

Care Enough to Confront

Ezekiel 3:18-19 HCSB If I say to the wicked person: You will surely die, but you do not warn him--you don't speak out to warn him about his wicked way in order to save his life--that wicked person will die for his iniquity. Yet I will hold you responsible for his blood. (19) But if you warn a wicked person and he does not turn from his wickedness or his wicked way, he will die for his iniquity, but you will have saved your life.

Jesus had the following to say about intervention in the case of sin:

- **Matthew 18:15-17 HCSB** "If your brother sins against you, go and rebuke him in private. If he listens to you, you have won your brother. (16) But if he won't listen, take one or two more with you, so that **by the testimony of two or three witnesses every fact may be established.** (17) If he pays no attention to them, tell the church. But if he doesn't pay attention even to the church, let him be like an unbeliever and a tax collector to you.

When someone is habitually sinning, their minds are stultified by the sin. They harden their own hearts and blind themselves to the consequences of their sin. It often takes a lot to break through the haze of sin and get them to honestly evaluate their path. Even if many people go to them one at a time, they are usually able to dismiss each one, one at a time, and find some way to justify themselves. Sometimes – sometimes – if a group intervenes, united by their love for the sinner and their hatred for the sin, the power of their combined argument can get through.

Crisis intervention is never pleasant, and I've never known one to go smoothly. What are some things you should consider before going into an intervention?

Precursors to a crisis intervention:

Pray – for wisdom and understanding from the Lord.

- **Psalms 32:8 HCSB** I will instruct you and show you the way to go; with My eye on you, I will give counsel.
- **Proverbs 2:6 HCSB** For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.

Educate yourself – learn about the person's particular addiction and what does and does not seem to help in overcoming it.

- **Proverbs 18:15 HCSB** The mind of the discerning acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks it.

Call a professional.

- **Proverbs 15:22 HCSB** Plans fail when there is no counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.

Meet the professional – Find an intervention specialist, meet with them, and plan your approach. You can get a much better sense of them and their spirit in person. Also questions will occur to you in a face to face conversation that will not by phone. Ask them for references to good accountability groups or programs in which to place the addict. Ask about insurance coverage and the potential repercussions of the addict's struggles to overcome their sin.

- **Proverbs 19:20 HCSB** Listen to counsel and receive instruction so that you may be wise in later life.

Enlist key people – Caring family members, friends, a doctor, their employer, coworkers, their spiritual leader – all these should be considered. Anyone who loves them enough to tell them the painful truth that is necessary to save their life.

- **Proverbs 14:25 HCSB** A truthful witness rescues lives, but one who utters lies is deceitful.

Meet confidentially – Without the person present, meet with those you've enlisted and carefully plan your approach, your method, and the consequences you are prepared to bring to bear if the addict will not comply. This meeting must be in strict confidentiality. The addict must not know and other people in the community must not know. These people must be prepared for a difficult, painful task; must be prepared to do what is necessary out of love for the addict; and must be united in their approach.

- **Proverbs 27:5-6 HCSB** Better an open reprimand than concealed love. (6) The wounds of a friend are trustworthy, but the kisses of an enemy are excessive.

Intervene – Arrange to have the person suddenly confronted by the group. Assure them of your love then one at a time, have each person express their loving care and genuine concern. Then walk through the plan you've rehearsed. Remember:

- **Proverbs 12:18 HCSB** There is one who speaks rashly, like a piercing sword; but the tongue of the wise *brings* healing.

So far, the confrontation we've been discussing has been more about dealing with addictive personalities. What do we do when we have to confront a co-worker or a fellow believer about unmet expectations? How can we do a better job of communicating our expectations?

Communicating our expectations well

1. **Make sure you know what your expectations are** before talking with others about them. Often, we think we know what we expect, but in reality we aren't ready to articulate them as clearly as we should.
2. **Don't assume the other person already knows (or should know) what you expect**. This requires mind-reading, a skill most people do not possess.
3. **Pray** - ask the Holy Spirit to help you not only communicate clearly, but also that you would hear and understand where the other person is coming from.
4. **Put your expectations in writing**, when appropriate. Ask for push-back on anything that is unclear, and use as a tool to foster deeper communication.
5. **Let expectation sharing be a two-way street**. Sometimes people have unrealistic expectations. Allowing for open sharing can build trust and minimize future misunderstandings.
6. **Do your best not to be defensive**. When expectations are not met, unrealistic, or unfair, our tendency is to defend ourselves. Determine to remain neutral, realizing that no one is to blame for misguided expectations.
7. **Use active listening**, and let the other person relay back to you what they are hearing. This one step will alleviate many misunderstandings.

What NOT to do: (Galatians 6:1)

Galatians 6:1 HCSB Brothers, if someone is caught in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual should restore such a person with a gentle spirit, watching out for yourselves so you won't be tempted also.

1. **Don't descend to judgmental name calling.** (Proverbs 11:12)
 - **Proverbs 11:12 HCSB** Whoever shows contempt for his neighbor lacks sense, but a man with understanding keeps silent.

2. **Don't argue when they dispute your facts.** (2 Timothy 2:24-26)
 - **2 Timothy 2:24-25 HCSB** The Lord's slave must not quarrel, but must be gentle to everyone, able to teach, and patient, (25) instructing his opponents with gentleness. Perhaps God will grant them repentance to know the truth.

3. **Don't defend the offender if you think someone else has stepped over the line.** (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 7)
 - **Ecclesiastes 3:1 HCSB** There is an occasion for everything, and a time for every activity under heaven:
 - **Ecclesiastes 3:7 HCSB** a time to tear and a time to sew; a time to be silent and a time to speak;

4. **Don't accept general promises. Instead seek immediate action.** (Proverbs 14:15)
 - **Proverbs 14:15 HCSB** The inexperienced believe anything, but the sensible watch their steps.

5. **Don't overreact – stay in control.** (James 1:19-20)
 - **James 1:19-20 HCSB** My dearly loved brothers, understand this: everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger, (20) for man's anger does not accomplish God's righteousness.

6. **Don't shield them from the consequences of their sin.** (Galatians 6:7-8)
 - **Galatians 6:7-8 HCSB** Don't be deceived: God is not mocked. For whatever a man sows he will also reap, (8) because the one who sows to his flesh will reap corruption from the flesh, but the one who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit.

7. **Don't ever make an ultimatum you aren't prepared to back up.** (James 5:12)
 - **James 5:12 HCSB** Now above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. Your "yes" must be "yes," and your "no" must be "no," so that you won't fall under judgment.

Conclusion: (James 5:19-20)

- **James 5:19-20 HCSB** My brothers, if any among you strays from the truth, and someone turns him back, (20) he should know that whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his life from death and cover a multitude of sins.