



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, as well as 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, in the words of Philippians 2:5, say *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.*

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.

1. Postponement – 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 OK 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 body, 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. Accommodation – Sometimes it is OK to let the other party have their way. Maintaining harmony needs to be a priority in the LWML. As long as you aren't feeling as if you are being taken advantage of, 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. Jesus prayed for unity in John 17:20b, 21a, 22b, 23 NIV: *"I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. ... that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."* Maybe you don't *really* need to have scalloped potatoes at your next zone rally ... 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 bring diapers *and* wipes for the crisis pregnancy center instead of one or the other.

4. Encourage – This type of response, especially when you have to make an unpopular decision for the good of the group, should be used instead of forcing compliance which will be met with rebellion in most cases. Instead of forcing others to agree with you, encouraging or influencing 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: *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 doing it for selfish reasons, as that would be the definition of bullying. Consider this: the type of tablecloth used at the Mission Festival is *not* a crisis!
5. Collaboration – Sometimes you can't just vote to solve a problem. You must collaborate and cooperate. 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. Dear sister, 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, co-laboring for the good of the body. This takes time, so plan accordingly.

“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 friends in the LWML. 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 for us to our fellow Christians and to offer the kindness and love that He has shown 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).