

Passages: Tools for Finding Your Way Through Conflicts

By Dr. Tamara Albrecht

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Part II: Focus on the Job

- A. The job interview is the most important step to discover what kinds of conflict one might encounter. At the interview--
- Be truthful. If you feel you must hide or bend your answers, that raises a red flag that something is wrong.
 - Ask many questions so that you may detect underlying issues and energy that does not sit well with your instincts.
 - Can you see yourself working as equal team ministers with the other staff, each honoring the other's fields?
 - If the job does not seem healthy, walk away.
- B. If you take the position, try to avoid conflict before it arises. "Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness." [Ephesians 6:14]
- Trust yourself to respond quickly and objectively in conflictive situations.
 - Do YOUR job even if others do not do theirs. Just do your job.
 - Try to maintain friendly but professional relationships—
 1. Think before accepting lunch or social invitations one-on-one: is something going on here such as gossip or attempted undermining of others' positions?
 2. Think carefully if asked to join the church, considering pros and cons.
 3. Be wary of "triangulation" – becoming involved in another's power struggle.

C. Tools for constant self-evaluation: Paul said, “For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared.” [Ephesians 6:15]. At regular intervals consider:

- What have I learned and accomplished?
- Plant seeds of change by educating, but try not to drive change. Let change grow from seeds if it is to happen. Within a year evaluate how many seedlings have sprouted.
- Use theological, biblical and musical language to increase your own comfort level and to help educate others by expanding awareness of why music is *worship, scripture, sermon* and *God inspired*.
- Explore writings of Martin Luther and other theologians. Begin collecting quotes and wisdom on the importance of music as worship and theology.
- Know that conflict can also lead to positive results, including a sense of harmony in team ministry.
- Adopt language that reflects your personal mission statement. Use beautiful and poetic words when discussing worship; the book of Ephesians may serve as a conflict resolution guidebook. Gerald Borchert reminds us that Paul’s writing enlightens us with poetic language such as riches, grace, glory, faith, knowledge, fullness, filled up, peace, love, armor, power, inheritance and unity. These positive and energizing descriptions of Christ and the Holy Spirit encourage us to absorb ways to stay mindful of Christ’s love and teachings when we are seeking ways to resolve conflict. [Gerald L. Borchert, *Worship in the New Testament: Divine Mystery and Human Response* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2008, 137)] Borchert shares another observation:

The letter to the Ephesians stands as a remarkable handbook of spiritual formation and worship in which Paul described an authentic relationship with God in Christ while rejecting all evil patterns of life. He defined the nature of genuine community spirituality, authentic new Christian morality, and appropriate family relationships as aspects of mature responses to God, all bathed in the context of prayer and worship. [Ibid. 130]

- Try to temper or eliminate from your speech ID tags that encourage hierarchical and judgmental attitudes towards worship and musicians, which often cause split congregations—tags such as Formal Worship, Informal Worship, Praise Worship, Contemporary Worship, Folk Mass, high brow music, high and low church, Blended Worship.

Lynn Cohick mentions how putting on each segment of armor serves as a memory hook to capsulize Paul’s final command for the entire community to take appropriate actions against conflict and evil. Some words and phrases that recapitulate from earlier chapters of Ephesians include truth, righteousness, peace, the gospel, the word of God, salvation, faith and prayer. Cohick stresses the

importance of “growing together in community as each member speaks the truth in love and does not give way to slanderous speech” [Lynn H, Cohick, *Ephesians: A New Covenant Commentary*, (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010), 152]. When one is faced with conflict resolution issues and evil, the word of God (armor) provides the ability to keep an open mind, sharpen listening abilities, communicate in an honest manner, and exercise objective behavior.

Next month: Ways to Work in the Spirit