

Below the Surface- Hard conversations, sincere love.

Sermon Notes

January 14, 2018

Top 5 Most Formative Moments

- Handling the death of two friends.
- Best friend basically telling me I was being a jerk and peers were beginning to avoid me.
- A college peer saying he was disappointed because he thought he had met the real deal, but instead encountered my pride.
- Being confronted by a parent for choosing the wrong values at “Christian night” at St. Louis Cardinals baseball game.
- Being told by my youth leader that I need to receive the advice of Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law.

Observation: four of my top five most formative moments were hard conversations initiated by others who showed greater care and concern for me at the potential cost of a scathing defense on my part.

Cultural Trend:

Story: Baseball team season end huddle.

Pro example: a team that went from top to bottom so quickly have self-identified their problem as a generational gap issue. We have “a different thing with young guys now.” There is an “entitlement problem around the league.” “Young guys need to understand what it takes. I didn’t always understand when I was first coming in, but I wasn’t afraid of the truth either. We can’t be afraid of the truth...Not everybody can take criticism that’s too hard...” A young player drafted in the first round who was dismissing and avoiding these difficult conversations from the veterans simply replied “I work things out during games...”

Messy relationship between Paul and the Corinthian Church.

- As founding pastor Paul was very much invested.
- **1 Corinthians** was a correction of their gatherings and governing as a church.
 - Services that were glorifying the participants and not God.

- Unchallenged sin among those who were prominent in the church.
- Other painful letters were sent and additional painful visits were made by Paul that precede **2 Corinthians**.
- Now the Corinthians have rejected Paul as having any legitimate authority over them.

Starting Hard Conversations. 2 Corinthians 1:12-14

- Do a self check. (12)
 - Is there integrity in our words and actions?
 - Are our motives godly and sincere?
- Speak with clarity. (13)
 - Paul was mindful of who he was speaking to.
 - Paul was intentional in making sure what was said could be understood.
- The tone must be hopeful. (14)
 - The content and tone of his words were hopeful of mutual success.

Carefully consider your actions. 2 Corinthians 1:15-17

- Paul had wanted to visit and do a face to face. (15-16)
 - Once on the way to Macedonia and again on the return.
 - Apparently this had been communicated to the Corinthian Church.
- He defended his decision to not come as not being an act of fickleness. (17)
 - Jesus had set a standard of letting our “yes” be “yes” and our “no” be “no”. **Matthew 5:37**
 - God is the God of “yes” where his words are always trustworthy and faithful. (20)
 - That is why we stand on God and not on another human being. His words are always accurate. (21)
 - Paul’s good intentions of wanting to visit were clearly too quickly spoken.
 - Better judgment prevailed in that it was seen that a greater joy could be found in his absence, thus a stronger place to stand on God alone. (23-24)
 - He again re-states that standing firm is best found in faith in the faithful one. (24b)

Providing a new vision for the relationship. 2 Corinthians 2:1-4

- Going from grief to glad as to what the relationship creates internally. (1-2)
- Hard things were said so that the relationship can take on a new form that is life giving—joyful! (3)
- Hard things were said, so that the true depth and sincerity of love would be made known. (4)

Take Aways.

1. Sincere love is often best expressed in the difficult conversations.
2. Truth is so vital in our own personal maturation and in the health of our relationships.
3. Standing on God alone will keep our esteem more secure than over-dependency on relationships that can exasperate us in managing our fickle humanness.