

Questions to ask yourself before a hard conversation

A companion to “Before You Say ‘Can We Talk?’”

These questions aren't a script, and answering them well doesn't guarantee the conversation will go easily. They're just a way of checking your own footing before you ask someone else to examine theirs.

Before you say anything

- 1 What makes me certain I've actually understood what's wrong? Have I checked, or just assumed?
- 2 Is this a real sin Scripture names, or mostly my own discomfort, preference, or expectation?
- 3 Am I actually the person who needs to have this conversation, or am I inserting myself into something that isn't mine to manage?
- 4 Am I approaching this with gentleness — and am I watching myself, too, for the same temptation?
- 5 Have I shown this person care they'd actually recognize as love, separate from this conversation?
- 6 Am I hoping to restore a relationship, or mainly hoping to be right?

While you're talking

- 1 Am I giving them real room to answer — or have I already decided how this ends?
- 2 Am I listening for something I might not know yet?
- 3 Am I protecting their dignity, even if I have to say something hard?
- 4 If our positions were reversed, would the way I'm speaking leave me room to answer, disagree, or correct something I think is wrong?

If it doesn't resolve right away

- 1 If I bring others in, are they capable of listening honestly — or are they just people who already agree with me?
- 2 Have I separated a boundary that genuinely needs to change from contempt for the person themselves?
- 3 Does this actually need to escalate right now, or am I unwilling to give the other person time to think, pray, or respond?
- 4 Am I still willing to be told I misunderstood something?

A NOTE ABOUT SAFETY

These questions are for ordinary hard conversations, not situations involving abuse, threats, coercion, or possible criminal conduct. You are not required to confront someone privately when doing so may put you or someone else at risk. Seek appropriate support, safeguarding help, or civil authorities where necessary.

None of this replaces actual wisdom, prayer, or trusted counsel — and none of it turns a hard conversation into an easy one.

But a shepherd went looking before any of this was asked of you. Whatever this conversation becomes, that's still where it starts.