

## Methods of Communication

(Definitions of methods are derived from [Bridges-Across](#) web site)

This paper briefly describes two ways to communicate when there is disagreement .. the first .. Method D is destructive but .. sadly is often what happens when issues concerning homosexuality are discussed. The second .. Method E .. is what I hope we can all strive for.

### Method D:

Many on both sides are opposed to our ideal of respectful relationships and dialogue. Some of them think that such respect is impossible to achieve, others feel that extending that respect to those on the other side is wrong. The resulting dynamic is one which (in our opinion) unfortunately plagues most discourse on the moral/political issues surrounding homosexuality today. We call this (sadly) popular method of engaging those we disagree with "Method D".

What does this dynamic look like?

- For one thing, it is marked by fear. A posture of defensiveness is assumed. It is not safe to listen or respect, on this view--the other side will take advantage of whatever we give them.
- It is also marked by distrust. There is no need to listen, on this view, because whatever the other side says about itself is lies. There is no attempt to get to know or learn about the other side, to allow them to speak for themselves, because nothing they say can be trusted. Those who are distrustful in this way may believe that there is a conspiracy or an organized effort to propagandize. Because the other side cannot be trusted, everything that is known and believed about them comes from leaders and authorities on one's own side.
- It is also marked by a war-like attitude, a tendency to see one's main goal to be defeating or crushing the other side. With this attitude, there is no attempt to discern the justice or legitimacy of the other side's claims or complaints. If it hurts them, it must be good. If it costs us something, it must be bad. Often this attitude is accompanied by the belief that the other side is extraordinarily and incorrigibly vicious--that they are not worth dialoguing with.

(Turn over the page to read about a better way to communicate ..)

## **Method E:**

Supporters of Method E do not deny that our disagreements with the other side are serious and profound. .... To be Method E is not to be naive about the other side, nor is it to be lukewarm about one's own convictions.

It is, rather, to insist upon acknowledging and respecting the humanity of those with whom we disagree. For those of us who consider ourselves Christians, we feel that Jesus' teachings about loving our enemies and blessing those who persecute us call us to reject the approach of Method D in favor of this method.

What are the marks of this method, practically speaking?

- We reject the fear approach of Method D, by opening ourselves to dialogue and relationship with those on the other side.
- We reject the attitude of extreme distrust by listening to those on the other side, learning about their lives, hearing what they have to say about themselves, seeking to understand them and where they are coming from. This does not mean we accept everything the other side says without scrutiny. But it does mean that we open our minds to the possibility that our preconceptions about others are wrong, that others' experiences have differed from ours, and that not everything the "experts"/leaders on our side say about the other side is correct..
- We reject the attitude of "culture warriors" in favor of seeking ways to promote peaceful, harmonious coexistence. We consider that in spite of our disagreements some of the other side's complaints of injustice and unfair treatment may have merit and should be listened to and addressed.