

**FROM THE SERVANT GENERAL**  
**ON SERVANT LEADERSHIP**  
**(Part 2)**

December 16, 2008

When things are going well in community, then leaders get along fine. But when disagreements come, this is where many fail in servant leadership. But disagreements happen all the time. In fact, it is good to have disagreements, as long as we do not become disagreeable in handling these. Disagreements enable us to sift through a particular situation or decision, look at new angles, hear fresh insights, and challenge our own thinking about the issue at hand. The result is hopefully a better solution or decision, being the fruit of different minds and a thorough discussion.

Perhaps more importantly, God allows disagreements in order to test the quality of our servanthood. When there is no disagreement, then we can be very nice and agreeable. But when there is someone who opposes what we believe to be right, how do we react? Do we become defensive? Angry? Do we dig in? Are we onion-skinned? Do we get hurt? God wants what is hidden to surface, in order that we might address our own shortcomings and sins.

When we handle disagreements in the right way, especially in the face of provocation and seeming unreasonable opposition, then we are on our way to greater holiness.

How do we handle disagreements?

First, when someone disagrees, do not dismiss it outright, but thank God that someone cares enough to try to come up with a better move or decision. Second, be really open to the input, looking at it as possibly coming from the Lord. Then go and have a good discussion.

When having your discussion, here are things that you should NOT do:

Be defensive. If you genuinely welcome any input, then you do not have to put up any defenses. If you stand up for your position simply because you already articulated that position, then that is pride.

Be onion-skinned. Do not take a dissenting opinion negatively. Look at it as being given not as a personal affront but out of a genuine desire to help out.

Pull rank, in case you are speaking to a subordinate. He is your brother, and the Lord can speak to him as much as to you.

Walk out. You may not come to an agreement, and the situation can become a bit heated, but be committed to working things out. There is always the right way which is the Lord's way. If things cannot as yet be resolved, shelve it for the moment (whether for a little while or over some days) and return to it after cooling down and after praying. Or bring in others who can help in resolving the impasse.

Quit your service or even the community, if things do not go your way. Do not penalize and turn your back on others, including the Lord and the community, because of your conflict with just one person.

On the other hand, here are some things that you should DO:

Be pure as a dove but wise as a serpent. That is, be meek and humble and pure in thought, truly open to contrary opinions, but also fight for what you believe to be right, arguing your case strongly.

Look on the other party as truly a brother, committed to you and to the well-being of the community. So keep cool, knowing that you are both on the same side. Do not judge him to be a trouble-maker (he might be, but it is not up to you to judge).

Look to our pastoral structure and system in community, which provides for ways and means of making decisions in the face of contrary views. If the system is working, be willing to subordinate your view to the decision of a higher authority.

Always remember that we are appointed as leaders in order to serve the Master and to carry out His agenda, not ours. We should aggressively stand for what we believe to be right and true, but we must always consider that we could be wrong, or that there could be a better way than ours. Then we rejoice that there are brethren, whom the Lord provides, who can help keep us on the right track.

God bless you.