

Our agreement of sisterhood in Women’s Walk with Christ states that we “allow our sisters to stand in their woundedness as they heal.” What does this mean? How do I honor this agreement and our WWWC Core Principles, trusting that my sister is responsible for her own work as the Holy Spirit speaks through her?

In order to establish and maintain healthy boundaries as we facilitate or witness another woman’s healing work, we refer to two acronyms, **F.R.A.P.** and **L.A.M.B.**

F.R.A.P. is an acronym for fix, rescue, advise, and project. These are the things we seek to avoid in order to honor our agreements and our WWWC Core Principles. L.A.M.B. is what we want to do for each other – listen, accept, model, bless and be blessed.

F.R.A.P.

Fix: When a sister shares a problem, I may be tempted to offer possible solutions. It can be difficult to see a problem and not want to fix it. The truth is, I will only ever have a partial understanding of her situation. My solutions may or may not be right for her. If she accepts a solution that I offer, she loses the opportunity to discover her own solution. If my suggestion works, she may feel beholden to me or weakened in her sense of her own personal agency. If my suggestion doesn’t work, she may end up in worse straits – and blame me besides. When I am invited to witness or facilitate another woman’s work, I am not being invited to problem solve or fix things for her. I am being invited to stand alongside her as she listens for the voice of the Holy Spirit in the unfolding of her own story.

Rescue: I see my sister in pain, and I want to make her feel better. I offer a hug or a tissue or words of comfort. The problem is that my sister may need fully to experience her pain in order to discover the depths of truth that God is opening up for her to lead her to healing. My efforts to rescue her from her pain may cut her off from this source of deep healing. What’s more, it may not be her pain I want to ease, but my own. When I see someone I care about in pain, *I* may hurt too. If I can keep you from hurting, I can limit my own pain. Instead of rescuing my sister, I can see my own hurt as an opportunity for me to seek God for my own healing.

Advise: When I hear a woman’s story, I may feel I know what she needs to do to experience healing. I may even be convinced that I have heard a word from the Holy Spirit telling her what she should do. I’m tempted to give her advice. Instead, our Core Principles invite me to trust that my sister herself is hearing from the Spirit in the context of her own walk with Christ. Perhaps I *have* heard a word from the Spirit. I can wonder how that message is for or about *me*. Even if my sister asks me for advice, I can instead affirm my confidence in her access to wisdom. Instead of advising, I might offer to pray silently with her as she listens for how God might be speaking through her.

Project: On our WWWC Weekend we say, “Change some of the details, and your story is my story.” Sometimes even the details are the same. This situation can incline us to projection. When I recognize my story in your story, I can over-identify. I see myself in your story. I forget that your work is about you, and that our circumstances, histories, and needs may be very different, even if elements or our stories are the same.

L.A.M.B.

Listen: Our everyday, conversational listening typically involves half-listening. I may be multi-tasking, or I may be trying to listen to you while I also prepare what I want to say next. When I am facilitating or witnessing a woman's work, I can give the gift of listening with singular attention. I can help focus my own mind by preparing to repeat back for my sister her own, exact words. I can sharpen both my understanding and hers by offering her a simple, summarizing paraphrase or asking a clarifying question. She then has the opportunity to correct any misunderstanding on my part or to sharpen the way she is expressing what is true for her.

Accept: Acceptance means choosing to suspend our judgments. I may experience feelings or register judging thoughts as I listen to my sister's story, but I am intentional about not revealing those judgments whether in words, body language, or actions. In receiving my sister's story without reacting – either positively or negatively – I help to create space in which my sister can experience her own judgments and explore them as she listens to the Holy Spirit. Whatever judgments may arise for me are an invitation for me to engage in my own healing work.

Model: While I do not give a woman advice or attempt to fix or rescue her, I can support her growth by modelling healthy or healing behaviors. For example, as I live by the agreement of honesty to the best of my ability, even to the extent of sharing painful truths, I can inspire my sisters to risk deep honesty. I can also be willing to walk alongside a sister in her choice to do difficult work. Becoming vulnerable by walking through our fear or expressing our anger or naming our shame is often made possible when we know we are not walking alone. One woman's courage in risking these actions can establish the safety of the container for another woman. Or, by mirroring a woman's vulnerable action (walking with her through her fear; voicing her anger in tandem; looking her in the eye as she voices her shame, e.g.) I can bolster my sister's courage.

Bless and Be Blessed: Blessing is a way of expressing unconditional acceptance and love. When I bless my sister, I acknowledge all of her as good and worthy of the love of God, her Creator, Savior, and Sanctifier. Likewise, I bless my sister when I allow *her* to bless *me*. We lay aside whatever feelings of unworthiness we have and open our hearts to God when we allow our sisters to offer us their unconditional acceptance and love.