

## Serving the Lord . . . with Her?

When you consider the theme of our retreat, “Mutual Ministry—Serving the Lord Together,” what kind of thoughts run through your mind? {Allow participants to share their ideas and thoughts. Thoughts might include: Servant events and mission projects which we do together as an LWML organization; reaching out to help other people along with someone else (the word “mutual” implies involvement with someone else, not by myself); doing specific actions of service with other people; using the gifts and abilities which are unique to me as I do a service project with someone else; agreeing on serving in a particular way; trying to teach another person the specific ways to do a ministry task; etc.}

The concept behind “mutual ministry” implies a service which I am doing along with or along side of one or more people. Thus, “mutual ministry” will bring two or more people together into a common task which provides a service to someone else.

1. Read Matthew 18:20. What does Jesus say about His people being together in one place? {He says that wherever *two or three* of His children (i.e. people gathered *in My name*) are gathered He is right there in their midst. This puts an interesting perspective on doing ministry together. It makes me wonder about our behavior while doing that mutual ministry. Do we talk and act as if Jesus is in the room? In our house we have a plaque which reads: “Christ is the Head of this house; The Unseen Guest at every meal; The Silent Listener to every conversation.” It is intended as a reminder that He is right there with us in all activities and conversations.}
2. In Scripture the Holy Spirit compares our mutual ministry to the functioning of our bodies. What does Paul say in 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 about our ministry together as he begins this body analogy? {He says there are *varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God Who empowers them all in everyone*. The concept is variety in the midst of unity. The Spirit gifts people differently to do different kinds of service for Jesus through different activities. It also reminds us that our empowerment to function with these gifts in our serving activities comes from God—not us. (cf. 2 Corinthians 3:4-6) The various parts of the body with their various functions are intended to **work together** properly in order serve.}
3. So . . . at various times we strive to do activities of service together. What kinds of challenges have you faced when striving to do **mutual** service with your fellow sisters in Christ? {Allow participants to share their ideas. Ideas could include: ① Instructed to do a task and then having another person come behind you and change it. (e.g. Telling someone to put stuff on the tables for a special supper at church and then following right behind her to change the arrangement. In effect, it says: *You’re not arranging everything properly*. What adds to the frustration is the person didn’t give specific instructions about the arrangement but yet still had specific expectations.) Service is met with actions which produce feelings of inadequacy. ② Showing up to serve but feeling “in the way” because the “long-termers” have specific tasks which they’ve always done and “go to it.” Unless you are a very gregarious person, you will feel “left out” and like you don’t belong or that your desire to serve is not wanted. Service is met

with actions which produce feelings of rejection. ③ Wanting to perform the service with others but being told that the way you do it isn't the "right" way. The task must be done in a specific way, in a specific time period, following a specific paradigm. (e.g. If a person wanted to serve along with (or "join") the "established" quilting group and could make the quilt in 2 hours, but the "traditional" paradigm takes 5 or 6 hours, would the "new" way be welcomed in the group? Or would the person have to do it on her own or form a new group which was more open to her way? Both ways are "right" but many times bring forth feelings of inadequacy and service not being "good enough.") ④ From the perspective of the one doing the work you may find yourself griping and complaining that no one else does it. This frustration fosters an attitude of self-righteousness expressed in the statement: *If you want something done right, do it yourself!* You can even believe (consciously or sub-consciously) that you're entitled to gripe and complain because you actually do the work. ⑤ Again, from the perspective of the one who serves regularly and has done it many times before, you may feel frustrated that everyone comes to you to be assigned specific tasks. You feel they should simply "pitch in and help." (e.g. When doing spring cleaning at church you may simply expect each person to take some task off of a list of things that need to be done and go do them. Instead, they may look at the list and then come and ask you what to do.)}

4. Could it be that these challenges which we face doing mutual ministry to serve the Lord has caused us to desire, beg, plead and cry out for all kinds of "training" programs throughout the years? Even in LWML? The theme verse of our retreat is Hebrews 10:24. Seems like it fits a lot of the times with the challenges we face doing mutual ministry: *let us consider how to stir up!* Guess we do a pretty good job many times "stirring up" people (or getting "stirred up") when we serve with them, huh? Oh . . . I guess that's not what its referring to is it? We are supposed consider ways to *stir up one another to love and good works*, not anger and inadequacy! Now that's a different story!!

Maybe such challenges have produced an awareness of the need for "mentoring." When you hear the word "mentor" what thoughts come to your mind? {Allow participants to share their thoughts. Thoughts might include: a teacher; teaching somebody by example; job shadowing; apprenticeships; internships; looking "over a person's shoulder" to guide or train them to do tasks; etc. "Mentor" has become one of the "buzz words" of the last 15 years or so. "Mentoring" is a process that always involves communication and **is relationship based**. However, definitions of "mentoring" vary greatly. Techniques of mentoring could include: ① Accompanying: Making a commitment in a caring way, which involves taking part in the learning process side-by-side with the learner. ② Sowing: Mentors are often confronted with the difficulty of preparing the learner before he or she is ready to change. Sowing is necessary when you know that what you say may not be understood or even acceptable to learners at first but will make sense and have value to the mentee when the situation requires it. ③ Catalyzing: When change reaches a critical level of pressure, learning can jump. Here the mentor chooses to plunge the learner right into change, provoking a different way of thinking, a change in identity or a re-ordering of values. ④ Showing: This is making something understandable by using your own example to demonstrate a skill or activity. You show what you are talking about, you show by your own behavior. ⑤ Harvesting: Here the mentor focuses on "picking the ripe fruit." It is usually used to create awareness of what was learned by experience and to draw conclusions. The key questions here are: "What have you learned?" or

“How useful is it?” Another way to think about mentoring is by categorizing it into the headings of: ① Teaching: Conveying information from a person who is knowledgeable in a particular field to one who has little or no knowledge of that field. ② Overseeing: Watching a person as s/he functions in a task with guidance being provided by one who oversees the learning process. ③ Evaluating: Helping a person learn about his/her performance based upon an evaluation at the end of the task or activity. ④ Supervision: A person simply tells the other person what to do or not to do while doing the job. Actually, these four categories overlap quite a bit.}

5. Scripture reveals the “mentoring” concept, especially in the relationship between Paul and Timothy. Read Titus 2:3-5. Does this passage say anything about the concept of mentoring? {It appears to since it speaks about the *older women teaching what is good, and so train the young women*. It even says what they should teach. They should teach them *to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands*. What is the purpose for mentoring such behavior? *That the word of God may not be reviled*. It was to give witness to others of their faith in Jesus.}
6. Even Christian mentoring provides its own challenges for us sinners. Read 1 Corinthians 12:7. The Holy Spirit gifts us all uniquely and differently. What purpose does such giftedness serve? {They are intended to serve *the common good*. In other words, they are given for service to people, not just to serve tasks, programs or myself.}
7. In light of the Holy Spirit gifting us differently for the purpose of serving Jesus by serving others, what guidance can the following Bible passages give us as we do mutual ministry?

Proverbs 16:18 → {Notice that sinful *pride* and a *haughty spirit* precede *destruction* and a *fall*. Sinful pride leads to a self-righteousness which destroys mutual ministry very fast. For instance, from the perspective of the leader, she can stifle the service of others by: ① Being unwilling to consider constructive criticism or suggestions. This is expressed by statements like: *If you don't like the way that I do it, I would gladly turn it over to you!* or *If they think they can do a better job, have at it!* Notice this attitude removes one from mutual ministry through the sin of self-righteousness. ② She can insist that this service is valid only if it is done in one specific method in one specific timetable. What method? Her method in her time. This is expressed in statements like *Its my way or the highway!* It implies that other methods which the Holy Spirit may manifest through someone else are not “right.” Thus, the “mutual” part of ministry is present only when it is done with everyone else **my way!** However, from the perspective of the person desiring to serve in an established mutual ministry, her sinful pride can cause the sin of self-righteousness in service by: ① Quitting her serving all together. She may go through feelings of rejection and “hit the highway.” This

too is fueled by a self-righteousness which is focused on how people make me and my ideas feel unwelcome. In sinful pride she cannot get “past herself” to see that the Holy Spirit still wants to use her giftedness in mutual ministry. This attitude also removes one from mutual ministry through the sin of self-righteousness. ② Starting a whole new group. If she can’t make any headway with her ideas in the established serving group then she will try to start a whole new group with whom to do mutual ministry. While this may be commendable because she doesn’t give up, it still fosters a divisiveness within which the devil can get a foothold and people hold grudges or resentments against each other as they strive to do mutual ministry. Instead of serving the common good it may only be serving my own desires. It is usually in this context that the people “pit” the ideas of the “young” people and “old” people against each other. **We must be aware of the destructive nature of sinful pride when it comes to serving the Lord together!! We need to always remain “teachable” rather than “unteachable.”}**

Mark 10:42-45 → {In this context James and John has asked Jesus about acquiring positions of authority in His kingdom. There were times when the disciples of Jesus would argue about who was the greatest among them. Here Jesus contrasted the method of serving as a Christian with that of how people of authority function in our worldly culture. He describes an attitude of **humility**—*whoever would be great among us must be our servant, and whoever would be first among us must be slave of all.* **Humility** is that characteristic which makes us both teachable and willing to be open to suggestions flowing from the giftedness of others. **Humility** moves us to serve for *the common good* of others by being more concerned about relationship than simply the logistics of doing tasks “my way.” Notice also, the motivation behind such an expectation of Jesus: *For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.* It is based upon **His** humiliation, **His** suffering and dying on the cross for us undeserving, self-righteous sinners!}

John 13:1-16 → {On the night before Jesus would *give His life as a ransom* for us, He decided to wash His disciples’ feet. Why? Cause they were dirty? The text reveals that His primary purpose for doing so was to set *an example, that we also should do just as He has done to us.* The example was bound up in the fact that Jesus was willing to do the task which was usually done by the household servant. If we think we are “above” the tasks of household servants then we’re saying we’re better than Jesus, not simply like our Master.}

Ephesians 4:32 → {We are told to *be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.* Once again, the motivation for kindness, patience and forgiveness with each other is the fact that God has forgiven us in the Person & Work of Jesus. **The focus of our mutual ministry must always be Jesus, not ourselves!**}

Doing mutual ministry, serving the Lord together, will always be a challenge for us sinners. Many times you may wonder why you have to serve “with her!” After all, she doesn’t do it “right!” Yet, she may be thinking the exact same thing about you. Thus, no matter how much “training” we go through, no matter what our various gifts, talents and abilities, we cannot simply depend upon the example of Jesus to carry us through. **We depend upon the expiation rather than the example of Jesus!** He carried through as our servant so that our sins, which hinder our mutual ministry, would be completely forgiven!! In that complete, unconditional forgiveness in Christ we can move forward in mutual ministry, humbly serving the Lord together with this song as our prayer:

*Make Me a Servant*

**D**            **Bm**    **Em**            **A**  
 Make me a servant, Humble and meek,  
**Em7**            **A**    **G**    **D**    **A**    **D**  
 Lord, let me lift up, Those who are weak,  
**Bm**            **Bm/A**            **D**            **Gm**  
 And may the prayer of my heart always be . . .  
**D**            **A**            **D**            **A**            **D**            **A**            **G - D**  
 Make me a servant, Make me a servant, Make me a servant today.

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