



The Power of “Un”

Un ... just two little letters until they are added to the beginning of a word, but then *un* changes everything. With *un*, “clear” becomes “unclear.” What was “spoken” is now “unspoken.” “Met” is now “unmet,” and “realistic” is transformed to “unrealistic.” When we then add unclear, unspoken, unmet, and unrealistic to describe our expectations of ourselves or our sisters in Christ, this becomes a recipe for “unhappiness.”

Expectations are often based on past experience or values and are anticipated with excitement. When we work together to serve our God, we bring our expectations into the group. Often everyone involved has their own idea of what should happen, but this is not necessarily what *does* happen. Because we are sinners and therefore imperfect, unclear and unspoken expectations can surface if we make assumptions that everyone agrees with us. Unfortunately, we don’t always communicate expectations to our sisters. We assume they agree with us, often because they haven’t shared their ideas.

To confuse the situation further, some groups have “unwritten” rules which may not have been communicated to new participants:

- We’ve always done it this way;
- You should want to be part of this activity;
- It is someone else’s turn;
- You should be able to figure this out;
- If we say it is important, it is; and
- You should care about this.

These rules may be rooted in guilt and tradition instead of a desire to serve. They contribute to power struggles, manipulation, and resistance to change. In other words, if rules aren’t shared, you can be kept from making changes that will make the group “uncomfortable.” Soon the group has women lost in their service to God. Newcomers to the group are coerced into leadership positions for which they are “unprepared.” They may feel “unsatisfied” or “unwanted” as their efforts are critiqued, and possibly criticized, by others.

How can we combat the power of *un* in our relationships and expectations? Consider these four steps:

1. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, recognize past experiences and beliefs that affect our perceptions. As forgiven and redeemed children of God through the blood of Jesus Christ, we are free to state our expectations and be clear about what we can contribute for the furtherance of the kingdom of God.
2. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we can listen actively and note what seems important. Then as forgiven and forgiving children of God, we can restate what we think we heard and discuss what was said, so that we can put the best construction on everything and avoid, or at least head off, many misunderstandings.
3. Through the use of inventories, help women discover their spiritual gifts as well as their God-given talents and abilities. With those in mind, help them find opportunities to serve others as Christ has served them by using these gifts, talents, and abilities. As they serve others and respond to all that

God has given them through faith in Christ Jesus, they can more easily feel a part of the group as they contribute to the kingdom.

4. Encourage without pressure. Let each redeemed child of God, through prayer and the study of God's Word, along with the encouragement of fellow believers, decide what they want to share and where they can serve. Then mentor and help them.

It's been said that some people take the heart out of you, while others put it back in. Be someone who puts it back. Don't let the power of *un* interfere with the work of the One.