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## **Train & Multiply™**

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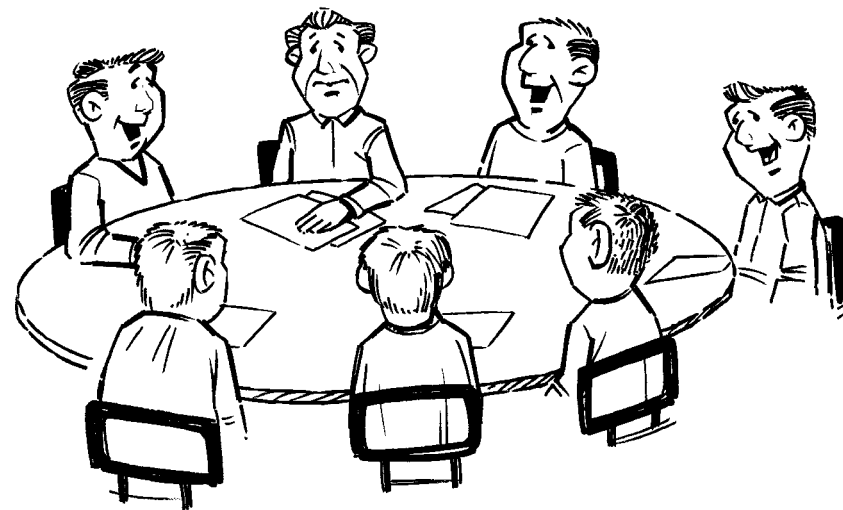
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# **How to Reach Agreement in Administrative Meetings**



**Pastoral Leader Training Booklet**

# **45**

**Train & Multiply™**



**T&M™**

Ask God to help you in this study, so that the members and pastors of your church may reach agreement.

Various cultural groups deal with issues differently. In parts of Africa, for example, administrative matters normally require long discussions before any official administrative meeting takes place. The younger men defer to the older, the women to the men, and former slaves or servants to former masters. Your particular field may have a unique cultural practice for arriving at agreement in administrative meetings that this study does not deal with. If so, please note it here:

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Jesus Christ says: *“All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.”*  
(John 13:35)

- Ask God to guide you through His Word.
  
- Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit’s leading in the meeting. Be willing to yield your personal opinion.

Notes:

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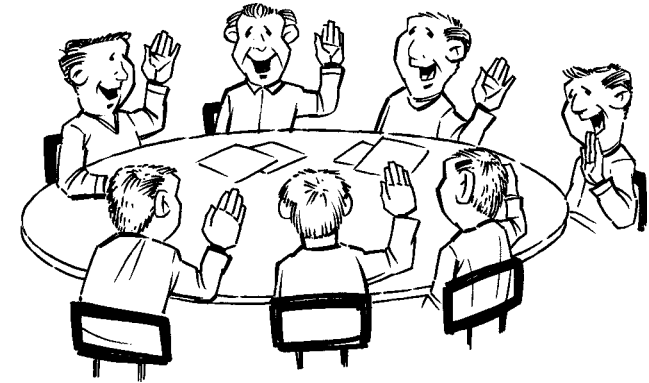
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# PRACTICAL WORK

## Teach the leaders and your congregation how to agree on hard decisions:

- Seek a unanimous decision.
- Treat differing opinions openly.
- Discuss problems with all the people directly concerned.  
Do not talk about people behind their backs.
- Allow everyone the right to speak (but not to criticize individuals, without having previously spoken to them in private).
- Keep quiet while others speak. (Take turns.)

The church of Christ should be known by the sweet harmony among its members. There are always different opinions, but we reach cordial agreement in properly led meetings.



When opinions differ, we cannot force uniformity. Unity in Christ is not uniformity. Paul's epistles teach us that we already have the only unity of value before God (spiritual unity in Christ). The essence of this unity is not that each Christian or church should conform to the same practices, but rather that there are different gifts and ministries, with freedom within the same body. (Romans 12:3-16, 1 Corinthians 12-13, Ephesians 4:1-16)

Although opinions differ, we maintain mutual respect and good relations. Acts 15 teaches us the good example of the church in Jerusalem. We find there are seven norms for reaching agreement. Let's examine the Jerusalem meeting, to learn these seven rules.

# RULE 1

## THEY TREATED DIFFERING OPINIONS OPENLY

Read Acts 15:1-5.

### Observations:

- The problem was serious; it concerned the deepest convictions.
- In the early, apostolic churches, there were differing opinions. There will always be differing opinions in any church.
- We can resolve differences in the same way.

First, they spoke openly and respectfully of their different opinions.  
They did not remain silent or hide their disagreement from each other.

The disagreement between the Christians was:

- ☐ small.
- ☐ great.

(Check your answer with verse 2.)

8. During the meeting, what prevailed?
  - ☐ Criticism.
  - ☐ Free discussion.
  - ☐ Noise.
9. After much free discussion, James proposed a solution based on:
  - ☐ the Scriptures.
  - ☐ his own opinions.
10. James' opinion was based on the Word of God. They accepted it because of the:
  - ☐ Holy Spirit.
  - ☐ firm decree.
11. The Spirit of God brought to agreement:
  - ☐ everyone.
  - ☐ some.

4. Which chapter in the Bible reflects good guidelines for leading an administrative meeting?

- ☐ John 15.  
☐ Acts 15.

5. We find a good example about how to reach agreement, in Acts 15, at the church in:

- ☐ Jerusalem.  
☐ Mexico City.  
☐ Rome.

6. The disagreement in Jerusalem was:

- ☐ great.  
☐ minor.

7. This dispute was settled through:

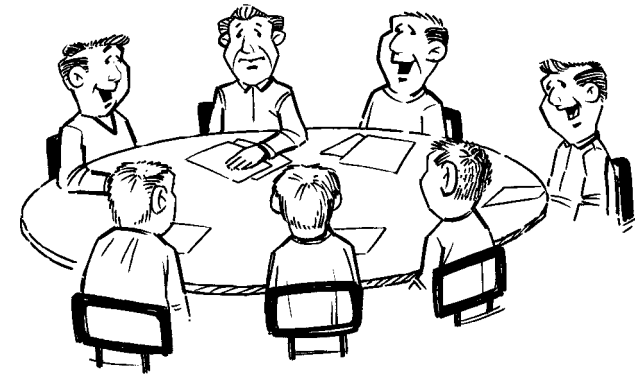
- ☐ a worship service.  
☐ an administrative meeting.

## **RULE 2**

### **ALL THE INTERESTED PARTIES DEALT WITH THE PROBLEM**

Read Acts 15:6.

All the interested parties met to solve the problem. (verse 22)



#### **Observations:**

- A problem between two members should be resolved between the two of them. There is no need to involve the whole church.
- Problems at leadership level should be dealt with by the leaders (pastors and elders).

- A problem involving the whole church might require interaction with all members. The leaders should discuss it first, to suggest a course of action.
- We deal with this matter at the meeting while avoiding politics, personal attacks, or lobbying for support. We allow everything to be presented openly in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

## RULE 3

### EVERYONE HAD A RIGHT TO SPEAK

Read Acts 15:7-11.

The Apostle Peter:

- ☐ monopolized the discussion.
- ☐ waited his turn to speak.

#### Observations:

- No one person dominated the discussion.

## SUMMARY TEST

1. A problem between two Christians should be dealt with between the two of them. Why?  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. In meetings, one should not speak several times, when others are still waiting to speak for the first time. Why not?  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Why do we not interrupt one another?  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
  
\_\_\_\_\_

## RULE 7

# ALL YIELDED TO THE GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

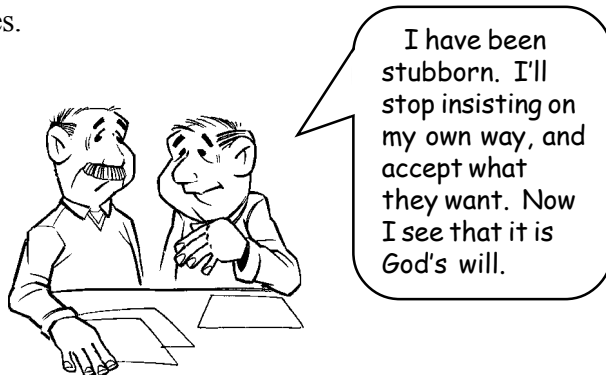
Read Acts 15:28-29.

### Observations:

- It was a miracle that the believing Pharisees agreed. Although it was hard for them, they submitted to God's will.
- In our meetings, we accept the Holy Spirit's guidance in the same way, expressed through our fellow Christians and leaders.

The Holy Spirit guided them by:

- ☐ tradition.
- ☐ the Scriptures.



- Peter did not criticize the Pharisees, but explained the situation in love. He reasoned calmly.
- During a meeting we do not criticize people. In the case of personal conflict, we speak to the person involved in private.
- All members have the right to speak. If some persons might cause a serious problem, the leaders might listen to them first in a special meeting in which no vote is taken, to let them know they are being listened to.



## Important:

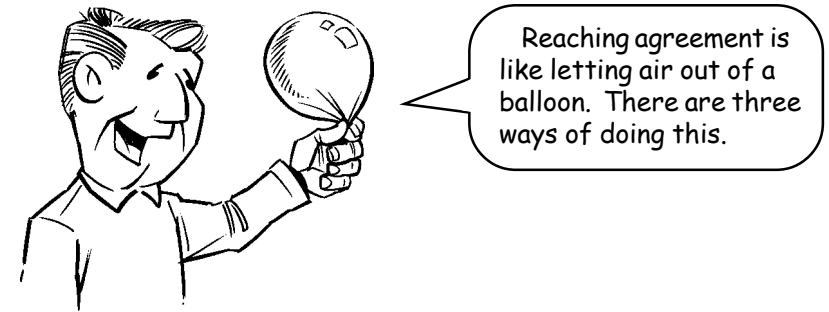
If someone has offended you, you should speak to them before involving others. (Matthew 18:15-17) This avoids quarrels. We do not criticize someone in public, but rather, solve the problem in private. This avoids gossip.



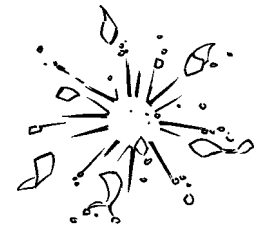
Although a believer may not have any other faults, if he habitually criticises his fellow Christians, he commits a serious sin. Some sin harms one's own body, but criticism damages others. It destroys the fellowship of the church.

Which is more apt to make a problem worse?

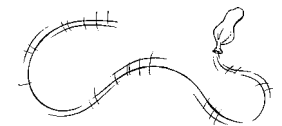
- ☐ Disagreeing with a person politely but firmly (or if he is a superior to whom you owe respect, through a proper mediator).
- ☐ Criticizing the person behind his back.



First, we can explode the balloon with a pin, but then it is destroyed. The same happens with a church; communion is destroyed when anger is allowed to burst in a meeting.



Second, we can let go of the balloon, and let it fly through the air, out of control. This happens in a church whose leaders avoid facing up to disagreements frankly.

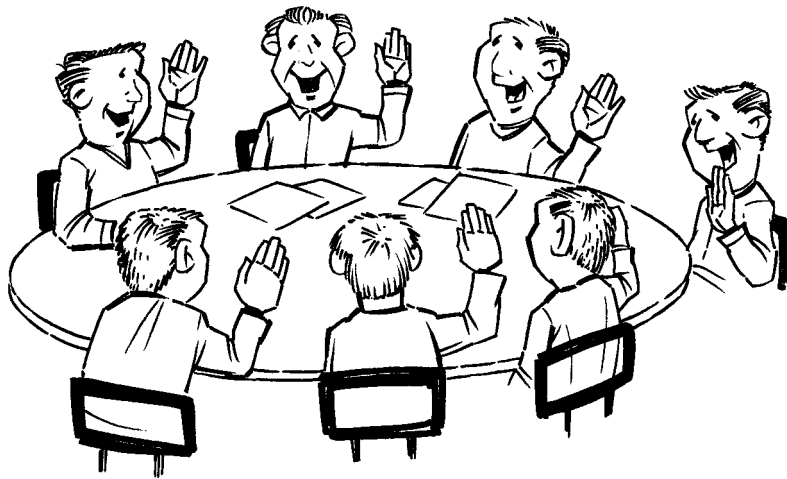


Third, we can let the air escape gently, controlling it with our fingers. This is how we control disagreements, dealing with them patiently, as mature spiritual leaders under the control of the Holy Spirit.





- The leader encourages finding a satisfying solution. He realizes when there has been sufficient discussion. Then he explains the solution, so all understand.
- A unanimous agreement is best. Some will always have to submit to others, to reach agreement in the love of Christ.



Check your answer with the following:

*“Do not spread slander among your people. Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor’s life. I am the Lord. Do not hate your brother in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in his guilt.”*

(Leviticus 19:16-17)

The Bible forbids criticizing your brother behind his back. You should not talk about someone, without having spoken to him alone, first. (Matthew 18:15-18) Many quarrels at meetings come through breaking these rules.

## RULE 4 THEY WERE SILENT WHILE OTHERS SPOKE

Read Acts 15:12.

### Observations:

- They did not interrupt while someone spoke.

- They did not try to shout down a speaker. While others speak, we should wait calmly.
- We respect our fellow Christian, although his opinions may differ from ours.

When someone is speaking, and we wish to say something:

- ☐ we wait till he finishes.
- ☐ we interrupt.

## RULE 5

### THEY SOUGHT GOD'S GUIDANCE THROUGH THE SCRIPTURES

Read Acts 15:13-21.

#### Observations:

- James proposed a wise solution, based on the Scriptures.



- His proposal took into account everyone's beliefs. They did not oblige the Gentiles to keep the Old Testament Law for their salvation. We are saved by grace. Nevertheless they were asked to avoid what most offended the Jews.

How do we solve problems?

- ☐ Using the Bible.
- ☐ Holding to our own opinions.

## RULE 6

### THEY REACHED AN AGREEMENT

Read Acts 15:22-27. All accepted James' proposition.

#### Observations:

- They reached agreement willingly. People did not have to go against their conscience.
- Several had to stop insisting on their own ideas, to reach agreement.