

Communicating through Conflict

By Jacob Rodriguez

Proverbs 15:4 says, *“A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, But perverseness in it breaks the spirit.”* Lately I’ve been thinking about sometimes how difficult it is to resolve conflict, especially within a team or family. Nobody likes conflict, and naturally we tend to avoid it. But sometimes, we simply cannot avoid it. So learning how to communicate through conflict can play a vital role in your life. Communication is important, within a family or team, it’s critical. To me, communication is the link between knowledge and ignorance.

What we often fail to realize is “how” we communicate is just as important as “what” we communicate. Listen carefully; **if you say the right thing in the wrong tone or method, you said the wrong thing.** How we handle communication determines how well we can resolve conflict. We can either promote life and goodness, or pain and abuse. It’s that simple.

Let me give you some pointers when communicating through a conflict, especially a relationship conflict.

1. Analyze the Conflict – If you speak before you analyze, you might say things you wish you didn’t. Prayerfully judge the situation. Weigh the matter before you verbalize your frustration. Matthew 7:2, 3 (NLT) says, *“For others will treat you as you treat them. Whatever measure you use in judging others, it will be used to measure how you are judged. And why worry about a speck in your friend’s eye when you have a log in your own?”* This is most important step because it could save you further stress.

2. Never begin a Conversation with Criticism – It’s confession time! We’ve all done this. We’re disappointed about something (okay, we’re “mad”) and we start the conversation with critical remarks like, “You always do this...” What you’re saying is, I want a fight, not a resolution. Anytime you begin a conversation with criticism or sarcasm, you start off on the wrong foot. Proverbs 10:11 says, *“The **mouth** of the righteous is a well of life, But violence covers the mouth of the wicked.”*

3. Own your Part – This is the part we avoid the most. Rarely are we willing to look at our role in the conflict. You have to ask yourself, “How much of this is my fault?” James 5:16 says, *“Confess your faults one to another...”* Admitting where you were wrong helps open the door to healing, resolution and restoration. You have to swallow some pride, but it’s worth it. What helps is also using personal statements (I. my. our.) rather than blaming or attacking (you. your.).

4. Never bring up Unrelated Issues – When communicating through a conflict, never bring up unrelated, unconnected issues. This not only takes the focus off what’s being discussed, but causes further tension. Now instead of solving one problem, you have multiple issues that won’t be solved at that time anyway. It also makes you feel like you’re never going to put an end to the matter. I know it can be tempting, especially

when you feel like they're all related. But you're not going to solve world hunger by pouring everything out on the table at the wrong time.

5. Always maintain Respect – When communicating through conflict, never disrespect the other individual. This is what I refer to as **when you say the right thing in the wrong method, you said the wrong thing**. Being disrespectful negates your opinion. No matter how right you are, you never have a license to demean or belittle someone's character. Even in a disagreement, your issue has a much higher chance of being resolved when you respect each other. It helps to defuse the tension.

I hope today's writing was a help to you. I know it's more on the practical side, but we definitely need it.

Blessings,
Jacob