

Strengthening Relationships through Difficult Conversations

Leadership Summit - Fall 2020

Difficult and uncomfortable conversations are all around us. They seem amplified during this season, but they always abound. We have conversations about race, politics, schools, COVID, guidelines, and reentry among others.

The church doesn't choose sides. The church follows Jesus. At Our Savior, remember to whom we belong and who we are. We are sons and daughters of the King. We make disciples who love God, love people, and live like Jesus. In times like this, we do well to hold close the words of Paul to the church in Philippi:

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand (Phil. 4:4-5).

Our charge and encouragement in the midst of difficult and uncomfortable conversations is to be reasonable, to fuel the solutions, not the problems. If we lose our reasonableness, we (perhaps unintentionally) become a barrier to making disciples.

How do we remain reasonable when it's lacking around us? Practically it boils down to preparation and tools.

Prepare

Developing a daily rhythm gives us a firm foundation, clear eyes, and a full heart.

- Reading scripture, devotions, prayer - get focused in the first 15-30 minutes of the day.
- Prayer doesn't necessarily change your circumstances, but it does change you and your perspective of them.

Remember the goal: loving God, loving people, living like Jesus; we are all Americans

- If you're having a conversation with a non-Christian, choose a broader truth like "We're all Americans - we aren't enemies."

Pick a healthy space

- Communication is...
 - Tone - 38%
 - Non-verbal - 55%
 - Words - 7%
- The way you say it is 5x as important as what you say.
- Calm is just as contagious as fear or panic.

Tools

Seek understanding

- Walk humbly - Drop the sarcasm, fixing, rescuing, dismissing
- Be patient; difficult and uncomfortable matters aren't solved in 30 minutes.
- Do more listening than talking or sharing. Use phrases like...
 - "Tell me more..."
 - "Help me understand how you came to believe that?"

Express empathy

- Communicates you understand another's situation, feelings, and motives.
- You don't have to agree with someone to do this.
- Seeking understanding and expressing empathy make rapport possible.
- Use phrases like...
 - "I can understand how you feel that way."
 - "I hear what you're saying."
 - "I appreciate you sharing how you feel."

Provide information and support

- Bring it back to the foundation
- What do you love about OSLC? Loving people
 - The most common answer to this is "I love the people". A distant 2nd is "I love our commitment to biblical truth."

Follow-up

- This expresses that you share a relationship; not simply a moment.
- Ideas for follow-up include:
 - Grab coffee next week
 - Give them a call
 - Check in on them; ask how they are seeing different things
 - Mail a hand-written note