

One of the greatest communication problems is the assumption that it has taken place.

Chris Hogan has had remarkable success mediating family conflicts by using 10 key questions that help individuals have a "courageous conversation." Recently, a successful businessman appealed to Chris for help with his family. He knew that he had deeply wounded the spirits of his three oldest children through his anger and harsh discipline. In response, they had rejected his leadership, and he is quite sure that they no longer desired to have a relationship with him.

Chris agreed to meet with this family. At first, the teenagers slouched in their chairs, folded their arms, and glared at their father. After some discussion, the oldest daughter agreed to have a "courageous conversation." She would be asked the 10 key questions, and her father would have to accurately repeat to her what she had said until she was satisfied that he understood her. He could not blame, complain, or offer any explanations during their time. Then, the same questions were asked of the father, with his daughter repeating his answers. The questions were:

1. What is your most pressing issue?
2. In addition to this, is there something else?
3. How is this affecting you?
4. What will the future be like if nothing changes?
5. What do you see as my responsibility for the issue?
6. What do you see as your responsibility for this issue?
7. What does the preferable future look like to you?
8. What is the most powerful thing we can agree to ask God for?
9. Based on the above, what is the one thing we can not fail to do?
10. What practical steps must we take to make this happen?

In the process of the "courageous conversation," some deep hurts from the father's childhood came to light. These hurts had affected the way he interacted with his children. The resulting tears gave the daughter hope for reconciliation. As each person was able to present his or her grievances and listen to the other's point of view, they were able to clear up the offenses and misunderstandings, and a marvelous restoration began to take place in this family.

Would those in our families say that we listen to them and understand them? Do they feel safe to approach us when an offense has occurred? Let's make every effort we can to develop "hearing" hearts by learning how to conduct "courageous conversations."

Through Christ our Lord,

Bill Gothard

Matthew 18:15 NIV

"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you.