

## THE ART OF CONFRONTATION

Does your life just go great? Do you never have any problems or problems with people? Mine does not and I bet yours does not either. In fact, I heard someone say the other day, "I could really do a good job of living in this world if I just didn't have to deal with people." Unfortunately, we have to, and when you do there always comes those sticky times when you have to confront issues. Most people do not like confrontation. You will hear people say, "I don't like confrontation, I would rather just take it and put up with it." You really would not, because you do not put up with it. Instead, what happens is that you get more and more angry inside or you get more and more frustrated, or you get discouraged or depressed. So you really are not doing better by putting things off and not dealing with it.

I want to share with you some of the things I have learned about the art of confrontation. I did not like it either it is still hard for me at times. A problem that I have had is that I wait too long and then I get so angry that I just blast. That is not the answer either. There is a better way. Even God talks about it with you. Have you ever thought about how angry God could get with you at some of the dumb stuff you have done, and some of the dumb stuff I have done. He does not come and just blast us. He has His own way of confronting us. Today we are going to study how does God confront each of us and how does God want to teach us to confront other people. I have a friend who says she loves confrontation. She says, "I just want to get those cards out on the table and I just want to lay it out there." To be honest with you, she has done that to me sometimes and she hurt me because she got so caught up in just laying all the cards on the table that she forgot to use diplomacy and love and it did not work very well. I have a pastor who is an incredible preacher. The pastor of my church is wonderful. He is very good at confrontation. He says, "I like it, I prefer it. I want to do. I like what happens when you do it. But, there was a time I could not do it and I would run around the corner to keep from having to do it." You can learn. It is an art. The title of the lesson today is "The Art of Confrontation," and you can learn it.

First, let's talk about you and God and what He says when He is talking to you about your sins. You are just like me. You have done things you are sorry for or ashamed of, wish you had not done, or wish you could do it over again. There may even be something that you think, "I kind of like doing that, but God said no, so I guess I have to quit." God says, "Let's talk this over." The Bible was written 2,000-4,000 years ago. It is amazing. Look how long ago God had to talk about things that are going on in my life today. I had an English and Spanish teacher in high school named Mrs. Vincent. She was a great teacher. What I remember her saying is "Don't ever forget, clothes may change, countries may change, but people remain the same for all of time." That is true. It is impossible to go through life and not have to have confrontation. The sooner you can learn how to do it, the better you will get at it. The more you practice it, the better you get at it. I have made mistakes in learning how to do it, and people have taught me things. I have had people make mistakes in doing it with me.

When you are a leader you have to do confrontation. I was the head of Women's Ministry in my church and I had a Board. There was a lady on the board that was a wonderful Christian woman. My job was to get everyone in positions where I needed people to do certain jobs. We talked about it on this board. This lady had a friend who wanted to be involved. Without asking me, she asked her friend to be the head of something. The lady was not qualified for the job and I knew that. How did I have to handle that? What did I have to say? I get a lot of good advice all of the time, so I went for some advice, and then I went to her. I said, "Could we talk about this," instead of "Can I tell you what you did?" That is not laying the cards on the table, it is being rude. I said, "I did not have an opportunity to determine whether this was God or not to put this woman in this position. I want very much to put people only where God wants them because I want them to expand and grow in their own calling. I did not have an opportunity to do this." She said, "Oh, I am so sorry. I just got excited and wanted her to be a part of it. I am so sorry." I said, "Well, we have to figure out what to do but in the future come to me first and let's talk about it first." We had to come up with an answer. A lot of times in confrontation other things have to take place after that. You have to figure out what you are going to do now. We decided that the woman had already been asked and she had already said yes so we would give her a small commitment now. We will say it is just for a semester and see how she does. We will give her a chance. We have to appraise her dress, her speech, her manners, what effect she has with the ladies, and then we would decide. It did work out. I dreaded doing it. Yet, because God had begun to teach me how to confront, I had some tools. That is what I want to do with you today.

I want you to read Ephesians 4:15. It is talking about speaking the truth in love. When you speak the truth in love, people know it. First of all, people know truth. It rings clear with them. Even if they do not quite understand it, something about it rings true and they can feel your love. Before you go to someone to confront them, be sure you have a heart of love. What if something has happened and you are very angry and it is not good. What do you do to handle that right? If you go in your anger, you are not going to do it right, you are going to do it wrong. Sometimes anger just happens like that and it is righteous anger and it was the right way to say it and do it. I am not talking about that today. I am talking about when you are having to deal with a situation and figure out the best way to do it.

The first thing you do is wait until your anger has left. You probably think, "If I wait until my anger leaves, will I still do it? Will I do it right?" Yes you will. My husband has been a great influence on my life. I can get angrier than he can. When we were raising our children, I would just spout off. My husband would not say anything. Maybe two days later, after he has been thinking about it all of this time, he will come in and say, "Could we talk about this." Even when it is something I have done wrong, I think, "Oh brother, here it comes." Then he does it in such a peaceful way. He has taught me a lot about how to do it because it makes me say, "Slow down Betty. You are angry, you are upset. This is not the right time. Wait for the right time. You are not going to miss it if you wait a couple of days, because you are still going to address the issue." That is what good confrontation is all about – addressing the issue and not running the person down or making the person feel like they are worthless or no good, or tuck their tail between their legs and run off. That is not good confrontation. That is an anger issue. What you want to do is help the person to realize, "We are not talking about you, we are talking about something you did, your performance. You are a good person, your performance was not right and we need to talk about that." That takes the pressure off.

I counsel people about their marriages. Say a woman comes to me and says, "I feel this, I feel that. My husband and I are really fighting about it and we cannot talk about it. Every time we try to talk about it, we get angry. We get angry at each other and it never changes." What I say to them is, "Together, put the problem out in front of you and get it to the place where both of you are working on the problem, and not attacking each other." If you will let the problem get out in front, and decide together we are going to solve this thing. Let's talk about it. Sometimes in confrontation it takes more than one meeting. Sometimes you just cannot do it in one meeting. People need to go home and think. They need to think about their responses. They need to think about what they believe should be done. Confrontation is everywhere you look. Look at what is done in the United Nations, or around the world, especially in the Mid East. Realize you are in it for the long haul. You are going to stay with it in a non-angry position, and deal with the issue, not the person.

Another thing you want to do is think it out from all angles. Usually, you are only thinking about it from your angle. When you go to talk to them and lay the cards out on the table in a non-threatening way, they say "Well did you know such-and-such happened?" "No, I didn't. That changes everything." Part of confrontation is just getting everything out where everyone can look at all the pieces of this little puzzle.

Another is to look at it from their point of view. When I was single and did not really have a steady boyfriend, I had a relative who had broken up with a guy. I thought, "He's cute. I think I would like to go out with him." I asked her if they were broken up. She said they were. He asked me out and we had nice dates. It did not last, but it was fun. She got highly offended. I thought, "She said she didn't like him anymore. She did not want anything to do with him. But, there were other issues I was not aware of. When I began to look at it from her point of view, I realized, "Oh my goodness, I should not have done that." I did not see it that way and I called and apologized. Another thing in confrontation is to make sure you cover it completely. Say, "Is there anything else that we need to talk about? Is there anything else that you have been upset about?" "Is there another way of looking at this that I haven't seen? Can I help you go to try and correct this?"

One of the major aspects of really good confrontation is to use the sandwich method. Jesus used the sandwich method. If you study in Revelation when He is talking to the churches, He is using the sandwich method. He says, "You have been doing this and that is good. But, you have been doing this and I don't like that. If you will correct, we can keep going. He did that over and over in all kinds of situations. You can study that and see how Jesus confronted those churches. What is the sandwich method? Praise, deal with it, praise. What do we want to do? Deal with it. It is hard to be corrected. Even for the most wonderful person in the world, it is still hard. You think, "I am not doing things right and I don't like that. It makes me feel bad." So use praise, deal with the issue, and praise. Always make sure you praise the people for the things they are doing right. I worked for a man named Tom once. He was a great boss, maybe the best boss I have ever had. Somebody said to me, "Wait until he corrects you. You are going to find out it is the best that has ever happened to you. You don't even know it is happening." I thought, "What in the world does that mean?" I had to meet with him weekly. I can remember walking out of his office after meeting with him for about an hour, when I was the head of Women's Ministry, and later I

thought, "I think he corrected me." He did it so politely, so respectfully and with no anger. He was trying to help me be better at my job. His motive was to try to make things better for me. I walked out thanking him for what he had talked to me about. That is the best way you can tell confrontation has been great. You like each other better. You are closer. You know each other better and you know how to deal with things better. You are wiser and you are growing. That is the fruit of good confrontation.

Do not ever do confrontation when you are mad. Give yourself time to calm down or else let someone else do it. Maybe you think, "I am so angry. This is wrong and I cannot let me anger go down." If you feel that way, then let somebody else do it. Let them help you. Never do it in an accusing manner. Instead say something like, "Can I tell you how I feel about this? Can I tell you something I am concerned about? Can I talk to you about this and see why things happened the way they did?"

If you are in a situation and the confrontation has to take place and you do have intense feelings, you can even say, "I would like to talk to you about this. I need to let you know that I have a lot of intense feelings about it. I have anger that I am trying to deal with and I don't want that to come in between us. I don't want that to come into the situation." If you are with Christians, you can pray before you start it all.

Husband and wife can pray. One time my husband and I were on vacation in Puerto Vallarta. We are both pretty strong willed and stubborn. I wanted to do something and he did not want me to do it. I was just determined I was going to do it. He was trying to tell me "No don't do it." We got so angry at each other. We were in a Jeep, and I told him to stop the Jeep. I said, "Jesus, would You help us be able to talk to each other about this because we need You right now really bad. Amen." Then we went down the road and we were arguing again. We were determined that our way was the right way. I told him again, "Stop the car. Jesus, I am sorry to have to ask you again but we need some help here. Please help us." After that, everything calmed down and we were able to discuss it.

Do not think just because you love Jesus and your husband or wife loves Jesus, that everything is going to be great. That is what I see happening to Christians a lot. They think, "I am a Christian and God says He wants to bless me. How come all of this stuff is happening?" Because you live in the real world, that is why. You are not in heaven yet. Relax and let God teach you how to do it. When you walk out of a situation where you have had to confront someone or you have been confronted, just say "God, how could that have been done better. Holy Spirit, what could I have said and what could they have said. "Remember I told you the Holy Spirit is your teacher and your guide and He is the one who corrects you.

Another thing you can do is pray ahead of time and say, "God, what does that person need? What can I say that you need me to say to them? Then, if you feel violated and that is why you have to do the confrontation, be sure you identify what it is that you really feel violated about. What is it exactly? Identify it, name the baby. Then when you confront people, perhaps about their behavior, something they are doing or did, you need to give examples of it. For most of us, even when someone comes and tells us what we are doing wrong, it is hard to figure it out because we have blind spots. Maybe you do not realize you did it, or do not remember saying it. Just be aware of a couple of examples, and be careful how you tell them. "You did . . . and then you did," that does not help them. They get defensive, they are not going to listen as carefully. They are going to figure out a way to say, "Well, let me tell you what you did."

Instead, give them an example and say, "When you do this, let me give you an example of this." Then you give two or three examples. But be open to their input. They may say, "Well do you realize that you do such-and-such?" That is when you need to ask yourself what is the goal of this confrontation? Is it to get mad at each other? Is it to sling darts at each other? Is it to make it worse than ever? Is it to try to come to a better place and resolution?

Sometimes you have feelings and you know they are not right but you still have them. You can say, "This is how I feel. I may not be right and you may see it differently, but when this happens it makes me feel like such-and-such." A very important part of confrontation is that you give the other person opportunity to respond. Laying all of the cards on the table is not going in there just blasting it all out, saying how you feel, what you think should happen and leave and say, "Good. We had a great confrontation here." You have not succeeded at your confrontation point until you have arrived at a good conclusion, or at least you can tell we have moved forward. You can even say, "If you don't think I am right, tell me."

Another one is, "I am listening." Then you can say, "This is what I heard you say. . . .Is that what you meant?" The person may say, "No that is not what I meant at all." "That is what I heard you say, so say it again." They said it again, and you say, "Let me get it right. This is what I heard you say. . . .Did I get it right that time?" They may say, "Well, kind-of, but not all." "Okay, what did I miss?" You are trying to get the problem out in front of the two of you or the group of you, out in front where you can identify it, pick it apart, and resolve it. You can use phrases. When you have to give the correction that goes with the confrontation, "In the future, do this." No one likes to be told they are wrong or that they made a mistake or did not do something right.

The Lord has taught me to say, "Next time." The principal of next time involves saying what we say in a different manner. Instead of saying, "You shouldn't have done it," I might say, "Next time when you get in this situation, do this." It seems to take the sting out of it. You could also say, "Another way to do this is such-and-such." My husband will say, "What do you think would be another way to do this? How could you see solving this in another way?" It makes you have to think.

You want to be very direct, but you want to be tactful. You are not in here to harm or to put down to make people feel less than. You can be gentle and make your point. The Bible says, "A soft answer turns away wrath." Sometimes in confrontation, if you are not careful, it will start escalating. What do you do when in this confrontation things start escalating and everyone's voices are getting higher and louder? You deliberately make your voice go lower and softer. It does not mean that the words you are saying change. You just say it lower, slower and softer. It starts calming everything down again. Have you ever seen a pot that has the lid on it come to a boil? The hotter it gets, it starts going bubble, bubble. It starts to bubble faster and faster. You turn it down a little bit and it keeps cooking, but it has taken it away from the boiling point.

You do not want to soft peddle what you are saying. You need to say the truth and speak it. There are ways to do it. People need structure. They need examples. They need answers of how to do it better next time. Remember, you are trying to draw attention to the problem, not their personality or anything about them. When people leave your presence after being confronted, do they feel built up, good, and happy? Do they leave relieved that something difficult was discussed and they are moving forward?

What do you need to be thinking about? Remember the reason you are dealing with the issue. God confronts you about your sins. What is His reason for doing it? It is not to put you down or make you feel less. It is to identify the problem. You are a sinner and you need Jesus. You are not going to go to heaven without Jesus. You need to give your life to Him. You need to turn the control of your life over to him. Confrontation is good.

#### QUIET TIME QUESTIONS

1. When is confrontation a good thing?
2. How does Ephesians 4:15-32 apply to the art of confrontation?
3. What is the sandwich method? Can you find a place in Scripture that uses this method?
4. How can you use Proverbs 15:1 when dealing with confrontation?
5. How can prayer be used in the process of confrontation?
6. What are most important things to remember about confrontation?

To watch the video on THE ART OF CONFRONTATION, Pillar Five, Relational Skills, go to [www.bettyswann.com](http://www.bettyswann.com).

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