

Advanced Confrontation Skills:

Every ministry is one tough conversation away from a breakthrough. And the goal isn't to "log confrontations" but rather log effective conversations that lead to long-term relationships.

The essentials of *Biblical* confrontation are listed at the bottom of this document (Eg., "Go to the person first in private" (Mt. 18:15); "Do it gently and with humility" (Gal.6:1-5) etc.) However, in leadership, we need to hold a slightly higher bar for our confrontations as the damage can be greater. Thus, here are a few recommendations I teach to my staff.

- **AVOID WRITING YOUR CONFRONTATIONS:** If you love people, you will attempt to meet face-to-face; (or at the very least, *call them*). 99% of all written confrontations come off more intense than they should for several reasons: (1). When you're looking people in the eyes, most people tend to dial back the sarcasm and edginess; (2). Most people are terrible writers. I'm a best-selling author, and my writing skills have consistently fallen short. "But, what if I need to write it down to focus my thoughts?" Great. But don't give that letter to them! And the last reason to avoid writing is that, people tend to brood over their own bad assumptions (whipping themselves into a frenzy) when the misunderstanding could've been solved in a way that was far less intense. "But didn't the Apostle Paul write his confrontations?" Sure! But you ain't the Apostle Paul! He lived *before* video conferencing software. And he was often in prison. You don't have the same excuse.
- **CONFRONTATIONS SHOULD BE DONE IN THREES:** (Try to do at least 2 follow up meetings after a confrontation). Whenever I have an awkward conversation, I always follow up within a day or two to help the relationship normalize. It's a fact that introverted personalities tend to internalize criticism more than extroverts... and often overthink or overreact to a verbal confrontation. Thus, it's critical to simply follow-up: "Are we good?" (I.e., Give people a chance to add feedback that they've processed). All intense convo's should happen in threes. And if this sounds like a lot of work, trust me: It's way easier than trying to patch up a severely burned bridge or starting over with a new person.
- **ALWAYS HAVE A STRATEGY FOR THE INVOLVEMENT of SPOUSES & FRIENDS:** When you have tough convos, remember: These people are probably going to be processing these tough conversations with the people around them. The spouse and friends often hear bits and pieces which can be dangerous – yet, they may not hear about the follow-up convo where everything got resolved. So, if an conversation is big enough, I generally include spouses (and include them in my two follow-ups). Or, we specifically talk about designated "safe people" to process with.
- **DON'T CONFRONT FOOLISH OR WICKED PEOPLE AS THOUGH THEY ARE WISE:** The book of Proverbs is always talking about the differences between the wise, the foolish and wicked people. And the reason it's important to discern between these categories is because, the Bible requires a different strategy for each – especially as it pertains to confrontation. For example, *Prov. 9:7-9* says "Whoever corrects a mocker invites insults; whoever rebukes the wicked incurs abuse." It's easy to project maturity upon people who don't have it – treat everyone as though they can handle rebuke. But the greater point is this: We don't confront wicked people; rather, we avoid them all together. With a foolish person, they need demotion and /or distance with benchmarks (not access to a higher lead). With a wise person, "tension demands attention." But if we fail to identify these categories and change your strategy of dealing with each, you will have a greater level of frustration.
- **APPLY THE CHECK BOOK THEORY – AKA., EMOTIONAL BANK ACCOUNT:** People are like bank accounts. The more you make deposits of love (time, touch, gifts, etc), the more you can make withdrawals (confrontations, requests, and tough questions). Keep in mind, you need to show them love in a way that *they* can understand.
- **CREATE A WEEKLY ATMOSPHERE OF CARE AND CANDOR:** Like the emotional bank account, when care is high, candor (honesty) can also be high. And if an atmosphere has a high amount of both, a lot of time, it prevents small issues from becoming big issues. For example, our

organization doesn't do "annual reviews" because we do reviews *every week*. We would never wait six months to give a team member feedback. And the more a team can normalize feedback, (and have healthy follow-ups), the easier it becomes to give and receive feedback.

- **STUDY ENNEAGRAM and MYERS-BRIGGS:** Some people have an aversion to these personality tests because unstable people use them as "excuses and boxes." Yet, when used correctly, they can become a powerful tool for avoiding offenses. Believe it or not, if I have an accurate MBTI /Enneagram score, I can actually statistically predict what kinds of misunderstandings they will tend to have with other people. 3 of the 9 Enneagram types meet their needs by being assertive (aggressive) whereas another 3 of the 9 types meet their needs through withdrawing (making their needs smaller). Both have strengths and weaknesses. I.e., When I train my team with these inventories, we become better at compensating for other people's preferences. Although we don't 'think alike' we become good at 'thinking together.'" Check out books like *Type Talk*, or *Just Your Type* (which predicts 64 complex combinations of personality conflicts – and how to avoid them).
- **SEEK TO UNDERSTAND FIRST, THEN TO BE UNDERSTOOD.** When conversations become heated, remember this: a person who feels understood rarely feels the need to yell or stay upset. (And by the way, it's really hard to yell at a person who whispers back and continues to ask questions). Truly great leaders can usually handle overlooking a few offenses and accusations while they disarm the bomb inside of people. If you can learn this skill, you will have a long-list of long-time friends.

5 Hallmarks of Biblical Confrontation:

If you're a follower of Jesus and you need to confront someone, the Bible gives 5 Guiding principles:

(1). Confrontations must be done "gently" and with humility (Gal.6:1-5). Submissive & full of mercy (James 3:17)

WHY? "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." Prov. 15:1

"Healthy communicators prefer face to face as its almost always gentler than written confrontations."

(2). Run to tension quickly (Mt 5:23-24; Eph 4:26) – Tension demands attention; Don't fester or allow weeks to go by. **WHY?** Often, our info or assumptions were wrong; thus, we waste energy on unnecessary tension.

"Healthy people are quick to give attention to tension."

(3). Confrontations must be done privately - going to the true source of the problem first before you involve others (Mt. 18:15) – while assuming the best (1 Cor. 13:7). **WHY?** Because talking *about* people rather than *to* people (a.k.a. Triangulating) is a form of gossip and politicking that God detests (Prov.6:19). And, none of us like people talking behind our backs in unflattering or untrue ways.

"Healthy people never start a confrontation in a public forum – like social media"

(4). Only after confrontations fail do we talk to or involve a righteous third party (1 Cor 6:1-7; Mt. 18:16) **WHY?** Because when we unnecessarily drag people into our drama, we create "bitter roots" & defilement (Heb.12:15)

"Healthy people avoid triangulation even when it feels scary."

(5). If all else fails, separate yourselves from them (1 Cor 5:11); And if their unrepented sin is "predatory" (which means, it will harm others), then "Go public" with the grievance (Mt. 18:17).

"Healthy people create boundaries and benchmarks after mediation has failed."

