

Devotion from the past ... 2008

Extended Reading: [Romans 14:1–12](#)

Tend to Your Knitting

“Welcome with open arms fellow believers who don't see things the way you do. And don't jump all over them every time they do or say something you don't agree with—even when it seems that they are strong on opinions but weak in the faith department. Remember, they have their own history to deal with. Treat them gently. ... So tend to your knitting. You've got your hands full just taking care of your own life before God” (Romans 14:1, 12 MSG).

Some people think that “tending to your knitting” is an opportunity to needle someone. Not that you would ever resort to such provocation! After all, working for the church is like 40 hours in labor's utopia. (It must be! So many of you spend 50, 60, or more hours weekly in loving service.)

And what can you say about the pay? Many of you have little to complain about. (Think about that one!)

And then there are your coworkers, students, parents, and passionate congregation members! Okay, so maybe we should talk about this one.

You aren't involved in any innovative church-work phenomenon here. Apparently, the Roman Christians had some interpersonal relationship problems. Why would Paul write what he did in today's reading if everything was peachy keen? Sounds more like these early Christians occasionally encountered the pits. (Probably at Voters' Meetings.)

One would hope positive, spiritually enlightened, and peachy-keen relationships would sweeten the workings of Christians. A key word here is *Christians*. Paul wasn't addressing relationships with pagans; enough trouble was afoot among the Christian brothers and sisters.

Bickering has potential for blustering, blasting, and blistering. (To say nothing of tongue twisting!) Its power is singularly destructive. Bickering is discussing or debating with malice. And unless the topic involves the source of salvation or authority of God's word, Paul warns us to avoid it.

What does this mean? You could name more than a few examples. But here's one: The staff discusses the upcoming Christmas program. Later it launches into practice, which reveals some flaws in the optimism that originally accompanied the concept. Need I say more? Okay, I will.

- “Who picked THIS song? It's too hard to sing”

- “Why doesn’t THAT JUNIOR HIGH TEACHER get those boys to stop slouching and start singing?”
- “Does the pastor have any part in this? And just when did the principal get too busy to help?”
- “And why can’t the preschool dress as the heavenly host?”
- “The DCE wants to do WHAT?”

And that’s just centered on one of the happiest school and church events! You could cite multiple variations festering around confirmation, Sunday school, athletic programs, and staff socials. (If you’ve been exempt from all this, praise the Lord. Just do it in a format acceptable to everyone.)

Sin is the culprit. Sometimes you and I are the accomplices. Thank God that the Holy Spirit led Paul to the solution.

“Tend to your knitting” and do it “gently.” Work for warmth. When that fails, as sometimes it will, repent and renew your resolve to work peaceably and lovingly with each other. Even if it is one sided!

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*Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.
 (Jude 24–25)*