

# Marriage Harmony

“Courageous Conversations”



## Oblivious to the Obvious

Husbands can never underestimate their ability to be **oblivious to the obvious** in trying to relate to their wives. All too often we are enclosed with a mental and emotional fog when we attempt to figure out what we have done to offend our wives. **Being oblivious to her emotional hurts** makes us instantly plummet from being her hero and mighty man of valour to being a zero.

A young man is often unaware that **taking interest in the woman he wants to marry**, rather than being **interesting** is what makes him irresistible to her. Shortly after he marries, circumstances reveal just how oblivious he really is to what made him so irresistible before marriage, and as he begins to digress in his **attentiveness** to his young bride, she sees this lack of interest as a sign of rejection.

### *Four Levels of Understanding*

Here is a short story illustrating how paying attention to the details can make a big difference.

***“For want of a nail, the shoe was lost. For want of a shoe, the horse was lost. For want of a horse, a General was lost. For want of a General, a battle was lost. For want of a battle, a war was lost. For want of a war, a nation was lost. And all for the want of a nail.”***

This example relates to heart-to-heart relationships within the family. ***For want of a heart-to-heart conversation a moment of building trust is lost. For want of trust, a relationship was lost. For want of a relationship, a Godly seed was lost. For want of Godly seed, a generation was lost. For want of a generation, a dynamic church was lost. For want of a church, a nation was lost. And all for want of a heart-to-heart conversation.***

## Example of a Heart-to-Heart Conversation

**A heart-to-heart conversation allows God's love to cast out fear of rejection in women and fear of failure in men.** An example of a heart-to-heart communication is the story of Joseph after he revealed his true identity to his brothers. Joseph's brothers felt he would take revenge, but instead of threatening them, Joseph discerned the most pressing issue and addressed their fears. *"And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them"* (Genesis 50:19-21).

Joseph's willingness to have the conversation with his family, to share God's perspective with them, allowed the nation of Israel to prosper in the land of Egypt. This was God's plan and He chose to use a wise and willing man to bring it about with small decisions and subsequent steps of action. *"And Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he, and his father's house"* (Genesis 50:22).

### One Common Fear

As I coach courageous conversations among couples and families I find one common fear among men in that they would rather choose to remain silent than take the risk of doing further damage by saying the wrong thing. I would like to remind men that it is difficult to say the wrong thing if you are truly allowing Christ to be humble and meek inside you. When you **ask questions with a willingness to see through the other person's perspective**, you will begin to understand their heart. I urge you as men to not guess at what you thought your wife or child said, but to ask them to restate or clarify their answer until you can grasp in shorter segments what they are saying. As you practice courageous conversations you will begin to become proficient in each stage of understanding. In Proverbs God tells us to bow down our ear to understanding, "My son, attend unto my wisdom, and bow thine ear to my understanding."

Let me give you four stages of developing your understanding:

#### 1. Simple Understanding

Repeat what you heard them say using their words.

#### 2. Mental Understanding

Rephrase what you think they mean using your words.

#### 3. Intimate Understanding

Capture their true feelings in your words by seeing from their perspective. This begins to develop true intimacy (in-to-me-see). The call of a noble leader is to become God's willing vessel to affirm and confirm God's answers to the core questions of every man and woman.

The questions of a woman's spirit, soul, mind and strength may sound like this: Does God delight in me? Do you delight in me as wonderfully and fearfully made? Will I be able to delight in my role as a lover of my husband, my children, keeper of the home, and discipling of younger women? Will others be delighted when I use my talents, and strengths to serve them?

The questions of a man's spirit and soul sound similar but have a different meaning: "Does God delight in me? Do you delight in, and accept the strength God has given me as a man? Will I be honoured in my role as a protector, provider, leader, and father? Can I gain respect for my God-given strengths and talents? It takes courage to let go of your own fears and self-centered perspective to become a vessel through whom God can move to reveal His love and truth. Remember, God's love will cast out the fears of rejection and failure. His truth will restore the soul.

#### 4. Spiritual Understanding

When we have spiritual discernment, we can understand with or without words. We are able to address the true needs of a person by yielding to God as His vessel so and He can reveal the kind of love that casts out all fear.

When a person experiences God's love through a human vessel it confirms their belief in God's Word. This type of understanding comes as we become a vessel of His presence and practice the skills of a courageous conversation. *"For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding"* (Colossians 1:9). *"Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge"* (Proverbs 22:17).

### The Core Question of a Woman's Heart



Women have a different question than men, who need to know that **they have what it takes**. The deepest question of a woman's heart is **do you delight in me, will you pursue my heart?** This core question is answered when a man is interested and willing to consider her troubles and know her soul in both adversity and in peace. As he does this, she begins to believe that, God delights in her, we delight in her, and she is worth fighting for.

When we fail to be a vessel God can use to affirm His love to our wives, they feel unwanted and alone. Our wives genuinely believe that we intentionally reject them when we fail to hear their hearts, and in disbelief they ask themselves how we could be so insensitive, uninterested, and uncaring. A husband's typical response is to feel threatened by his wife's unhappiness because she is answering his core question with an emphatic "No! You don't have what it takes to rescue me, you are weak and I take no pleasure in you."



## The Core Question of a Man's Heart

The question men ask is **"do you think I have what it takes as a man, are you well pleased?"** When we see our wife's sad face and respond with anything other than a wholehearted pursuit of her, we go from being her irresistible noble leader to an unwilling selfish boy. This can crush even the most courageous man.

Because we are asking this question to **the wrong person** we live in constant threat of having our identity destroyed. David realized his only hope was in God, he knew God delighted in him and would deliver him out of all of his troubles. *"He brought me forth also into a large place; he delivered me, because he delighted in me."* (Psalm 18:19) When we ask our wives if we are measuring up, we are in a recurrent state of trepidation. Our wife feels abandoned



when we don't eagerly pursue her heart. Simultaneously, we fear that she will rebuff and despise us, so we don't even ask. This reinforces her dejected answer, "No, you don't have what it takes." Men **interpret this to mean** that they are a failure and are inadequate, when the wife is really asking why her husband isn't **willing** to pursue her heart in the midst of her adversity. *"I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy: for thou hast considered my trouble; thou hast known my soul in adversities; And hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy: thou hast set my feet in a large room."* (Psalm 31:7-8.) A wife wants her husband to identify with her feelings, not just the urgent concern.

## From Zero to Hero



A man can go from being a person who lacks courage in the face of danger to a man of understanding and strength through following a few standard operating procedures. **He must realize first and foremost who he is in Christ.** If he fails to remember that the life of Christ in him is his only hope of glory, he will lose courage and drown with his wife in the ocean of emotion.

Once a wife is flooded with emotions and tries to share them, the husband's adrenalin kicks in, along with the natural response to fight or flee. "*There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death*" (Proverbs 14:12). A man will become defensive by blaming, complaining, or explaining, which will only make his wife more emotional because **she realizes that he is unwilling to know her true heart and affirm her core questions.** This translates into feelings of rejection and will only

increase the storm of emotion, which, in the end, can tear apart their relationship.

The alternative to becoming antagonistic is to **retreat because we don't want to make things any worse.** Our withdrawal shoots a **negative answer** to her question, "Do you delight in me, am I valuable enough to him that he will pursue me?" When we **walk away from a conversation** we make her feel abandoned, worthless, and unlovely. God's heart is grieved when we do this because He wanted to use us to hear her heart so she would say as David did, "I love the Lord because **He** has heard my heart" (Psalm 31:7-8). The enemy of her soul comes in as quickly as we retreat, filling the vacuum of silence with poisonous lies, accusations, and half-truths. When we avoid the conversation we are actually shutting her up with her enemy instead of giving her a broad place to rest. (See Psalm 31:8)

God has called us as men to **rise up and slay the enemy by being His vessel,** ears, mouth, and eyes to affirm His thoughts towards our wives, who are **His** daughters. I have outlined a few steps that will resolve 70% of the issues on your wife's heart. If you catch them early enough while she is in the *pond of emotion* it will be less threatening.



## *Discovering your noble identity*

**A man has something of eternal value to offer others only when he understands his identity in Christ and receives his security in the everlasting love of his Heavenly Father.** When a man understands that his significance comes from being a vessel through which God can move he will gladly offer himself to God, impacting others for a time and for eternity.



- 1. Discover the meaning of your first, middle, and last names.**
- 2. Discover your spiritual gifts.**
- 3. Discover the characteristics of the heroes in your life**
- 4. Discover the worth of having an eternal perspective**
- 5. Write out the significant Scriptures, mottoes, or sayings that have helped direct the course of your life.**

Take a few sentences from each part of the equation and make a Noble Blessing Identity Statement to remind yourself of the love and security that is found in your heavenly Father and the significance that comes from being a vessel in and through which Christ can live. Start by stating the meaning of your name and the reality of what it means to have Christ, the hope of glory, in you. Then continue with each succeeding part of the following equation:

- 1. I am a loyal light-bearer of Christ Jesus, and in Him I find wisdom, righteousness, and joy ...*
- 2. He has made me to be an exhorter, to encourage men to become noble men who make noble plans and by noble deeds produce fruit that will stand the test of eternity...*
- 3. I am courageous as David and yet the gentleness of God has made me great to all those whom God has given me: my wife, my children, and other noble men. I am wise as Solomon, understanding the wise art of skillful living so others may follow in my footsteps and find their trust in God. I am faithful as Paul and one thing do I seek: that I may know Christ and the power of His resurrection.*
- 4. Those who follow after me in death will know that I was a friend of God who walked with Him daily and it was Christ in me that was fervent in Spirit, mighty in the Scriptures, and noble in character.*
- 5. I know my God and understand that He has made me to do great exploits; he has made my hands to be strong and my work to be rewarded. He makes me to follow the ancient paths and to walk in them that my soul may have peace. My God regards me because I am broken and contrite and I tremble at His Word.*

# 1. Provide your wife with a safe place to express her heart.



We can **draw out the depth of our wife's heart** with wise and tender questions. "*Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out*" (Proverbs 20:5).

You will be providing a safe place by asking your wife, "Honey, what are some of the urgent concerns on your heart?" Then respond to her by saying, "So, what I hear you saying is . . . ."

These questions (*You can find the rest of the questions to a courageous conversation at the bottom.*) will be helpful when you need to come to a resolution by taking steps of action. Taking action by asking these questions is roughly 30% of the process. The other 70% is understanding her feelings about an issue. This can be done by simply asking her what is on her heart. To go deeper you can ask the more detailed questions outlined below:

## Going Deeper

1. **What caused you to be upset?** *This question helps you understand the crisis that provoked and disquieted her heart. (See Psalm 38:8.)*
2. **What question went through your mind when this happened?** *This question helps you understand the focus of her thoughts and how she arrived at her conclusion.*
3. **How did you answer this question in your own mind?** *You can discover the stories she developed to fill in the gaps of the facts. (See Psalm 39:1-4) This question reveals the vain imaginations of the heart and helps you uncover the strongholds, false beliefs, and core lies at the heart level.*

*"I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy: for thou hast considered my trouble; thou hast known my soul in adversities; And hast not shut me up in the hand of the enemy . . . ." (Psalm 31:7-8).*

## 2. Help your wife identify her fears, frustrations, and feelings.

Do not explain, blame, or complain. Simply help your wife **express verbally what she is feeling inside**. Remember, your job is to rescue her from her fears that are under the surface of her issue; you want her to feel secure in your love because **a wife can only share what is happening in her heart if she feels safe**. This is like doing reconnaissance on her heart and discovering how the enemy has been falsely accusing you or her. Helping her **identify her feelings** is how you begin to emotionally connect with your wife.

Here is a list of Soul Words to help you **identify** her feelings. (*"How We Love" by Milan and Kay Yerkovich*)

### HAPPY

Cheerful, delighted, elated, encouraged, glad, gratified, joyful, lighthearted, overjoyed, pleased, relieved, satisfied, thrilled, secure.

### LOVING

Affectionate, cozy, passionate, romantic, sexy, warm, tender, responsive, thankful, appreciative, refreshed, pleased

### HIGH ENERGY

Energetic, enthusiastic, excited, playful, rejuvenated, talkative, pumped, motivated, driven, determined, obsessed

### AMAZED

Stunned, surprised, shocked, jolted

### ANXIOUS

Uneasy, embarrassed, frustrated, nauseated, ashamed, nervous, restless, worried, stressed

### CONFIDENT

Positive, secure, self-assured, assertive

### PEACEFUL

At ease, calm, comforted, cool, relaxed, serene

### AFRAID

Scared, anxious, apprehensive, boxed in, burdened, confused, distressed, fearful, frightened, guarded, hard pressed, overwhelmed, panicky, paralyzed, tense, terrified, worried, insecure

### ANGRY

Annoyed, controlled, manipulated, furious, grouchy, grumpy, irritated, provoked, frustrated

### LOW ENERGY

Beaten down, exhausted, tired, weak, listless, depressed, detached, withdrawn, indifferent, apathetic

### ALONE

Avoidant, lonely, abandoned, deserted, forlorn, isolated, cut off, detached

### SAD

Unhappy, crushed, dejected, depressed, desperate, despondent, grieved, heartbroken, heavy, weepy

### TRAUMATIZED

Shocked, disturbed, injured, damaged

### BETRAYED

Deceived, fooled, duped, tricked

### CONFUSED

Baffled, perplexed, mystified, bewildered

### ASHAMED

Guilty, mortified, humiliated, embarrassed, exposed





## Going Deeper

As you continue to grow in your communication skills you can **go deeper by asking the following questions:**

1. **How did this make you feel about yourself, the problem, and others?** *Our reaction to the problem builds unrest in our heart (See Psalm 38:8). God promises that where evil flourishes, His grace will abound even more, keeping us from becoming victim to evil, or the weaknesses of others.*
2. **What do you want to do because of these feelings? How did these feelings cause you to react?**
  - o *Words – What words did you say?*
  - o *Deeds – What did you do?*

When David was able to identify his fears and talk to God about his failures and frustrations he eventually was able to say, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why are thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance" (Psalm 42:5).

### 3. Take your wife to the throne of God's grace.

After you have assisted your wife in clarifying her thoughts, and identifying her feelings she will be ready for you to take her into the throne of God's grace. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:12)

True spiritual leadership occurs when you can escort someone into God's presence. Ask her, "What is the most powerful thing we can agree in prayer to ask God?" Then say, "Why don't you pray first and then I will agree with you in prayer?" It is important to let her pray first, because you will hear her discuss her deeper heart issues with God, giving you a greater understanding of how to pray for her.



### Going Deeper

If I since we need to go deeper I will ask my wife if she would be willing to now allow Jesus, her Mediator, Intercessor and High Priest to cross-examine her heart before God's throne of grace. The accuser of the brethren has cross-examined her at Mount Sinai with the law and we have agreed quickly with her adversary but now it is time to allow the rest of the truth to be revealed. I then try to see through God's eyes, and judge our circumstance by His character. We acknowledge that God is all loving, all wise and all powerful therefore He will use this situation for our good. I ask **How could God work this situation out for our good?** (See Romans 8:28, James 1, Romans 5)

## G.R.E.A.T. Questions

I then ask my wife the following questions:

### Grateful

What can we be *grateful* to the Lord for in this situation? (See Phil 4:4-8.)

### Rejoice

What name of the Lord can we *rejoice* in? \* *“Those who know the name of the Lord put their trust in Him”* (Psalm 9:10).

### Engraft

What Scripture verses can we *engraft* and meditate on during this crisis?

*Life for the believer is found through meditating on and speaking the truth in our heart versus meditating on vain and wicked imaginations which lead to death.*

### Agree

What is the most powerful thing we could agree to *ask* God to do?

### Triumph

What good things can we do to *triumph* over evil?

*“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need”* (Hebrews 4:16).

*“I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears”* (Psalm 34:4).

## 4. Seek counsel to discern the Lord’s will



Finally, we can speak a word in season through sharing with our wives anything the Lord shows us as we search out His Word.

*“The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary”* (Isaiah 50:4).

*“A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it”* (Proverbs 15:23).

*“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver”* (Proverbs 25:11).

Ken Nair states in his book *Discovering the Mind of a Woman* “Contrary to popular notions, **most wives do not want to occupy the throne in their marriages**. A wife wants her husband to be her spiritual leader, but **she is designed by God to feel secure only when she sees that her husband is not the final authority in their marriage**, but that he is looking to God for direction and guidance.” (emphasis mine)

*“I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons”* (Psalm 16:7)

## What is empathy?

Author Adele B. Lynne writes in her book *The Emotional Intelligence Activity Book* "Empathy requires the ability to **understand how others perceive situations**. This perception includes knowing how others feel about a particular set of events or circumstances. Empathy requires knowing the perspective of others and being very able to see things from the value and belief system of the other person. **It is the ability to fully immerse oneself in another's viewpoint**, yet be able to remain wholly apart."

This principle is crucial to your wife. She needs you to fully immerse yourself in her viewpoint so you can identify with her fears, frustrations, and feelings of pain—and at the same time remain distanced so you can liberate her through connecting her to God.

## What makes this enjoyable for a husband?

What makes this an enjoyable experience for a husband is when his **wife provides a safe place for him to listen**. She has kindness on her lips, expresses appreciation for his willingness to pursue her heart, and lets him know that he does not need to come up with answers right now but simply listen and understand what she is experiencing.

**Wives need to give their husbands an opportunity to learn** because most of us men feel inadequate at relating on a deeper emotional level. A little praise from a wife for our willingness to try and letting us know how it helps them feel loved will make long strides in giving us the courage to try again.

Men can tend to be unaware of the obvious in knowing what makes a woman feel loved. In the same way, wives can be ignorant in knowing what makes a man feel respected. When a wife admires her husband's willingness to pursue her heart, appreciates his taking the time to listen, and accepts their present level of understanding, she shows respect to him, allowing him to go into deeper levels of their marriage.

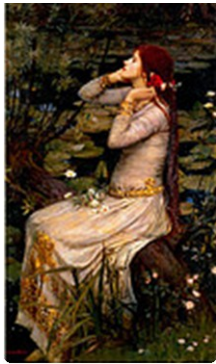


## A woman's influence

"The influence of **applied femininity is, by any measure, incredibly determinative.** In every culture, in every age, the power is awesome. And dangerous. As with any significant reservoir of power it may be used for good or ill. **Its impact may be constructive or destructive.** Like a mighty river, it is a force that may turn the turbines and generate power that will light up a community, a home, and a man's whole life. But undisciplined and unchecked, it may devastate, demoralize, and utterly destroy.

"Some women have no clue how much actual power they hold, and those are the women who destroy their husbands by default. Other women are acutely aware of their power and make a conscious decision to become high controllers. But still other women, keenly aware of the power God has vested in their femininity, make a **deliberate choice to use that power only for good.**" —*Four Pillars of a Man's Heart*, Stu Weber

**I pray for wives,** that they will become keenly aware of their power to do good and to help in the making of a man after God's own heart because **the making of the man is the making of a good marriage.** God has



given wives the power to win a man without a word, the power of a quiet and meek spirit will break a proud heart, and God's goodness through a wife's love that will lead a man to repentance.

**I pray for husbands,** that they will rise up and overcome their own inadequacy of the flesh, trusting Christ to work through them as a vessel to develop the full potential of their wives as women of God. Men, we can touch our wives deeply for eternity by simply allowing them to experience the truth that David stated in Psalm 116:1: "*I love the Lord because He has heard my voice.*"

Let us be strong men of good courage, fearing not what our wives can do **to** us, but believing what God can do **through** us for them.

There is not a job, an achievement, an award, or any other task that would bring us more joy and feeling of significance than that of **being a noble man in Christ Jesus** through laying down our lives for our wives as Christ did for the church.

## Courageous Conversation Questions

### 1. What is your most pressing issue?

Questions 1 & 2 deal with the Pressing Issues. Very rarely do I ever ask someone if they would like to have a courageous conversation. I simply realize that there is a problem because someone is either acting hurt or trying to get me to understand their viewpoint. When I see that a conversation is turning combustible because I don't feel understood or the other person is frustrated, it dawns on me that I need to humble myself and esteem the others need to be heard as greater than my own. This is the first beatitude Jesus describes of a happy, to be envied and prosperous man. I will simply say, "What I hear you saying is that your most pressing issue is..." or I will say "What I hear you saying is..., which of these is the most pressing issue?"

### 2. In addition to this, is there something else?

My goal in this question is to get to the real issue. I remind myself that most people may not be aware of how to describe their most pressing needs. I listen to what they say and try to see where one of two root issues may be causing the intense feelings.

- **Fear of Rejection** – This issue or person is making me feel like I am unacceptable and I don't feel good about myself because of it.
- **Fear of Failure** – This issue or person is making me feel inadequate.

When I am working with couples I think about how the woman's most important question is being answered. I believe a woman asks herself constantly "Am I worth being pursued?", so when her husband is not initiating the conversation or showing interest in her issues, she feels rejection.

From my experience with men it seems the major question they are asking themselves is "Am I adequate, do I have what it takes to succeed?" When they feel like others view them as inadequate or their ability to succeed is hampered then they begin to experience tension.

Sometimes people don't verbalize these root issues and I only bring them up if I sense they are willing to acknowledge that this fear is present, otherwise I let them determine their most pressing issue and agree to pursue this course with them.

It is important that you write down the most pressing issue in a concise sentence because all the other questions will refer to this issue. You can only deal effectively with one issue at a time.

### 3. How is this affecting you?

Questions 3 & 4 deal with the painful consequences of an issue. The beatitude of mourning can be displayed by the listener as they show empathy for the other person. When a person feels heard and cared about they can begin to move on to resolving their issues. It is a rare experience for most people to feel safe enough to talk about anything because there are so few people who can listen from another's perspective. One definition of intimacy I like is "In To Me See." When we look through another person's eyes and see as they see we can begin to understand why they are behaving the way they are.

When you take the brunt of their intense emotions and don't defend yourself, but mourn over what you may have caused or what others have contributed to, you are following the command "to rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn." It also allows you to see just how serious of an issue this is and what the cause and effects are for yourself and the organization.

Rephrase what you heard the person say to their satisfaction. This is a part of engaging in the conversation and helping the person feel understood.

#### 4. What will the future be like if nothing changes?

This question is a real motivator for me because I begin to see the high cost of doing nothing. I want people to really consider just what the future could be and not gloss over this one. It helps everyone to be more committed to resolving the issue.

Rephrase what you heard the person say to their satisfaction. If they are not satisfied that you understand, allow them to rephrase their statement, don't try to guess, but be patient until they can verbalize their own thoughts. A right answer is like a kiss on the lips, and in this case it is an answer that shows you understand them.

#### 5. What do you see as my responsibility for this issue?

Questions 5 & 6 deal with the personal responsibilities of those involved in the issue. When I ask this question I am showing a noble willingness to yield my rights and become meek and lowly, a servant like Christ, one who lays down his life for a brother. It also reveals a hunger and thirst for Christ's righteousness rather than defending my own. When I mediate courageous conversations this is the question most people fear to ask. It takes grace to die and lose your life, but God promises you will find it if you willingly lay it down. This question opens up the opportunity to really understand the heart of another, they want to share with you their real needs. If you begin to explain, complain or blame them in response to this question then you will have failed and turned a courageous conversation into a combustible one due to cowardice in not laying down your life.

Rephrase what you heard the person say to their satisfaction. The goal of rephrasing their statement is to try and understand their heart. If they verbalized it well enough you can simply restate their comments, if God gives you further insight then be willing to share this as it comes to you. Do not try to make up new statements because you don't want to use their words, it will change the meaning. Our goal is to reveal that we do understand their heart.



#### 6. What do you see as your responsibility for this issue?

This question is one the speaker is totally unprepared for because they have probably taken on the role of a victim. With this question you help them begin to move out of being a victim into a response able person. They can begin to share in the responsibility of resolving this issue. The turning point of the whole conversation starts with this question. People who are speaking begin to show mercy to the listener if they have demonstrated humility, mourning, meekness and a hunger and thirst for righteousness. Some people will maintain a victim mindset. It is easier for a mediator to deal with this issue than a person who is part of the issue. If I am part of the issue I simply say "What I hear you saying is...."

### 7. What does the preferable future look like to you?

Questions 7 & 8 are about the preferable future. This question turns the focus on what has been to what could and should be. It creates hope in the people because they begin to share a vision that both can agree on. When they realize how much they agree on their desired future they begin to walk together in agreement. This question begins to restore a sense of partnership and enthusiasm for what could and should be in their relationship and organization. God begins to give them a pure heart to see the future as he sees it, full of plans for good and not for evil.

Restate what you heard them say the preferable future could be.

### 8. What is the most powerful thing we can agree to ask God for?

This question is an acknowledgement of Psalm 55:22. We are to cast back on the Lord all our burdens that a conversation like this can create. We now know our responsibilities and the preferable future and we will either try to do it in the power of our flesh or we will cast our burdens on the Lord and acknowledge our weakness and dependence on Him to perform all things for us. When we agree in prayer right then we invite God's power to impact this issue. Psalm 133 says that God commands a blessing when brethren dwell together in unity.

### 9. Based on the above, what is the one thing we cannot fail to do?

Questions 8 & 9 have to do with making Powerful Plans. This question helps us focus on one thing that will make all the difference if we execute it with consistency and excellence. We are looking for one thing that will help us move towards the preferable future. It is an idea such as "We cannot fail to communicate." It is an objective that is simply understood by everyone. For a doctor going into surgery, the one thing he cannot fail to do is wash his hands well or everything else he does will be rendered inconsequential. What is the one thing that you cannot fail to do or everything else will be rendered inconsequential? Understanding this one thing puts you on the path to making peace.

### 10. What practical steps must we take to make this happen?

Andy Stanley wrote a book about the "Most Important Question" and he states it like this "What is the wisest step you should take based on past experience, present circumstances, and future hopes?" These are the steps you can put in your planner. It describes who will do what by when. These are highly leveraged steps that will yield the greatest results. They are the 20% activities that will yield 80% of your results.

May God grant you the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding that you may walk worthy of His noble calling and produce fruit that will stand the test of eternity as you make noble plans and carry out noble deeds.

*Adapted from "Zero to Hero" by Chris Hogan*