

## Decent Discussion & Identifying Issues

**Ephesians 4:1-6** *As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. <sup>2</sup> Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. <sup>3</sup> Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup> There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

### The nature of discernment

- Discernment is NOT waiting for someone to come to your “side.”
- Discernment is recognition that God is God, and that we are not. We are fallible humans, with a bent towards selfishness. We are people *being* transformed to Christ’s likeness, through the power of the Holy Spirit and with one another.
- **Humility – you might be wrong.**
  - Be open to the possibility that you might be wrong.
  - Be open to the possibility that you might not be outright wrong, but partially wrong.
  - Be open to the possibility that you might not be outright wrong, but God has lessons for you to learn, ways He wants you to repent.

### More on why we can discuss decently

- **The person standing in front of you is valuable to God.....as loved and valuable as you are.**
- **We have the same goal:** to honor Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord, and help others, in all ways we can, do the same. **Ephesians 4:4-6**
- **Decency doesn’t negate conviction. Ephesians 4:1-3**
- **Ask and discuss in freedom.** Asking the question doesn’t imply consent or heresy.
- **Trust in God’s Sovereignty and God’s work**
- *“In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, freedom; and in all things, charity.” Augustine*

### How we can discuss decently: Identifying Issues

Untangle the issues.

Define the issues.

Clarify Positions about each issue.

**Good rule of thumb** – Understand another person’s position at least as well as they know it.

Ask - Which issues need to be re-tied, at least for now?

## More practical tips on how we can discuss decently

“I” instead of “You” statements

Gossip – Don’t.

Triangles – BEWARE.

**Polite Company** – *“Parents sometimes tell their children that some words are not to be used in ‘polite company.’ But we Christians know that we are always in ‘polite company.’ We live our lives in the divine presence....God is always listening, and some words are so offensive to God that they should never be uttered.....Each person is a very precious work of divine art. To make light of an artist’s work within the artists’ earshot is a cruel thing to do. To demean one of God’s most precious artworks when God is listening – and he always is – crudely dishonors the divine artist.”* Richard Mouw, *Uncommon Decency*, 45-46

### **Active Listening**

*James 1:19-20 My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.*

#### **What you say:**

1. Empathize with people’s emotions.
2. Explore a person’s statement, seeking more information.
3. Ask open ended questions
4. Clarify what has been said. “What I hear you saying is. \_\_\_\_\_. Would you say that is correct?”

#### **What you hear:**

1. Pay attention to what is being said, instead of formulating how you will respond. As you listen, focus on specific information that is being shared.
2. It’s okay to allow silence between someone’s comments, and your response.
3. Pay attention to people’s non-verbal cues while they talk.

### **Prayer**