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# Orientation to MTS

## **Introduction**

These are some key areas to discuss in setting up our teamwork each year and in providing some orientation for Apprentices. We need to learn to set policies and standards for our ministries. They are an aid to thinking about life and godliness and help us to lead our ministry teams. In ministry there is no 'clocking on and off'. When are we at work and when are we not at work? Some events are clearly work, others are not. There are work patterns but also many irregular 'divine interruptions'.

## **1. Adjusting To Ministry As Work**

(See MTS Training Discussion Paper 8.01)

## **2. Role Of Spouses of Apprentices**

Make adjustments if spouse is a husband.

## **Expectations**

Many churches feel they are getting two workers for the price of one, which is unfair. We expect our wives to be nothing more or less than a Christian women. That will include being a faithful church member and so be in church regularly and in a Bible Study group. If they are never at church, then there is a problem.

We are happy for wives to do whatever else they would like to do. If they want to take up formal ministries, it is their choice. They are welcome to attend all staff training programs, and are always considered a member of the team.

Realistically, there are other ways we expect wives will help the whole team. For example, the home phone becomes the work phone number. Also, hospitality to others will involve family and affect the family routine.

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## **Adjustments and frustrations**

There are many kinds of adjustments that wives need to make. Some wives will have to make more adjustments than others depending on what things they have done previously.

- Many wives would prefer to be in the ministry themselves rather than go out and earn the money. Husbands need to encourage their wives to see themselves as partners in the ministry. They are looking at a long period of training.
- Financial costs may mean delaying having children which can be emotionally difficult. Women need to learn to be content and positive about the decisions they have made.
- Sometimes wives have to cope with big financial pressures. Both partners need to understand that it is only for a few years, although it may seem like the situation will remain forever.
- Wives who are home with children will find days off difficult because she will want to go out and he will want to stay at home and see no one.
- Being married to someone in ministry is very disruptive to your social networks as you keep changing churches etc. Wives need to be aware that this may happen and have strategies to deal with it.
- Wives will find that the relationships that they have will be determined more and more by your husband. It is important for the wives' emotional wellbeing to hang on to some key relationships from the past.
- Most wives get anxious about their husbands: their future, failings, criticisms etc. If a wife is anxious it would be helpful for her to remember she is married to a capable man and she should try not to worry too much. However, if she needs to worry, someone will speak to her.
- Wives need to accept that their husbands need to 'fail' on MTS, so that they will learn and thus stretch themselves.
- One of the things that make it impossible for men to enter public ministry is the inability of their wives to cope with criticism. If your husband is going to be a godly minister of the gospel, he will be criticised, so a wife needs to learn how to cope with this.
- Husbands do not necessarily need to repeat every criticism to their wives because it will hurt the wife more than it hurts the husband to say it.

- Wives should not compare their husband to others on the team.
- It is important never to marry a minister, but a man. Never be a minister's wife but a man's wife. The greatest contribution wives can make is not by ministering publicly but by loving their husbands privately. A man's wife can make or break his ministry. She can make his ministry not because she is running lots of ministry, but because she makes him the man God meant him to be by complementing and completing him.
- It is important to remember wives just have to be themselves.

### **Training**

Spouses should get involved in as much training and ministry as possible. Sometimes they can be in a ministry with their partner, such as teaching a class.

### **3. Privacy and Confidentiality.**

We are in the people business and we gather loads of information.

- The underlying principle is: will it be edifying to tell this?
- Beware of gossip. Do not speak if there is no benefit to the person concerned.
- If a colleague tells us about another person, do not tell other staff and don't treat the information as public knowledge.
- We may raise issues confidentiality with the team to discuss what is best for specific people. This can also further our training.
- What is said in the staff meeting is not to go elsewhere. Be loyal to one another.
- Never let people bind you to total confidentiality. We need to be able to tell our spouse or leaders if appropriate. Sometimes we need to share things we know with others (spouse, staff) as a safety valve.
- If you are given information that has legal overtones, encourage the person to make restitution and set the situation right. Talk to your Trainer and see if a solicitor should be consulted. Suggest: "I won't tell anyone without telling you first." Also, you have a legal responsibility to report crimes. This should be done through your trainer - don't jump in and do it yourself. The best way to do it may in fact be to work the person around to confessing to the police themselves.
- When asked a question, we are not compelled to answer - just do not lie.

- When we talk about people, the way we do it is very important -never a put-down, but in love with concern for godliness.
- It can be helpful for new staff to start from square one in relationships with people and not be told all the details about specific people. It is often better to work out our own understanding of the person.
- There may be things that certain people need to know - you need to use wisdom to work out what to tell who and when; i.e. what should be passed on and what should be forgotten.
- Response cards. Never throw them out! We are fanatically interested in the person the card represents. If you never throw out a card, you will never throw out the wrong one! You never know where a contact will lead.
- Any information given on cards is only given to eldership and staff.
- Even within church membership, don't give information out freely.
- NEVER give out a woman's details. Refer enquires to the Office, and they will contact on the enquirer's behalf. No woman's phone number should ever appear on any advertising.
- Any information given to you it is assumed that you are able to tell your supervisor. This doesn't mean you have to tell them, but don't share it with everyone else (information only up and down, not across). Share information only for the benefit of the person you're caring for – if you don't know what to do etc.

#### **4. Alcohol**

- We are free to drink or abstain.
- We are not free to get drunk 1 Timothy 3:3 etc.
- Never be open to the accusation of even being tipsy.
- Recognise that alcohol will be a problem for many in church life.
- We are not free to cause others to stumble. Alcohol is an area where some Christians are convinced that it is wrong.
- Don't be the person to initiate or encourage drinking because you do not know the damage you are doing or the model you are setting.
- Social pressure to drink is worse than drinking itself.
- Generally it is best not to serve alcohol or to promote it in church life.

- We need to pay attention to the context in which we live. Alcohol abuse is very common in our society. (1/20 Australians are alcoholics; 1/4 Australians live with alcoholics). As the problem is not being addressed it is not good for Christian leaders to take leadership in drinking alcohol.

## **5. Money**

- Christ's Name is disgraced and ministries are ruined through greed and embezzlement.
- There must be absolute integrity in all money matters.
- There must be the appearance of absolute integrity in all money matters.
- Ministers should not physically handle the congregation's money and so not to appear to have a hand in the till.
- At Conferences and Bookstalls you do have to handle money, but here you are dealing with business transactions rather than donations.
- Keep good money records and issue receipts so that all is recorded. Never borrow from the bookstall.
- Be aware of our greed. 1 Peter 5:2
- Be determined to be content with your own wages.
- In ministry, we are not at liberty to receive money from other sources but to depend on our own congregation of welfare. Any money we receive should go to the church. In particular, we must not accept any money from congregation members so that we will not be indebted to anyone and not tempted to do anything for money. Make up your mind to do it now.  
Exceptions: money from family, small kind tokens of love, out of pocket expenses.

If we keep these gifts, we cultivate greed and learn that ministry can be used for monetary gain. We do not need these gifts since we are provided for through our church, MTS, working etc. We can be generous by insisting the gift is passed on to others, especially the organisations that fund us.

- Greed and embezzlement ruin ministries all the time. A requirement of elders is that they must not be greedy for money (1 Tim 3, Titus 1, 1 Peter 5).
- Ministers will get paid but that should not be their motive in ministering.
- If a ministry is being run as a business it will do what attracts the crowd so more people will give more money. This will not be gospel ministry.

- What do you do if you are building your own platform? Find a treasurer and don't handle the money yourself.

## **6. Gender Issues**

1 Tim 5:1-2

Working with colleagues of the opposite sex:

- In one sense there is no difference as ministers of the gospel.
- Our physical and emotional capacity is different. Women's capacity for relationship is greater than most males, but this takes its toll. Women are often more compassionate, more generous, understand others better, and are more sensitive.
- Men tend to be task-centred with female co-workers rather than relational.
- For women, the future is less certain in some ways and this leads to anxiety.
- Men should do the physical work.
- Men tend to make unilateral decisions rather than through discussion with women.
- Men should be shepherds and protectors of women.
- Be aware that working in ministry together can breed emotional and sexual intimacy.

### **Ministry to the opposite sex:**

- Christ's Name is disgraced and ministries are ruined through sexual unfaithfulness.
- There must be no appearance of evil as well as no evil.
- As far as possible, establish channels that enable primary pastoral responsibility for women to be taken up by other women, and for men by other men.
- Meet publicly, rather than privately, both for your reputation and godliness. Don't set up regular appointments with someone of the opposite sex.
- It is easy to talk about life and seek support from someone other than your spouse. This can lead to relational risk.
- If you feel there is any threat upon your relationship with your spouse, take immediate action!!
- Be accountable to your Trainer in this.

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## **7. Dress**

- Clothing is a statement about yourself, so you need to be thoughtful about what you are trying to say.
- Some people are more sensitive than others.
- People do notice what you're wearing.
- We must dress to avoid distraction or offence.
- What helps you to preach the gospel is what matters, not what you like.
- Dress appropriately for the context - part of the context will be age.

### **Modesty:**

*I also want the women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, adorning themselves, not with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God.*

1 Timothy 2:9-10

- Paul calls women to modesty as an outward expression that they follow the Lord, turning away from worldly ideals of beauty or status that are pursued through appearance.
- The way a person dresses can have an impact on another believer's struggle against lust, however this is not the Bible's impetus for modesty. Women are told to dress modesty for the sake of their own godliness and profession of faith, not burdening them with responsibility for another person's sin.
- It is possible for men to dress immodestly as well, and so need to be equally as conscious of the thought process behind their decisions about dress.
- Conversations about modesty, either with ministry workers or congregation members, may at times be necessary. These should be handled with sensitivity, realising that there may be bigger issues of insecurity and body image underlying the person's immodesty.
- Modesty should be preached on rarely but exemplified consistently by staff and other lay leaders.
- Rather than setting absolutes, nurture a culture in which Christians give thoughtful consideration to their dress, as in all other areas of godliness.

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## **8. Extra-curricular ministries**

Eg. speaking at camps, youth groups etc. Some considerations:

- Which ones will further your training goals?
- Ensure your local responsibilities are fulfilled first.
- Watch the ego.

## **9. Other Adjustments And Pitfalls**

- Moving into a new ministry for training
- Relating to your congregation as a staff member
- Others expectations
- Finding out the history and agenda of an existing ministry/group
- Competing and comparing
- Freedom to fail