



Zoom Bible Study ~ Improving Your Relationships

Session 10 ~ March 23, 2021

Tips for Confronting

Once you've come to the conclusion that you truly need to confront a person about some situation, then you need to consider several important elements of a confrontation.

Proverbs 14:15: The simple believe anything, but the prudent give thought to their steps.

Proverbs 14:29: Whoever is patient has great understanding, but one who is quick-tempered displays folly.

How would you describe a "prudent" person?

Choose the Right Time

The timing of your confrontation is a critical point to consider. Should you confront when:

- You are upset and at the point of tears.
- You spent a sleepless night worrying about it.
- The "confrontee" is extremely busy this week.
- The "confrontee" just lost his/her job.
- You are angry.
- The "confrontee" has had a recent health problem.

It is obvious that none of these would be good times for confrontation. However, it should also be noted that some confrontations can't wait. For example, the following situations would probably require an immediate confrontation:

- A situation where there would be no further opportunity for confrontation; it is now or never.
- A situation of such volatility and potential harm that to wait could endanger the reputation or welfare of others.
- A situation where the name of Jesus Christ would be dishonored by waiting.
- A situation where your ethics or morality could be misunderstood or defamed by waiting.

Choose the Right Place

Choose a private place where you can have a one-on-one discussion without being overheard by others.

On the job, consider an off-site location.

Consider confronting over a meal.

Plan Your Words

Proverbs 21:23 reminds us that:

Those who guard their mouths and their tongues keep themselves from calamity.

Proverbs 16:21 is very helpful in this matter of confrontation:

The wise in heart are called discerning, and gracious words promote instruction.

Avoid Finger-Pointing Words

Here are some 'finger-pointing' phrases?

- You never are on time...
- You don't know how to do this...
- Your attitude is causing problems...
- You have had your way for too long...
- You've made the same mistake three times...
- You have difficulty getting along with your sister...
- You never listen to me...

Notice that they all begin with “you.” And here are some typical reactions:

- Defensiveness
- Hurt feelings
- Retreat
- Argument
- Anger

Here are some words/phrases that *don't* have that “finger-pointing” flavor.

- “Perhaps there has been a misunderstanding...”
- “If I understood you correctly. . .”
- “From what I’ve heard/noticed...”
- “I’ve noticed you have difficulty_____. Maybe there is a reason. Can you tell me?”
- “I appreciate that your work is always done well, but have you noticed that more often than not, you miss the deadlines?”
- “Can you explain why you always speak in such an angry way?”

When you confront, do so with the understanding that you could be wrong. Don't set yourself up for embarrassment by accusations that turn out to be false simply because you didn't have the whole story.

Confronting Examples

Let's say you need to confront someone on your job about mistakes she is making. Think which of these two approaches would work best:

- #1 “As you know, I've been working here for almost 12 years, and since you're somewhat new on the job, I thought it would be good to give you a few pointers because you are making some mistakes that are causing a lot of problems. Let me point out to you what you are doing wrong....”
- #2 “I remember when I first started working here, everything was so new and confusing. I'm sure I made tons of mistakes, but there was a woman who really helped me, and so I thought maybe I could do the same for you. There are some areas where a few changes on your part could make things easier for you and help us get the work processed better with fewer customer complaints. For example....”

Let's say that you are a manager or supervisor and one of your employees is habitually late to work. This calls for a confrontation. Choosing a good time, you call this employee into your office to discuss some other issue that is business related, so as not to put that person on the defensive, and then at the conclusion of that discussion you broach this touchy subject of being on time. Which of these two approaches would work best?

- #1 "Before you go, let me point out something that is bothering me. You've been late to work a lot and it just drives me crazy. I want every person here on time every day. You're paid to be here on time, so I'll be expecting you to be on time every day from now on. I hope that is clear."
- #2 "I've noticed that you have some difficulty getting to work on time. Perhaps there is some good reason for that; if so, you need to tell me so we can work it out by cutting your lunch time or having you work later each day. Is there some reason that makes it difficult for you to be here on time each day?"

Let's say you work with a person who is always negative, griping, complaining and unhappy about everything. Consider these two confrontation approaches:

- #1 "I've noticed that your attitude is always negative. You never seem to be happy about anything, and that makes it difficult to work with you. Your attitude really poisons the atmosphere, so I wanted to suggest that you work at being more positive."
- #2 "I've noticed that you seem troubled and unhappy at times—with the job or whatever. If I can help you in any way, I'd be glad to. Maybe we could make things better around here if we tried."

Who is the focus of approach #1?

Who is the focus of approach #2?

When Confrontation Backfires

I've encouraged you not to avoid confrontation when it is the right thing to do. But we also have to be aware that even constructive confrontation doesn't always work. Wise Solomon warned us that people will not always listen or change when confronted.

Proverbs 12:1: Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid.

Proverbs 10:17: Whoever heeds discipline shows the way to life, but whoever ignores correction leads others astray.

Proverbs 12:15: The way of fools seems right to them, but the wise listen to advice.

Since we do not have total control over how the other person will react to a confrontation, we can never be certain how it is going to turn out. Which of these do you have control over in a confrontation?

- The words you choose to say
- The timing of the confrontation
- Your motivation and attitude toward the other person
- The frame of mind of the other person
- The other person's willingness to change
- The other person's insecurities
- The other person's life experiences

Here are some possible reactions to a confrontation which you may personally have seen or experienced.

- Totally quiet; no response
- Defensive
- Very hurt; emotional
- Angry and irrational
- Refuse to change

Please understand that none of these reactions is proof in itself that the confrontation should not have been done, or that it was done in the wrong way. So, be prepared for any one of these reactions.

Also, keep in mind there may be a delayed response. Often at the moment of confrontation, a person reacts in an out-of-control manner, but after some thought and introspection, they are able to hear it and come back with the right response.

Your Plan for Confrontation

The next time you know there is a need to confront someone in your life, I encourage you to use this outline to help you prepare.

I need to confront _____ in order to help her/him :

Before I confront I will:

- Pray for wisdom and guidance
- Seek needed advice, if appropriate
- Examine my motives to make certain I am doing it for the right reason
- Make certain I am not acting out of anger or vengeance

The best time for this confrontation is: _____

The best place for this confrontation is: _____

I will open the conversation by saying:

Regardless of the immediate results or reaction, I will trust God to work this out to his glory.

This simple plan for confrontation will make certain you've done your preliminary homework and give you the confidence you need to move ahead.

