

# Navigating Difficult Conversations

John Ortberg: "People who love authentic community always prefer the pain of temporary chaos to the peace of permanent superficiality."

Helpful thoughts:

1. **Pray about it.** It can make the difference between a difficult conversation that begins a process of discipleship, healing, and growth, and a conversation that causes a falling out.
2. **Prepare your heart.** Before approaching someone about a difficult topic, prepare your heart by reading the Bible. A scripture passage such as Psalm 139, which reminds us of God's presence, wisdom, and sovereignty. God knows all about us, intimately and completely. There is no place, time, or situation that can separate us from God – including difficult conversations. Mark and revisit Bible texts that touch your heart to help you prepare as you face different and difficult conversations.
3. **Don't ignore the issue.** Don't wait too long. Ignoring problems never makes them go away.
4. Even in an age of digital dependence, **difficult conversations should always be held in person** or at least in a way for both parties to hear vocal inflections. Don't let a screen dictate tone and context. People appreciate honesty, even when it is not easy to receive.
5. **Prep for the conversation with Biblical resources.** Utilize websites like <https://gotquestions.org> for Biblical wisdom and insight as you prepare.
6. **Ask the person to meet for coffee.** A meal could take too long if the conversation doesn't go well.
7. **Be clear about why you want to meet.** Don't ambush anyone in a meeting. It could create a cloud of suspicion about your motives that remains long after lunch has ended. People may not enjoy being confronted but they do appreciate honesty and straightforwardness. Example: Hi Sally, this is \_\_\_\_\_. I wanted to let you know I've been praying for you since you mentioned the other day that....(fill in the blank)....I'd love to talk with you through that and pray with you if that's ok. Would be free to get some coffee this Friday morning?"

For the meeting:

1. Stay calm. Keep your voice low. Smile. It can create a sense of calm even if there isn't one.
2. Listen first by asking questions. "How do you like coming to our Community Group? What has been the most helpful? How do you feel about the openness our group has together?"
3. Then slowly transition into the issue. "We love having you as a part of the group and are so thankful you have found Community with us. I want to be here to help you and support you in any way that I can. I know the other day you mentioned....(fill in the blank)....I'd love to talk with you through that and pray with you if that's ok".
4. End in prayer.
5. Follow up prior to the next Community Group and ask them how they are doing, and tell them you have been praying for them.