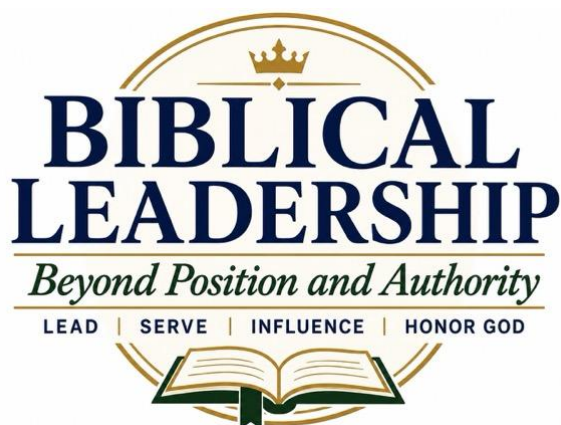




Part 1: Personal Leadership

Lesson 3: Handling Difficult Conversations

In This Lesson

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Start With the Right Heart | 4. Listen Carefully |
| 2. Address Problems Early | 5. Focus on Solutions |
| 3. Speak the Truth Clearly | 6. Keep Grace and Respect |

Description

Difficult conversations are a normal part of leadership. When people work together, misunderstandings, mistakes, and disagreements will happen. A good leader does not avoid these moments. Instead, they handle them in a way that honors God, protects relationships, and helps people grow. The goal is not to win an argument, but to bring clarity, restore peace, and help the team move forward together.

1. Start With the Right Heart

Before addressing a problem, check your own heart. Difficult conversations should come from a desire to help, not to punish or prove someone wrong.

Supporting Scriptures

- Galatians 6:1 “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness...”
- James 1:19 “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.”

Key Principles

- Be calm before speaking
- Pray and ask God for wisdom
- Seek restoration, not victory

Example

An employee repeatedly arrives late to work.

1. Wrong approach: “You’re always late and it’s becoming a problem.”
2. Better approach: “I wanted to talk with you about something I’ve noticed. You’ve been arriving late several times recently, and I wanted to see if something is going on.”

The second approach opens the door for understanding rather than creating defensiveness.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is it important to check our attitude before correcting someone?
2. What happens when correction comes from anger or frustration?

2. Address Problems Early

Small problems often grow into big problems if they are ignored. Leaders must deal with issues while they are still manageable.

Supporting Scripture

- Ephesians 4:26 “Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.”

Key Principles

1. Do not let tension build
2. Speak privately first
3. Deal with facts, not rumors

Example

Two employees are frustrated with each other and tension is building.

1. Wrong approach: Ignoring the problem and hoping it goes away.
2. Better approach: “Hey, I’ve noticed there seems to be some tension between you two. Let’s sit down and talk about what’s going on so we can work through it.”

Discussion Questions

1. Why do people often avoid difficult conversations?
2. What problems can grow when issues are ignored?

3. Speak the Truth Clearly

Kindness does not mean avoiding the truth. Leaders must speak honestly and clearly.

Supporting Scripture

- Ephesians 4:15 “But speaking the truth in love...”

Key Principles

1. Be honest but respectful
2. Focus on the issue, not the person
3. Avoid exaggerations like “always” or “never”

Example

A team member is not completing their responsibilities.

1. Wrong approach: “You just don’t care about your work.”
2. Better approach: “I’ve noticed the last three reports were not completed on time. Can we talk about what’s making that difficult?”

This keeps the conversation focused on the problem rather than attacking the person.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the difference between speaking truth and criticizing someone?
2. Why is clarity important in correction?

4. Listen Carefully

Good leaders listen as much as they speak. Sometimes a problem exists because someone feels unheard.

Supporting Scripture

- Proverbs 18:13 “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.”

Key Principles

1. Ask questions
2. Let the person explain
3. Try to understand their perspective

Example

An employee seems careless with tasks. Instead of assuming laziness, ask questions:

1. “Help me understand what has been making this difficult.”

You may discover they lack training, clarity, or resources.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do people often interrupt instead of listening?
2. How can listening change the outcome of a difficult conversation?

5. Focus on Solutions

The goal of correction is improvement, not embarrassment.

Supporting Scripture

- **Proverbs 27:17** “Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.”

Key Principles

1. Work toward a solution together
2. Set clear expectations
3. Offer help if needed

Example

1. An employee struggles with organization. Instead of simply pointing out the problem, say:
 - Let's figure out a system that helps keep these records organized.
 - What would help you stay on track?

Discussion Questions

- Why is it important to focus on solutions instead of blame?
- What makes correct conversation productive?

6. Keep Grace and Respect

Even when correction is needed, people should leave the conversation knowing they are valued.

Supporting Scriptures

- Colossians 4:6 "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt..."
- Proverbs 15:1 "A soft answer turns away wrath..."

Key Principles

1. Do not embarrass people publicly
2. Keep your voice calm
3. Show appreciation when possible

Example

1. After correcting an issue, say: "I appreciate the work you do here. I know you want to do a good job, and I believe we can fix this together."

Discussion Questions

1. How does tone affect difficult conversations?
2. Why do people respond better to correction when they feel respected?

Practical Steps for Difficult Conversations

1. Pray and prepare your heart
2. Speak privately
3. Explain the issue clearly
4. Listen carefully
5. Work toward a solution
6. End with encouragement and clarity

Matthew 18:15 "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone..."

God's pattern for dealing with problems is simple: go directly, speak honestly, and seek restoration.