

When You're Facing Disagreement

In leadership, you will always have detractors. People will question your assumptions, your actions and your attitudes. Today we will look at Job (from the Bible) and see what he did to deal with these “friends.”

Right up front we know that God finds Job to be “blameless and upright.” Job’s friends come to him out of a desire to help. Oftentimes, people who shoot arrows at you in church ministry do so out of pain—it is hard to watch your friend or leader go through something. They want the pain to end, and look for solutions.

Job’s situation shows us how our assumptions, actions and attitudes form the tension in difficult situations.

Assumptions—Job’s view of God was different than his friends’. They saw God as perfect and a mighty judge. Job saw Him as approachable, a vindicator. Job’s friends’ assumption led them to believe that the problem was Job. Job’s assumption led him to believe that God was capricious, choosing to give His favor inconsistently.

Notice that both assumptions were right, but the conclusions they drew from those assumptions weren’t right. Much of our conflict with other people in the church comes from just this issue—people with delightful love for God interpret reality through their worldview, not waiting to understand the whole picture.

Actions—Job knew that he hadn’t sinned. His friends believed that he must have, so they mulled through his actions, and attributed sin to them. We can learn a couple of things from this:

- If you keep yourself in close relationship with God, you will be able to walk through the hard times with confidence.
- People assume that action = result, and if they don't like the result, the action must be wrong. We all want to believe that we have some control in this life. If you look at false religions, you will find that this is the common denominator—a belief that our actions will manipulate the outcome. In truth, God really is in charge, and we will “win” in every situation only by sticking close to Him, hearing His heart and following hard after the things that matter to Him.

Attitudes—Job's friends interpreted his refusal to heed their advice as an unteachable spirit and an attitude of disrespect. Job was so far down in his depression, he came across as unteachable. Attitudes are a matter of interpretation. We take what we see and run them through the filters of our experience, then we interpret people's actions through that lens. When other people attribute wrong attitudes to you take time to:

- Check self—ask yourself and God if your attitude is wrong.
- Check with others—sometimes you need to also get the perspective of others.

Example: A board member tells you how you blew a meeting, and offended half the room ... you had no idea. Here's what to do: Check your heart and check with God. Were you trying to offend? Did you know you were hurting people and didn't care? Apologize.

If your heart was right, you still have to determine what relationships need mending. Go to someone you trust who was in the room and ask them if they sensed tension. Don't approach it from the whine, “Sam says ... but I think he is wrong, what do you think.” Protect your detractor's anonymity and look for

an honest assessment. It may be that you only have one relationship to worry about, and treating them with respect through the whole process will go a long way to restoring peace.

Today's question:

In tough times, do you assume the problem is you, that the problem is someone else (even God) or that pain is part of life? What do you do to alleviate the pain?

Kim Martinez *is a pastor, writer, speaker and ministry coach. You can hear more from her at .*