

Theme: Difficult Conversations

Quotes and adaptations (by John Webb) from “Open Table Talks”, Session 11, recorded 16 May 2020. Panelists include William Paul Young (author of *The Shack*), Brad Jersak, Baxter Kruger, John McMurray, Katie Skurka and Kenneth Tanner.

1. Someone who has actually tasted truth is **not contentious for truth**. A person zealous for truth has not yet learnt what truth is really like. Especially when we know that truth is a person — Jesus.
2. With fellow believers, acknowledge **the other person’s intent to be faithful** (to God or Scripture). It lowers the heat likely to emerge.
3. “I have a friend who often asks, ‘I’d be **curious to know...**’” Nice.
4. Think of saying up front where there is likely conflict or serious disagreement, “**I want everything that is precious to you at the beginning of this conversation** to still be precious to you when we have finished.”
5. If you can’t communicate your **care for the other person** more than for the topic or conversation itself, then be silent and listen more. Offer your presence.
6. We don’t move people through **intellectual conversation or argument** — only by the quality of the relationship.
7. Remember... it is not the intelligence of God or the challenge of God that leads to transformation in our lives, but **His kindness**.
8. We can disagree with someone, even totally, but they should *feel* (deeply in their gut) that they **were heard**.
9. It’s sadly possible to communicate that *what I believe* is more important to me than *you* are. It may be worth saying explicitly (especially if the tension is rising): “**You are more important to me than what side of the conversation we end up on.**”
10. Think long term. **We don’t accomplish much in one conversation**. At best we may sow seeds that become, at best, a process that takes time, reflection, revision, and true humility that opens doors to more and better conversations in the future. But there will always be failure along the way.
11. It is **better to be intensely curious** than to be right, which takes humility. After all, I don’t know everything and always have more to learn. Actually, the very idea of not being right is a fruit of walking with the Lord and knowing His heart.
12. When we find ourselves in the moment of actual tension, disagreement or difference on an important issue — that’s the **time to ask myself**, “Am I hearing you now?”
13. Here’s a stance to aim for sometimes — for the sake of this relationship, **I will be the learner here**.
14. Sometimes **I need pushback** to get to a better place in my understanding.
15. I’m going to trust the Holy Spirit in your life. **I don’t need to play the Holy Spirit**.
16. Whatever non-negotiables there are for a believer — **the first one is love**.
17. You don’t meet ideology with ideology and expect a good outcome.
18. If you don’t know **who you are**, and if you’re not comfortable inside your own skin, you won’t know when to **keep your mouth shut**.
19. If you really *do* care about a person, **they will know it**, even if they are uncomfortable.
20. Remember, there’s a timing issue in the life of people that we’re not in charge of.
21. God sees me with all my baggage and still stays with me.
22. Somewhere in the back of your mind, stay aware of this... “I could be wrong.”
23. Sometimes, another word or more talk won’t accomplish anything — it’s time for a break — and maybe a hug!