

## CARING ENOUGH TO CONFRONT OTHERS

1 Samuel 15

August 5, 2007 Sunday p.m.

### INTRODUCTION

- A. "Individuals behave in a difficult manner because they have learned that doing so keeps others off balance and incapable of effective action. Worst of all, they appear immune to all the usual methods of communication and persuasion designed to convince or help them change their ways," says Robert M. Bramson, Ph.D., author of *Coping With Difficult People*. Bramson suggests we avoid these "don'ts" when dealing with difficult people:
- Don't take difficult people's behavior personally. Their troublesome behavior is habitual and affects most people with whom they come in contact.
  - Don't fight back or try to beat them at their own games. They have been practicing their skills for a lifetime, and you're an amateur.
  - Don't try to appease them. Difficult people have an insatiable appetite for more.
  - Don't try to change them. You can only change your responses to their behavior.
- B. Two weeks ago we looked at what King David learned about dealing with difficult people. We noted two things...
1. First, God allows difficult people into our lives.
    - a. David had his Saul.
    - b. We probably have our Saul too.
  2. Second, God uses difficult people.
    - a. God used Saul to remind David how much he needed God.
    - b. God may be using our Saul too even if we don't know how.
- C. Sometimes God uses us to deal with a difficult person as we see in 1 Samuel 15. Notice two things here.

### I. FIRST, NOTICE THAT DIFFICULT PEOPLE ARE USUALLY DIFFICULT WITH EVERYONE.

- A. This is what Dr. Bramson says in his book. So try not to take it personally.
- B. Difficult people aren't just difficult at work or school, but at home, in the neighborhood and most everywhere else. It should come as no surprise then that you even find difficult people at church.
- C. We even find this is true with King Saul.
1. He certainly was a thorn in the flesh for David.
  2. However, in our text today, we see he was also a source of difficulty for the prophet Samuel.

### II. SECOND, NOTICE THAT OFTEN DIFFICULT PEOPLE DON'T EVEN KNOW THEY ARE DIFFICULT.

- A. Saul was a source of difficulty for Samuel. Why?
1. Samuel revealed to Saul what God wanted him to do-15:1-3.
    - a. This seems harsh treatment of anyone. Why would God do this?
    - b. For one thing, the Amalekites were the Al-Qaeda of the Old Testament.
    - c. For another thing, God sometimes judged extreme wickedness (i.e. The Flood and Sodom and Gomorrah).
  2. Saul, however, failed to follow all of God's instructions-v.9a.
  3. Then Saul blamed his army for his disobedience-v.13-15.
  4. Saul wasn't aware he was being difficult with both Samuel and God.
- B. In a sermon on truth-telling, Bill Hybels recounts a story told by Brennan Manning in his book *The Ragamuffin Gospel*.

Brennan Manning quite courageously admits that 25 years ago, he had a drinking problem. He voluntarily entered a 28-day treatment program. Early on in the treatment program they had to sit in a circle with a leader and tell the truth to themselves, and to the other people in the group, about the extent of their drinking.

So they went around the circle and they all told the truth, except for one business guy named Max. When it came time for him to reveal the extent of his drinking, he said, "I never really drank that much."

They said, "Max, you're in an alcoholic treatment center for a month. You weren't sipping cokes. Tell the truth to yourself. Admit it."

He said, "I'm being honest with you. I've never really had all that much to drink."

They had signed affidavits to be able to get information. Max had signed one, too.

They could glean information in any way they so desired. So they had a speaker phone in the center of the circle, and the leader of the group said, "I'm going to call the bartender close to your office and we'll just find out."

So they called the bartender and the leader says to the person on the phone, "Do you know Max So-and-So?" The guy says, "Oh, like a brother! He stops in every day after work and has a minimum of six martinis. Man, this guy drinks like a fish! He's the best customer we have—a prolific consumer of alcohol."

The rest of the people in the group all looked at Max. And now here's a moment of truth. Max tells the truth to himself. He says, "Yes, I've had a lot to drink."

A little later on in the group, they asked everyone, "Have you ever hurt anybody, a friend or family member, while you were drunk?"

Some people said, yes, and they described it. Other people said, no. They tried to get at the truth, and if that was the truth, that was the truth. They get all the way around to Max, who says, "I would never, ever hurt anybody. Not when I'm sober, not when I'm drunk. I have four lovely children. I'd never hurt my wife, I'd never hurt my kids."

The leader says, "You know, Max, we don't believe you. We're going to call your wife." As soon as Max's wife starts talking on the speaker phone, Max starts breathing heavily. He knows something's coming that he has been unwilling to face.

The leader says, "Mrs. So-and-So, has Max ever mistreated you or anyone in the family when he was drunk?" And she said, "Well, yes he has. It happened just this last Christmas Eve. He took our 9-year-old daughter shopping on Christmas Eve, bought her a new pair of shoes; he's a generous man. On the way home, our little girl was sitting in the front seat enjoying her new shoes, and Max passed the bar and saw the cars of some of his buddies.

"He pulled in. It was a cold, wintry day, 12 degrees, with a high wind chill. He made sure all the windows were rolled up snugly. He left the car running so that the heater was blowing, and he said to our 9-year-old daughter, 'I'll be right back. You just play with your shoes; I'll be right back.'

"He went in the bar and started drinking with his buddies. He didn't come out of the bar until midnight. In that time, the vehicle had shut off and the windows had become all frosted over and locked up tight so she couldn't get herself out of the car. When the authorities opened up the car and rushed her to the hospital, she was so badly frostbitten that her thumb and forefinger had to be amputated. And her ears were so damaged by the cold that she'll be deaf for the rest of her life."

The wife describes this to the group, and Max falls off his chair and starts convulsing on the ground. He just couldn't bear telling himself the truth about what he had done. He couldn't face it. He was going to live the rest of his life in some fantasy world of denial about what he had done.

I'll tell you why I bring this up. If I had the time, I could pass a microphone down the aisle and I could say, "What is that one sin that you feel so desperately bad about that you can't even bring yourself to acknowledge that you actually did it? The one that you can't bring out of the darkness into the light to let God forgive it?" What is that one sin that keeps you under a cloud of guilt day in and day out?

*Bill Hybels, "Telling Yourself the Truth" (4-14-02); submitted by Gino Grunberg, Gig Harbor, Washington*

C. If you have a difficult person in your life they may not even know they are being difficult.

### III. THIRD, NOTICE THAT SOMETIMES DIFFICULT PEOPLE NEED TO BE CONFRONTED.

A. In his column for REV Magazine, Charles Lowery writes about a friend that loved him enough to tell him the truth. After complaining about some lower back pain, his friend said to him, "your back isn't your problem, Charles, it's your stomach. Your stomach is so big it's pulling on your back." Charles resisted the temptation to be offended and realized his friend was right. He lost the weight and his "back" problem went away. Charles commented on the incident by saying, "A friend will see through you...and also see you through."

--REV, May/June 2003

B. Samuel confronted Saul-15:13 & 23.

C. God may send you as a Samuel to your Saul.

1. Its not easy to confront someone else with the truth.

2. Love, however, cares enough to confront.

**Proverbs 9:8** Do not rebuke a mocker or he will hate you; rebuke a wise man and he will love you.

3. Realize, however, that as Saul rejected Samuel's confrontation ( he never repented or changed his ways), our Saul may reject us too.

### CONCLUSION

A. Is there a Saul in your life.

B. Remember....

1. They are probably difficult with everyone, not just you.

2. They may not even know they are a difficult person.

3. God may want to use you to confront them on his behalf.