

Quarrel? Or Collaborate?

St. Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 12 how the body is composed of many parts, but yet it functions as one body. He goes on to say, in verse 26, *If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.*

Isn't that a beautiful picture of who we are as the redeemed children of God, members of the body of Christ, caring for one another? What is equally as beautiful is the knowledge that our Heavenly Father always has a grasp on the dynamics of how we as women communicate, both when we are frustrated or have a problem that needs to be handled and when things are proceeding smoothly. Sadly, our sinful nature always wants its way, and we forget that following this nature leads to a negative result and suffering in the body of Christ. What a blessing it is when we — in response to all that our Savior has done for us through His perfect life, death, and glorious resurrection — can say: *Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus* (Philippians 2:4–5).

Have you ever heard a sister in Christ say that even if she can't control those around her, she can try to control how she responds to them? It is true. While conflict occurs whether we want it or not, we don't have to make it worse. Here are five possible ways to respond to conflict that can help the process instead of hinder it. Be in prayer as you tackle your conflict and work towards a solution.

1. Postpone – It is at times good to just let things go or put them off until later. It is alright for the body of Christ to pause and look at what lies before it as they consider the Christ-like way to respond. In a heated discussion, it is okay to say that you can't talk about this now and you need time to pray about it or do some research, especially if a problem might resolve itself. A deep breath, some time in God's Word, and a good night's sleep will often change a person's perspective on the immediacy or urgency of an action. Whatever you do, for the good of the group, make sure the situation is resolved in a Christ-like way and not just swept under the carpet where it can fester and grow into a bigger issue.
2. Accommodate – Sometimes it is appropriate to let the other party have their way. Maintaining harmony needs to be a priority in the Lutheran Women's Missionary League. It is alright to give in when it is not a spiritual matter. It might actually be a good idea. God values unity and harmony. *How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!* (Psalm 133:1 NIV). Maybe you don't *really* need to have scalloped potatoes at your next zone event ... it is just a thought.
3. Compromise – This is the best choice if you need a quick decision. Prolonged conflict is always emotional and distracting, and detrimental to the body of Christ, so compromise if you need to move past the problem to get on with the important work that our Heavenly Father places before us. For example, in choosing a servant activity for your next meeting, maybe you can come to a consensus to bring diapers *and* wipes for the crisis pregnancy center instead of one or the other.

4. Encourage – This type of response, especially when you need to make an unpopular decision for the good of the group, should be used instead of forcing compliance which may be met with resistance. Instead of forcing others to agree with you, listening and encouraging would be the way to go as you lead people to a particular decision for the good of the group. The words of Hebrews 10:24–25 come into play here: *And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.* As you encourage and influence, be sure you are not overbearing or doing it for selfish reasons. Consider this: Encourage someone new to choose the tablecloths for the mission festival. Then understand that it's not a crisis if the type of tablecloth chosen is not the one you would have picked.

5. Collaborate – Sometimes you can't just vote to solve a problem. It's important to collaborate and cooperate with each other. In Acts 6, the Church ran into a situation where the Greeks said the Hebrews were discriminating against their widows in food distribution. This required an out-of-the-box solution where the apostles called a meeting and, with God's help, they collaborated with those involved to find a solution that was satisfying to everyone. Often this approach is the only one that will truly resolve a problem because both parties are committed to the solution and are satisfied that they have been treated fairly. This involves listening, talking, and working together to find the best solution. St. Paul prays, in 1 Corinthians 12:25, *that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.* This is what collaboration is all about — working together for the good of the group. Collaboration takes time, so be patient.

Serving the Lord with gladness will probably involve making hard decisions, especially when we step out of our comfort zones and invite others to share the fellowship we have as Lutheran Women in Mission. The key to using any of these techniques is remembering that even in difficult situations, we are all sisters in Christ. Every obstacle is an opportunity to show Christ's love to our fellow Christians and to offer the kindness and love that He has shown to us, *to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace* (Ephesians 4:1b–3).

for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure (Philippians 2:13).

LWML Growth and Development Committee
Published by Lutheran Women's Missionary League
Originally Published April 2013
www.lwml.org

