

Pastor's Column

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Fighting Faithfully

Fighting faithfully is hard. Fighting faithfully is scary. We don't have any idea how another person is going to react. And, often, though we know what we are supposed to do, we do not have any idea of how to do it.

But if we look at Jesus' ministry, if we look at the way Jesus dealt with people, we can learn how to fight faithfully.

1. Jesus shows us that the resolution of conflict is always carried out in a caring and especially loving manner—never from a vengeful posture. Expressing our feelings (even our anger) is appropriate as long as it is not done in a destructive manner. And so when we confront or ask questions, we must be careful to state our position in such a way that we do not intentionally harm the other. And if a question is harmful, if it has an edge, we need to ask to have it rephrased in a more careful way.
2. Attacking ideas is different from attacking the person and the person's motivation. Attacking an idea is not wounding. We can work to change, improve, defend, and explain an idea. However, attacking a person or a person's motivation hurts. It ignores the issues, causes defensiveness, and only worsens the situation.
3. We watch our tongues. We do not use "always" or "never" statements. We avoid exaggeration and generalization, and are careful with the facts. Shouting is only a smoke screen to solving the issues; a smoke screen that generally suggests that one party does not really want to solve the issues or that it is time to take a break.
4. If someone says that they are hurt, we should not say, "Sorry you took it wrong. But I did not say anything wrong." Responses like that suggest that they are wrong, that they should not feel hurt, that they are too sensitive, and that I am unfeeling. If someone says that they are hurt, we say, "Thanks for telling me and expressing your hurt. I am sorry. I did not intend to hurt you. Forgive me." Responses like these show compassion. Apologies make us a better person. People expect us to make mistakes, but they need us to own up to the mistakes we make.

There will always be conflict, disagreement of ideas and positions, and mistakes will be made. How we handle them makes all the difference!

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