

'MAN, MORALITY, BELIEF & FREEDOM'

# **AFTER THE VISITING COURSE, WHAT NEXT?**

WORKING & DEVELOPING AS A GROUP

There are no 'rules' in MRA. These notes are NOT a manual on how MRA meetings must be run, they suggest how MRA meetings can be run. They attempt to illuminate attitudes rather than any techniques. Meetings should always be fresh and spontaneous.

The best meetings are those at which God has been clearly present, inspiring, prompting, encouraging and uniting you in conviction as to what is right and how to proceed. EA.

## After the Visiting Course, What Next?

Moral Re-Armament has the tendency its name suggests. It shows ordinary men and women a way to become responsible with others for how the world should be, hate, greed and fear free, where love, concern and respect motivate what is best for each and all. MRA proposes Global change - in human hearts. It addresses the source of Man's chaos, our rather under-developed Human nature.

Decide to be free - guided by your deepest God given convictions, and it will constructively change your life, family, work, community, even your nation or wider. Make no decision and next week you will again be 'too busy', the ideas will be put aside, then forgotten. Then, all you have glimpsed that could be - will evaporate like mist, and hope will grow a little colder.

### **Growing Together.**

Those who invite Visiting Courses are asked to seek participants from only one or two small areas of about 10km diameter. Why?

Because this is about the **future**. If you are all local keeping in touch regularly afterwards is easy. Course friendships develop at an unusually deep level. You have learned to trust and respect a group of local people. It would be a great waste indeed not to build on such a valuable investment of mutual friendship.

There are other good reasons too. The Course leaves you with many new insights to explore, which take time to digest. How you wish you could remember more... Your rough notes and general impressions, the few really clear things that you remember are however not the same as someone else's. You can help each other.

Regular group meetings can 'unpack' what the Course delivered, and then begin putting it to good use - as you develop new ideas exactly suited to your own lives and local circumstances. All of you will know the local issues of common interest and many other

people who may have a part to play. Some you will be able to help, some will help you. Things begin to progress at a personal and local level. Individually and together you become effective.

Solidarity is another good reason for a local group. There will be many times when having trustworthy good friends around you who will listen, help and stand with you is a great strength.

Evil needs no co-ordination to succeed; the same cannot be said of Good. A negative message, a lie, corruption and chaos are spread far easier than positive ideas, truth, integration and order. Constructive forces have constantly to co-operate in order to succeed, and even that is blighted with difficulty. A committed group who meet regularly to help each other listen for and act upon their deepest convictions becomes a rare tool in the hand of God.

### **The Cost of Commitment**

Deciding to do anything regularly takes personal commitment. It is an often costly decision of will, which is made easier if others share your commitment. The decision of each person makes a group a reality.

Living MRA's ideas is not easy; one can be a bit 'occasional' about it, particularly at the beginning and if you are on your own! Then nothing much happens. Without a similarly committed group of local friends one can drift to a halt, through laziness or inexperience, and not notice it. And hope will cool again.

When you decide to stand for something challenging and adventurous like MRA, you will almost immediately run into people who want to persuade you to behave otherwise. It is as if you have set off an alarm, and indeed you have! Your stand alarms those who have their own interests and comforts rather high on their agenda. Such 'me first' agendas have been common for so long, people are challenged by what you stand for. Those most challenged will either be fascinated and want to know more, or will oppose you with vigour, even venom, often in God's name,

because they are challenged. The battle line between good and evil runs through every human heart. Trustworthy like minded friends are a great comfort at such times.

### **Aims of a Local Group.**

The aim of a local group is to develop the understanding and the effect of MRA's ideas, at a personal, local and wider level. It is about stimulating change in yourself and discovering what God will do through obedient people, and sharing what you find.

The aim is not to develop an organisation, with committee, minutes and so on, but to develop an expanding group of friends committed to seek how to co-operate in bringing beneficial change to all aspects of life.

The aim is to become hope givers, beacons showing ways for others to become attuned to God and His Master Plan for us all.

### **Nature and Conduct of Group Meetings.**

Above all else, enjoy each other! Play together whenever you can and through openness, trust and integrity, develop your friendship and fellowship. Through this develop prayer and the honest sharing of your thoughts and needs, your growth, your fears, your faith and your outreach to others. Open your meeting to new people who wish to discover life changing ideas. Meetings should be warm and welcoming, with seriousness and humour.

Ask who should lead the meeting, or if someone has conviction to do so. (All should feel encouraged to lead meetings.) The leader's role is to make new people welcome, encourage others to share ideas and gently steer discussions so that the best is brought out and people's ideas and convictions are illuminated. It helps if everyone present has a notebook and pencil in which to make their own notes.

So that everyone present feels at ease, regular meetings should be small enough to allow all to speak within the time available and without feeling daunted by a crowd. If meetings get large, over 10 or so, split into two smaller groups which come together later to share news, convictions and plans.

Don't waste time with social chit chat at group meetings, there is time for that later.

In the days before a meeting try to consider what steps of change you may need, or what help others lack. Write your thoughts down. Bring your convictions to the meeting and share what 'gold' of insight you may have been given. Don't impose convictions on your friends, but place them gently 'on the table' so that all can see them. (This may need practice!) At the end people will carry off whatever they feel enriches them. There is always enough.

Help each other, with tender care, to consider and take steady steps that deal with character or Human nature at the deepest level.

The one Authority a group needs is God. Among sincere people His unity tends to show. But don't chase Unity, it is there or it is not, just seek it through God's leadership. In His presence and through His promptings the group must look to find its way.

Beware! Human Nature always tries to push God into second place. Temptation to lead, speak most, seem most changed or avoid deep honesty will always be with you. See it! Be great spirited enough to admit it. Apologise. Put right what you can. Ask for forgiveness and help to be different, and in your turn forgive generously and hold no record or resentment. But remember, self improvement is not the end in itself, it is the means to change the way things develop, in and around you.

While it is important to look inwards and to seek strength and help to change remember, superficial changes bear no fruit. The fruit of deep change shows in how you live life, in how you behave more than what you say. That way your life will touch others, move events and affect the way things develop.

Allow time in meetings for prayer and listening. Think about something that has been felt or said. Write your thoughts down and feed them back into the meeting; look for God given unity of conviction between you. Seek for greater clarity and degree of unity, and what should be the outcome.

Speak truth, without indiscretion or hurtfulness, and expect no less. Don't interrupt, listen with respect, take time, think about what was said and what was meant before you comment. Learn to read people's situation and needs, and seek God's wisdom on how to respond positively.

Be sensitive to those who seem to bring little thought, who are silent or who only offer scraps. They may be shy or in need of your care, insight and help. Would they like to talk more privately about something that troubles them? Care for the person struggling with truth and change, and never divulge to others what they tell you in confidence.

Honesty and Trust that are reciprocated result in Love, a highly desirable, right relationship in most cases, however an atmosphere of deep trust and openness can sometimes lead the opposite sex to misread one's attempts to help them. This is more likely if their problem makes them vulnerable and in need of love. Alternatively one may start helping such a person and find that one's own emotions have become entangled.

Either way, the Devil uses our weakness' and best intentions to bring confusion and pain. Helping someone of the same sex, or helping with another person, can avoid such misleading situations.

As a general guide, relationships that positively include others are unlikely to be problematic, while those that tend to exclude others tend to be divisive within a group trying to find God's way forward. Address such issues early, if they arise.

Informal discussion and fellowship is valuable after a group meeting, so that people don't only meet 'on business'. You should also plan and enjoy normal outings and social events - we live in a

real world that just needs to be better. Shared fun, friendship, trust and conviction is how Jesus built a most unlikely group of disciples - who have had quite an effect on the world.

These notes only illustrate elements of such meetings. God is dynamic, so be inventive, expect meetings to be different, don't fix a pattern, be flexible! Keep surprising yourselves as God leads.

### **Conclusion.**

This is the beginning not a conclusion! Who knows what God can accomplish through a small group of dedicated disciples who listen regularly for His directions and follow willingly? What we do know is that God works through ordinary people like you.

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### **What Next?**

*'Man, Morality, Belief & Freedom'* is Part 1 of the *'Foundations For Freedom'* programme. Part 2 is the *'International Course'* held annually in September in Britain. This is for people who wish to increase their understanding and use of these ideas in a deeper and more global way. Apply for details to:-

'Foundations For Freedom', 69 Victoria Rd, Oxford. OX2 7QG, UK.