

CONFRONTATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

This is the last lesson in the eight-part lesson series on leadership, Leadership Skills for the 21st Century.

In Part One we had four lessons, and in Part Two we have four lessons. The one today is probably the one that people dread. Do you like to confront people? Do you like to hold people accountable for their actions. Most of us run from it, even in your own family. When we are talking about leadership skills, it is not only for a business or ministry, it is not only for an organization of which you are the head. It is for your family, it is for raising your children, and it is for influencing the people that God has brought into your life.

In all of that and being a leader for God, there are certain parts of it that maybe you think are not pleasant and you do not want to do it. Actually, you can learn that this is one of the best things that you could ever do because of how it clears the air and how everyone knows what is really going on and what everyone really thinks. It is amazing how productive it is and yet we dread it. We dread the thing that can make things have greater productivity.

How do you teach people about confrontation? Most of us hate to be corrected. I have people in my life that are so kind to me and they love me, especially the people on the board of Betty Swann Ministries. I have sat them down and said, "Look I can make mistakes. I can say something I shouldn't say or do something I shouldn't do, and I have to know I can count on you to tell me when you don't feel like something is right." At first, they would say things like, "Betty, I felt that way but I just didn't know if I was right. I didn't know if I should say anything about it." I have told them, "Don't do that anymore because I have to be able to count on you." You do not want a bunch of "yes men" around you saying, "Oh you are just so wonderful." You do need compliments, as I talked about in the last lesson but you have to have people that will say, "Betty I don't feel right about that. We need to talk about that." Then when you talk about it, you come to a much better conclusion. That is the same way in your marriage.

Confrontation is a part of leadership. Why? If you do not have it, I can guarantee you will have some results you do not want to have. What are they? Bitterness, anger, misunderstanding, miscommunication, uncertainty, harsh words, and unresolved issues that go on and on. Do you think about that in your marriage? There are women who are afraid of their husbands. There are husbands who are afraid of their wives. They think, "I don't want to bring it up because it might make it worse." Actually, unresolved issues never go away. People think that if they just ignore it, the problem will go away or work itself out.

Sometimes things really do work out. You have seen that happen. You just leave it alone and it kind of works itself out. However, there are going to be those nagging issues. The hardest thing about confrontation is that you have already had confrontations about it and it did not solve it. It made it better but here you are again, and you have to find a new way to do it. I heard a great definition of insanity.

Insanity is keeping on doing the same things and hoping things will change. Keeping on doing the same things the way you have always done them and hoping things will change. That is the definition of insanity, and it is isn't it.

There is a right way and a wrong way to be confrontational with someone and to hold them to accountability. Accountability is a completely different thing. Confronting people is an issue. It is working over an issue. Accountability can involve issues but it can also involve job descriptions. If someone does not know what you expect from them and you have not made it clear, and then you try to hold them accountable for their actions, they will say, "I never even really understood that is what you wanted from me." As a parent, you children are growing up and as they get older you give them more and more responsibility in the family and expect more and more from them. Do they realize that that is what you want from them? Do the people that work under you know their job description? Do they understand what you expect from them? There are people who are soft spoken and not confrontational at all. They think they have communicated but they really have not. So some people are confused. There is a Bible verse in Corinthians that says, "If the trumpet sounds an uncertain tone, how do the men know to go to battle."

What is that talking about? In a battle, there is a battle sound that a trumpet gives, charge! Everyone knows that is the sound to go. When you are holding people accountable, they really need to know.

Maybe you need to write the job description down so that there is no lack of communication, there is no misunderstanding about what they are actually being expected to do. If you have that done, then when it is time to confront you can give examples and say, "This is what I asked of you. Have you done it?"

Let's look at Ephesians 4:15. "Speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him who is the head, that is, Christ." Confronting people has always been around. Holding people accountable has

always been around. People have always done it right and always done it wrong. Here is God saying to do it in love. How does God do it with us? In love. Growing up I had a lot of bad things happen in my family. My brother and I would look at each other, laugh, and say "Well hit me again Lord." Where did I get that? What made me think that God was out to get you? That is not right. God is out to grow you up. God is out to iron out all of the spots and wrinkles. God wants to grow you up into the bride of Christ. God wants to grow you up into the image of Christ. There are things that you and I do, we all do, that God has to come to us and say, "I need to talk to you about this." How does He do that? He does it through the Bible mainly. The other way He does it is through the Holy Spirit who lives in your spirit. He talks to you and tries to do it gently. Some of us are pretty hard headed and sometimes it takes a little bit more. God has been trying to speak in a soft, gentle way and you are not getting it, so He has to speak louder.

Look at these two pictures. In the first picture, two men are confronting each other in the wrong way. They are angry, tense, and uptight. Do you think anything is really being accomplished? There are times when people really get angry and just speak it out, and people listen. A lot of time, that only makes it worse. In the second picture we have two business people confronting each other in a good way. They are trying to work it out. How are they doing that? I am going to give you some steps in confrontation and I hope they will help you.

The first one is to define the actual problem. Sometimes it takes awhile to define it. You think you know what it is but you have to have some discussions from everyone involved. What is the problem here?

Maybe people are looking at it from their own perspective. You might sit down and one person will say one thing, and this person will say another thing. Then there might be a person coming from a completely different angle that you never even thought about. There you are defining the problem.

Low level anxiety, or maybe high level anxiety, is at the root of all the anger and misunderstanding.

Another thing you can do to really cut down on people's anxiety is to say to them, as the leader of the group or the parent with your children, "Let's put this problem out in front of us instead of between us and let's see what each one of us can come up with to solve it." Then everyone is on the same team. You are not against each other. Have you ever had someone that you thought was your bitter enemy? Yet, when a problem came up and you had to work together, and out of doing that you became the best of friends.

You saw strengths in them and they saw strengths in you, that you really appreciated and you thought, "That is great. I didn't know they were like that." Out of it, you become better friends than ever. Really that is your final goal in any confrontation or accountability procedure.

I worked for a man once who was named Tom. I think he may have been the best boss anyone ever could have had. My friend had been under him before I was. This guy came to me and said, "So Tom's going to be your boss, huh? You are going to love it. He is great." I said, "Good." He said, "I will tell you what he is really good at. When he needs to correct you, you are going to go in his office and you will have a meeting with him. Suddenly, he will be talking to you and you will be agreeing with it and thanking him, and thinking that is a good idea. You will walk out the door and realize you just got corrected." That is exactly what happened. He learned how to do it the right way so that when I walked out I felt like, "I have someone who is really watching my back and believes in me. He is really taking the time to help me do it better." Let me give you an example of that. Sometimes I can say things in a way that I should not say it, or say things I should not say. Are you like that? Tom called me in his office one day and was talking to me about how everything was going. He said, "Betty do you ever feel like you say things that you wish you hadn't said them." I said, "Oh yes, I do." He said, "Yes, I kind of heard you say something the other day that probably you shouldn't have said. Would you like some help in how to solve that?" I said, "Yes, because it happens a lot." When someone confronts you in the right way, you can expose your weakness to them because you do not feel like you have to protect yourself. I said, "Yes, I have a problem with that."

Tom said, "I can tell you a real good thing to do. Figure out where are the areas that you are most likely to fail with your mouth and then back up in your mind and put a flag in your mind. When that flag pops up, you can say to yourself 'Watch out, Betty. Get on guard. You could blow it right after this.'" I said, "Tom I really appreciate that." I walked out and about an hour later I thought, "He just did what my friend told me he would do. He corrected me and I feel great about it. I feel like I am going forward." When you confront people, that needs to be the end result, not where they go off and sulk for days because you have embarrassed them or made them feel like worm, or like they cannot do anything right. It needs to be where they think, "I can do better. I have some tools to do better." I am going to expose myself before you. I do not mind doing it because God has really worked with me on it. I sat down and thought, "What is a time that I am most likely to say something I should not say, really should not say it. It is when I get excited." I do get excited. If you have watched these programs very long, you know I get excited. What do I feel like when I get excited? It starts building up and I get more excited, then I say something, and then I get more excited. I thought, "That's my flag." So I begin to watch. It does not mean I am going to lose my enthusiasm for life, it does not mean I am going to lose my excitement for life. It means I am going to be able to guard myself and not say the wrong thing. That is the best example I can give you of a personal

situation in my life. What are yours? What are the areas that you keep getting confronted about? Have you ever seen that it seems to happen over and over. Then get a flag. What makes me do that? What am I feeling when I start to do it? Then back up and put a flag.

In defining the actual problem, another thing is to watch irrational thoughts. What is an irrational thought?

In II Corinthians 10:4-6, it says, "Cast down vain imaginations, capture every thought that exalts itself against the knowledge of God." Those are irrational thoughts. We all have those. You are not the only person that has those. What is that? It is where your mind is racing and before you know it you are excited, or upset, or maybe on the inside no one knows it is going on. It begins to defeat you and pull you down. Those are irrational thoughts and you have to capture those. How do you capture them? We live in Texas, and no matter where you are in the world, this is a show coming to you from the great state of Texas. We have cowboys, and cowboys can rope. Have you ever seen a rodeo with a big cowboy on a big horse, with a little tiny rope, and a calf coming out of the chute taking off? This cowboy has to have the expertise to be riding a horse, twirling his rope, knowing exactly where to put that rope on the calf, be able to stop his horse, jump off, tie the rope around the calf's legs, throw his hands up in the air, all in the shortest amount of time possible. That is what you need to learn how to do with your irrational thoughts.

That is what I need to learn how to do. How do you do that? You might suddenly feel like all your thoughts are assaulting you. The devil can do it to you. Are you aware that the devil comes to confront you, too? The people you work with tend to have these irrational thoughts, too. Tell them how to say, "Is this a vain imagination? Is God saying this to me or is this the devil, or is it me? Is this what God would say about me?" Really, most of the time it is not God. How do you know it is not God? Because the confrontation defeats you on the inside. People can come and confront you and you know, "No I didn't think that. No I didn't say that. No I am not like that. You have been mistaken." Even then, when you come back at people, you might want to get angry and shout, and then it goes up levels and nothing is accomplished. God can actually teach you how to receive confrontation. The best way to do it is to slow down. We are going to look at some wise ways to confront, some wise ways to be accountable, and wish ways to handle it.

In confronting people, do not ever do it when you are angry, if at all possible. If it is really important, you can wait. You can even wait weeks. You think, "Oh no, I have to take care of it right now." If God says to take care of it now, or if it is really serious, then do it. If it is the kind that you can stop and meditate on, you will think of better ways to do it and you will not do it in anger.

Make yourself slow down and think, "When is the best time to do it? Where is the best place to do it? How is the best way to say it?"

Ask God to show you this situation from all angles. "Lord, let me see it from their angle. Are they seeing something that I am not seeing?" Many times you will see it another way and you will think, "Oh, goodness, I am so glad I didn't say anything when I was angry."

The next thing is you can use it like Jesus did with the sandwich method. If you look in Revelation, when He was judging those churches, He would tell them something good they had been doing. "You know I am really proud of you. You are doing a good job here. You have done a great job. Here is something I want you to think about that you could correct. But, I don't want you to get discouraged because you are doing a good job." That is how Jesus did it.

Another thing to do is go ahead and cover it completely. Give examples. People need examples. We all have blind spots, things you cannot see. When you confront someone, if you do not give examples of what you are talking about, the people might say, "What do you mean? I do what? When do I do it? When did I do that?" You can say, "When you said this. When you did that. You did it the other day." Give them examples. If you really care about people and holding them accountable, you can say to them, "I am going to hold you accountable to this. Here is what I am going to do. When you do it again, I will tell you that is an example." One thing we do in our family is when someone does something, one of us just taps the center of our forehead. That little sign means "You are doing it again. There you go. Be careful." Once when I was in Belarus I had a dream that a lady was putting on lipstick and she went way outside her lips. Then I saw some 3 x 5 cards with writing on them and they were just throwing through the air. I thought, "What in the world does that mean. That is a dream from God. I know it, I can feel it." I prayed and prayed and the Lord said, "As Americans you have to be real careful and not be loud." Americans can be so loud, especially in a restaurant, laughing and thinking they are having the greatest time. God said, "Europeans are not like that and you are offensive. You are like the lady who thought she looked so good doing her lipstick outlandishly. You are losing everything you have been teaching because of your behavior." We made the agreement, "Ladies we have to watch it. We are having a lot of fun and laughing a lot but we want to leave a good impression. So, if one of us gets too loud, just do this." We had so much fun with that. So, be kind, be truthful, and give examples.

If you have great intensity and it is hard to control your intense feelings, go ahead and explain that. “I need to talk to you, but I need to tell you I am very upset. I am going to try really hard to just be calm, but you need to understand I am really upset about this. Let me tell you what I feel. I feel betrayed and I feel exposed. I feel undermined.” Then say to them, “Tell me how it is from your side. I want to give you an opportunity to explain to me.” Then really listen. Do not be sitting there thinking, “As soon as they finish that, I am going to tell my next point.” Really be open to listening. Be tactful but be direct. Do not beat around the bush. Sometimes in trying to kind in the truthfulness of something and doing it in love, they beat around the bush so much that the person gets up and did not get it. God does not do that with you. He comes to you and says, “Do not do this anymore.”

Another big thing to remember in all of this, especially as a leader, is to check back later. Ask them, “How are you doing with what we talked about?” A lot of times people think about what was said and then they think of other things that they wish they had said. Give them a change, “Is there anything else you have thought of? Is there anything else you want to say?” People will really appreciate that. Your children, whether teenagers or younger, will really appreciate that.

Accountability and confrontation kind of holds people to the fire, but it brings about necessary change. If there are things in your personal situation with someone else that are needing to change, sitting there hoping and wishing, even praying, might not get it done. There is a time that God says, “You just need to quit praying and go do it. Go talk to them. I will prepare them.” Remember the reason you are doing it for someone – for positive consequences for them. It is to help them improve and be more effective. That is what a good mentor or friend or marriage partner does. Do not wait too long. Get feedback.

Another thing is to be sure that you let them know making this error and having to get this correction does not disqualify you from future leadership. In fact, it helps them get to a place where they can handle leadership in a qualified manner. Teach them that. Then they want to be. What if someone says, “Well my heart was right in it.” You can give them grace but sometimes there is a place to say, “No your heart and your actions have to match up now.” Just make sure they know it is not about who they are, it is just about their performance. Together you can work on it. Teach them the principal of next time doing it this way.

QUIET TIME QUESTIONS

1. What happens when issues are not confronted?
2. How does Ephesians 4:15 relate to confrontation and accountability?
3. Give an example of a confrontation from the Bible.
4. What are some suggestions for helping us with confrontation?

To watch the video on CONFRONTATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY, Pillar Six, Leadership Skills, go to www.bettyswann.com.

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