

CHURCH DISCIPLINE - PART 2

Welcome to the five minute leadership podcast, and part two of church discipline. In part one we looked at how critical discipline is to church health and we applied the metaphor of heart surgery - it is as critical as heart surgery. The Holy Spirit works like a surgeon on our hearts; circumcising our hearts (Romans 2). As spirit-filled leaders, when we're involved in church discipline, that's what we are doing too. It is a heart matter.

When you are about to discipline someone you've got to - like a heart surgeon - have the sharpest tool available in your hand. What's the sharpest tool you have? It's the Word of God - the sword - which is as sharp as a double edged sword. You don't go blundering in using your opinion, church policy, history or your views on the matter. You go in wielding the Word of God, otherwise, if your opinions are like a butter knife, they are going to cause damage.

In addition to that, a heart surgeon needs to have a clean environment. You can make the right cut with the correct instrument, but if you have dirt on your hands infection is going to set in. None of us are perfect, but if you are about to discipline somebody you ought to make sure your hands are clean, and that you're not being hypocritical. In your vulnerability and humanity you can, at best, be blameless in the issue you are busy dealing with.

Heart surgery doesn't happen in a public space, it's private; generally in a theater. Whenever possible, deal with people privately to keep their dignity and space. If you start blabbing it out everywhere, you'll complicate matters by bringing the thoughts of others into it, and all sorts of personal issues are then thrown into the mix. Discipline is a private matter.

You would never do heart surgery without an anesthetic. The best anesthetic you have before you go into disciplining someone is prayer. You prepare in prayer. You prepare the person's heart and yours in prayer. A very important thing in heart surgery is timing. Done too early and it's an irrelevant procedure, too late and you might miss the opportunity. So you have to pick the time wisely.

Heart surgery has got to be done right. If you under do it (you open up and then think *oh my goodness I shouldn't go that deep!*), you might not get the full job done. If you do too much (start removing livers and kidneys) you could kill the guy. When you're going in for a discipline issue you have to understand what it is you're trying to do. Don't over do it and don't under do it.

Critical to the success of any operation is the recovery. You should pay attention to people you have disciplined. You don't pay attention by redoing the operation; you don't cut him open again to see how it's healing. The surgery is done - you can now attend to him and keep him clean and comfortable. Love him through his recovery process.

I underwent eye surgery and remember that the guy who did it didn't have a great bedside manner; he was cold and clinical. I remember driving to the operation thinking that I didn't mind so much that this guy was not weeping over me or laughing hysterically as he was

going into the operation - this was serious after all. I'm not saying that you don't need to demonstrate some level of emotion, but you've heard about the parents that weep as they discipline their children, saying that it hurts them more than it hurts the child - that's just not helpful. You're basically a surgeon in the hand of the Holy Spirit dealing with somebody. Your emotions should be set aside.

Finally, very few heart operations are conducted alone. You would want to do it with a team of responsible, confidential leaders. If you're dealing with a woman, you should have your spouse with you or at the very least have another woman leader in the room. The size of your team shouldn't be massive; you don't want to gang up with six elders to deal with one person on a matter of discipline.

I hope this metaphor has been helpful to you. When you're involved in church discipline remember that it is a serious matter - it's as serious as heart surgery. It's God's dealing, His circumcision of the heart. It's a terrifying role we have as we administer God's discipline, love and ways with people.