

## **Constructive Confrontation**

*Presented by Mary Lowman*

Air Dates: July 14 – July 18, 2025

### **Day One**

If we took a survey of the things we don't like to do, confrontation would come out somewhere near the top. Whether on the job or in our personal lives, most of us struggle with how and when to confront someone. It is not a pleasant experience, and therefore, we often avoid or postpone it.

Confrontation can be one of the most constructive things we can do when it is done at the right time, for the right reason, in the right way.

Let's talk about what happens when we avoid confrontation. Suppose you and I worked together, and you were doing something that caused me difficulty in some way or another—you were doing something wrong. But instead of bringing it out in the open with you and trying to find a solution, I just let it boil up inside me until what was a small issue became a major stumbling block in my mind.

Now in this hypothetical situation, instead of addressing the issue in a constructive way, I go into gossip and complaining mode about you. I tell another coworker what I don't like about you. This other person is influenced by what I've told her about you, so now, instead of solving the problem, I've spread the problem further because I've infected someone else with my gossip.

You can see how this could continue to spiral throughout the organization, until we have a major conflict involving not just two people, but several others as well. Has the problem been solved? No, not at all, because the one person who needs to be confronted is the object of gossip and backbiting, and she may not even realize her behavior has caused a problem.

Suppose instead I decided to confront you, and I did it in such a way that there was a possibility you might handle it well. And suppose indeed you do handle it well. Now, you are in a position to correct whatever it is that is causing a problem—or to correct my perception—and you and I have an improved relationship. Nobody else needs to ever know anything about it. By constructive confrontation, we've eliminated tons of unnecessary stress and avoided all kinds of unpleasant encounters. Good idea? I think so.

### **Day Two**

Constructive confrontation—does that sound like an oxymoron to you? I want to assure you confrontation can indeed be very constructive when it is done for the right reasons, at the right time, and in the right way.

Remember when the children of Israel were held captive as slaves in Egypt? *God told Moses, "Get up early in the morning and confront Pharaoh...and say to him, 'This is what the Lord says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me'"* (Exodus 8:20).

Moses was sent on a mission of confrontation by the Lord. Unfortunately, Pharaoh chose not to heed Moses' warning, and he suffered immense harm and eventual death as a result. But God kept sending

Moses to confront Pharaoh so these disasters could be avoided. That was the purpose of the confrontations; it was a very constructive and appropriate action to take.

Can you think of a person or a situation in your life right now that needs some constructive confrontation? How can you tell if it is constructive or not? Consider these questions:

- If the confrontation were successfully completed, would the confronted person benefit from it?
- Does this situation/person really require confrontation, or do you need an attitude change or more patience?
- Is your desire to confront imbedded in a desire to get even, or is it wrapped up in anger and vengeance?

*What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God (James 4:1-2).*

Anytime the turmoil inside us is simply our own selfish unfulfilled desires or covetousness or anger, obviously we are the one who needs confronting and changing, first and foremost.

As you think about the person or situation in your life that needs confrontation, search your heart in prayer before the Lord, read this passage from James 4, and make certain your motives are in line with God's Word. Otherwise, you will be confronting in the power of the flesh for the wrong reasons, and I can assure you that will fail miserably.

### Day Three

Confrontation can be very constructive and helpful when it is done for the right reason, at the right time, and in the right way. Yesterday, I talked about searching our hearts to make certain our motives are pure. Always pray in advance so you don't confront out of anger or selfishness.

Confronting at the right time is very important. Let's say you need to confront someone on your job because their poor work habits are affecting others, and it's affecting the quality of the work effort of your organization. You know this situation needs to be confronted.

Pick the right time and place. Never confront when others are present. It should always be a one-on-one encounter. Embarrassing or humiliating someone is sure to backfire on you, so choose a place that is private and conducive to a confidential conversation. Consider an off-site location. That often works best in business confrontations. Consider confronting over a meal. It seems to break down some barriers when we share a meal with someone. But again, it needs to be in a private setting.

Timing needs to be carefully considered. Make sure you time your confrontation when you are in control of your own emotions. It's not a bad idea to follow the "sleep on it" rule of thumb before confronting. Also time it when you have carefully considered what you will say.

Consider timing as it relates to the other person as well. If you know this is the busiest week of the month for that person, you might be well advised to wait until next week. Or if you are aware that this person has recently experienced a personal problem or a health issue, take those things into consideration. Someone who is already struggling with another issue likely will not handle one more thing very well.

Wise Solomon wrote: *a prudent man gives thought to his steps* (Proverbs 14:15) and *a patient man has great understanding, but a quick-tempered man displays folly* (Proverbs 14:29). Patience and prudence are very important as we think about confronting someone.

## Day Four

What is the best way to confront a person? When you are ready to confront, you need to open the conversation in a way that avoids sounding like finger-pointing. Think about it: Whenever someone approaches you in a finger-pointing mode, you most likely become defensive. If you begin the conversation with something that sounds like “you’re wrong and I’m right,” you won’t get to first base.

Remember, we are aiming at constructive confrontation, an outcome that will be beneficial to everyone. We need to choose words carefully, words that don’t create a defensive reaction, if possible. Here are some examples of opening words that could get the conversation off in the right direction:

- “I wanted to talk with you personally because I believe between the two of us, we can find an appropriate solution to this issue that will help both of us in the end.”
- “I believe when there’s any kind of conflict between two people, the best way to resolve it is to bring it out in the open and discuss it. So, I decided it might be a good idea for us to talk about this issue, because I need to know how you feel about it.”
- “After some thought I decided the best thing I can do is express openly to you how I feel about this and give you an opportunity to express your feelings as well.”

It is very smart to compose these opening words ahead of time. Recently a good friend told me of her need to confront her father, and she was very fearful of doing it. But it was necessary. I suggested she write it out so that when she talked with him, her nervousness wouldn’t cause her to stumble with her words and say it the wrong way. She did just that, wrote a couple of paragraphs before dialing his number, and then did what was difficult but necessary to do. She reported the confrontation went well, though she is not sure if he will take her advice. But at least she was able to get it said in the right way, and he listened.

## Day Five

God sent Moses to confront Pharaoh several times, to try to resolve their impasse in a way that would be best for both. Moses told Pharaoh, “Let my people go,” but Pharaoh refused to take the advice, and he paid a big price for it.

As we’ve talked about constructive confrontation, 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, because we do not have control over how the other person will react.

It’s important to remember even when we do the right thing in the right way, the confrontation may not have an immediate good result. The other person must ultimately choose how he or she will respond, and sometimes it doesn’t work out the way we had hoped. That doesn’t mean we failed.

Jesus was often rejected by those he confronted with the truth, and he allowed people to walk away. Even when you believe you know what is best for other people, ultimately, you must be reconciled to the fact that they make their own choices.

In some situations, you may have the power or the authority to execute an ultimatum if the other person refuses to conform. For example, if you confront an employee about their poor work habits and they refuse to change, they may indeed face the consequence of losing their job. But before you present the

ultimatum to that person, try to achieve the desired result—changing that person’s poor work habits in a more conciliatory manner. It may work, and you won’t need to issue the ultimatum.

In other situations, you may be powerless to enforce the change you are trying to achieve. Then, depending on the relationship, you must be prepared to live with it without allowing it to ruin your life, or you have to make changes if you are not prepared to live with it.

I want to encourage you to get past your fear and resistance to confrontation and learn how to confront when it is right to do. It is good to speak the truth in love even if it is painful.