

The How of Necessary Endings

By Dr. Gregory Wiens



Have you ever done the right thing the wrong way? In 1995 I attempted to stop an unmanned car that was spinning out of control (the right thing) and tried to jump in it (the wrong way). I almost killed myself and was in the hospital for a week and in recovery and therapy for months. Sometimes doing the right thing the wrong way can cause needless pain and suffering.

Last week, we began looking at how the “necessary endings” which need to take place in our lives and ministry. We saw that if current people or practices stymie the vision, then necessary endings are in order. However, we must deal with the question, HOW do we bring about these necessary endings. My observation is that good leaders most often learn this through their failures. How you bring necessary endings is critical, let me share with you three principles that I have found helpful in this process.

First, I would suggest that you seek the heart of God before bringing about a necessary ending. In these moments I ask God to get me out of the way. I ask God to reveal my fears and insecurities (as we talked through last week). This is what David was praying in Psalm 139.23, “*Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.*” David was simply asking God to reveal his (David’s) heart in this process. As God is able to get you out of the way, only then you can hear his heart. As we hear heart we have a much clearer view of what the necessary outcome should ultimately look like.

Second, you must speak all of the truth. God desires honesty in bringing necessary endings. “*Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body.*” (Ephesians 4.25) In so many of our churches we really don’t value being totally honest. We value “kindness” over honesty because we really won’t tell them 100% of the truth...we try and couch the truth in terms that they won’t be offended by. Without exception, this is one of the cultural traits that cause churches to settle for so much less than God desires.

As Paul says later in Ephesians, we should speak the truth with love, but let’s not confuse being nice with love. If we mistake being nice with loving we fail to say anything harsh, but helpful, to those we love. Love should always be the reason for what and how we say what we say. But if we don’t say 100% of the truth we will deprive them of opportunities for growth as well as sell short the Kingdom of God.

Let’s look at four truthful and loving conversations that Jesus has with Peter recorded within three chapters of the Matthew: in 14.31 Jesus tells Peter that he has little faith and his doubts are obvious; then in 15.15-16 he tells Peter that he is literally dull or dumb; in 16.17 Jesus tells Peter that he is blessed because he listens to what God the

Father tells him; and finally, in 16.23 he tells Peter that he speaking for Satan with his comments! What an amazing few conversations Jesus has with Peter. Surely he loved Peter and Peter did love our Lord, but their conversations were honest and 100% truthful. And it wasn't nice.

I remember hearing the staff at Willow Creek say they need to hear not just 90% of the truth, but the difficult to say 10%...they wanted to hear the 100% truth.

Accordingly, our motive should always be love, with no exception. If you cannot say if out of love for our Lord, His Mission and His people, then you best go back to the prior step of spending time with the Lord asking him to purify your heart and clarify the outcome.

Third, bringing necessary endings God's way requires knowing whose responsibility it is and what is God's timing. In an email last week, a friend mentioned that he was impressed with King David's ability to do this in 1 Samuel 24 where David knew that he would be King and King Saul would be put aside. David was once offered the opportunity to take out Saul while Saul was relieving himself (and his men even encouraged to do so!). But David listened to the Lord and did not take kill him. David later showed Saul that he could have but chose not to. Saul acknowledged that day in front of all of his soldiers that David was more righteous than he. Saul then went home and quit pursuing David. Seven chapters later a random arrow mortally wounded Saul and he killed himself on his own sword. David knew that is was not his responsibility to kill Saul.

I find it helpful to answer these questions:

- Who is best equipped and positioned to bring about this necessary ending?
- When is the best time to bring the ending so that it will cause the least collateral damage?
- Who else should be there? (They should be part of the problem or the solution)
- Is there anything else I need to know?

The three principles are:

1. Seek the heart of God.
2. Speak the truth of God.
3. Know whose responsibility it is and when it should happen.

My encouragement to you this week is to seek God's way to bring about necessary endings in your life and ministry. They are never easy, but they can be effective for the Kingdom if we bring them about with a love for our Lord, his mission and his people. Had I used this wisdom in 1995, I could have saved myself a lot of pain and time in the hospital!