when she turned on me and angrily blurted, “You look like my mother, you act like my mother, you even sound like my mother. I hated her as a child and I still do. You are just like her!” Transference surfaced her unhealed and immature (childish) soul. It was clouding the glory of God within her.

What do you do when transference happens? Here are a few suggestions:

- Confront the person with truth and kindness. Example:
She has misjudged who I am. I am not her mother.
- Respond out of maturity as opposed to hurt. Remember when you respond out of hurt (and a level of me was hurt) you are allowing your wounds to be your compass. This will only add confusion and mistrust to the confrontation.
- Guide them into identifying and resolving the issues of the past that have produced this present confusion. Be curious about details of their story you have not heard. Do so with a gentle yet firm spirit as they (hopefully) recognize their immaturity and the inappropriate ways their past has ruled their life.
- Pray...pray...and seek the help of a mature Christian to clarify your perceptions.

Know that a certain amount of transference is “natural” in any group as you and others identify with a story. This type of transference affirms others and is good. Know that transference is confronted to provide the opportunity to release a person from the strongholds (sin) of their past and give them the opportunity to “choose life” with their identity in Christ.



Heart to Heart Message Board

It's coming! We are hard at work on our new logo and material enhancement and we are aiming for January 2005 for the unveiling of our new face. This is not just something we are doing for OHM and our image. The new materials will be more attractive and inviting, easier to navigate, and more useful for group members. Group leaders will be proud and excited to offer these materials. Group promotion will be aided with a sharper image. So pray for the process. And consider designating a special gift to the **“OHM Materials Project”** to help us cover development cost and keep our resources affordable for everyone.

The gift that keeps on giving! When you help train a leader by providing scholarship support, in addition to impacting the life of a missionary, pastor or layperson, you are investing in the lives of all the future group members who come for help. Start an avalanche of help for the wounded. Support the **OHM Scholarship Fund**.

SALTS Alumni – Develop your leadership skills at ALTS (**Advanced Leadership Training Seminar**). Get feedback from peers and special input from well experienced SALTS trainers. ALTS runs concurrently with SALTS training. You owe it to yourself and your group to keep your heart connected, your skills sharp, your understanding growing. Join us in October or April.



Kalamazoo, MI 49007

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In this Issue:

When Are You Ready to Lead?

(cont. from page 1)

- In this ministry we face shame, first in ourselves and secondly in others. Shame says that because we are flawed, if we are to lead others we need to hide. It says that if we are honest and vulnerable we will show that we have nothing to offer. Shame keeps us focused inward in unhealthy ways. Shame forgets about God and His purposes and promises. Facing shame in self and in others diffuses its power and restores a healthy focus.
- In this ministry leaders need to know who they are and who they are not. Healthy leaders are not those who have answers for you, but who know how to walk with you as you find answers for yourself. Healthy leaders fail, disappoint, and do it wrong. But they don't get stuck there. They admit it to the group and turn it into a growing experience for everyone. Healthy leaders set and keep boundaries, clarify issues and maintain a positive vision for each group member's growth. But they don't play the Holy Spirit, pressure group members to see it the leader's way, or take choice away and replace it with legalism. Nor do they believe that they are responsible for a group member's healing. They leave that to God and the individual.

If all this is true, we are never fully ready to lead. There is no neat set of criteria that qualifies or disqualifies. It really comes down to a question of the heart: Am I willing to let God use my wounds, my weakness and my inadequacy? Am I willing to vulnerably offer real love and care so that others feel they have a safe guide for the journey ahead? When Moses and Aaron finally stood before the people to lead them out of captivity, we read, "...when they heard that the Lord was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshipped." (4:31). *May God use your leadership to accomplish the same!*

Important Dates to Remember

September 27 - October 2, 2004 - SALTS, Munich, Germany

October 11-16, 2004 - SALTS, Maranatha, Muskegon, MI.

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