

CRUCIAL CONVERSATIONS

Podcast Companion

AARON & MIRIAM | FEATURING TED MAX

THE BIG IDEA

Healthy relationships require the courage to talk to people, not merely about them.

In this conversation, Shane and Ted Max build on Numbers 12 and explore why difficult conversations are so easy to avoid. They talk about the "last 10 percent" we are often afraid to say, the difference between seeking wisdom and recruiting allies, how old wounds create new trust gaps, and what leaders can do to make honest feedback safer. The episode ends with a simple challenge: stop rehearsing the conversation in your head, pray first, make a plan, schedule it, and have it.

Listen for this: Where in the episode do you recognize your own conflict pattern - avoiding, venting, defending, assuming, or delaying?

SCRIPTURE TO KEEP OPEN

Numbers 12:1-2 - Miriam and Aaron had a problem with Moses, but Moses was not part of the conversation. The passage exposes how quickly conflict grows when we talk around someone instead of moving toward them.

Matthew 18:15 - Jesus' pattern begins by going to the person involved. The goal is not confrontation for confrontation's sake; it is clarity, restoration, and relationship.

1 | THE LAST 10 PERCENT

Ted described a pattern most of us recognize: we may tell people 90 percent of what is true, but the final 10 percent is often the part that matters most. We hold it back because we are afraid of what might happen if we say it. That fear can turn a needed conversation into side conversations with people who cannot actually resolve the issue.

Discuss or journal:

1. What is the "last 10 percent" you tend to avoid saying when a conversation feels risky?
2. What are you usually afraid will happen if you say it clearly - rejection, anger, misunderstanding, loss of trust, or something else?
3. How can you tell the difference between holding something back because it is wise to wait and holding it back because you are afraid?
4. Is there a relationship where you have been saying 90 percent of what is true while hoping the other person somehow figures out the rest?

2 | WISDOM OR ALLIES?

One of the strongest parts of the conversation was Ted's honesty that we are often looking for both wisdom and validation. The issue is not whether you talk to anyone before a hard conversation. The issue is who you call and what you want from them. A wise person can care about you deeply and still tell you that your perspective is incomplete.

A YES-PERSON	A WISE PERSON
Confirms your version of events. Strengthens certainty. Helps you build your case.	Asks what you may be missing. Challenges your assumptions. Moves you toward the right conversation.

5. Who is someone in your life who loves you enough to tell you when you are wrong?
6. When you call someone to "process," what do you actually want from them?
7. What would change if your goal in those conversations became, "Help me see the whole picture," instead of, "Tell me I'm right"?

3 | THE TRUST GAP

Ted made an important distinction: sometimes the person in front of us is not the whole reason we are reacting so strongly. We bring old wounds, previous betrayals, insecurities, and disappointments into new relationships. Feelings are real, but feelings and facts are not always the same.

"I don't think it was you. I think it was me. Let me tell you what happened to me."

That kind of honesty can lower the temperature of a conflict. Instead of accusing someone of motives, you name what their words touched in you. Vulnerability can become a bridge rather than a weapon.

- 8. Think of a recent reaction that felt bigger than the moment. What might that reaction have touched from your past?**
- 9. Is there a person you are holding responsible for something they did not actually create?**
- 10. What would it sound like to explain your reaction without accusing the other person of motives you cannot know?**

4 | IS IT ACTUALLY SAFE TO TELL THE TRUTH?

An "open door" policy does not automatically create a safe culture. Ted pointed out that authority changes the emotional stakes of a conversation. If the person you need to challenge can affect your job, role, reputation, or future, fear is understandable. His practical suggestion was that in some situations it may be wise to bring a trusted third person into the room - not to create a two-against-one confrontation, but to create clarity and accountability.

- 11. What makes someone feel safe enough to tell you something you may not want to hear?**
- 12. If you lead people at home, work, church, or anywhere else, what happens when someone disagrees with you? What have your reactions taught people?**
- 13. When would bringing a trusted third person into a conversation create safety rather than unnecessary escalation?**
- 14. If you need someone to join a conversation, what kind of person would help both sides pursue truth rather than simply take your side?**

5 | DON'T MISS THE TRUE 10 PERCENT

Shane described a difficult leadership challenge: sometimes a complaint may contain a great deal that feels inaccurate, but buried inside it is a smaller piece of truth that we genuinely need to hear. Defensiveness can cause us to reject all of it. Maturity means being able to correct what is inaccurate while still asking whether there is something in the criticism God may want to use.

15. When criticism is mostly unfair, what makes it difficult to hear the part that may be true?

16. How does believing that someone wants the same ultimate good help you listen differently?

17. What is one criticism you initially rejected but later realized contained something you needed to hear?

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Ted ended with a simple plan for the conversation you already know you need to have. Use this page to turn the idea into a next step.

1. DON'T CATASTROPHIZE	The conversation is probably not going to be as bad as the version you have rehearsed in your head.
2. PRAY FIRST	Before you build a 52-point plan, bring the relationship and your own heart to God.
3. MAKE A PLAN	Decide what needs to be said, what your goal is, and whether anyone should join you.
4. SCHEDULE IT	Send the text. Make the call. Put a time on the calendar.
5. HAVE THE CONVERSATION	Do not wait for perfect words. Go in humbly, tell the truth, listen carefully, and pursue understanding.

My conversation is with: _____

What I need to say clearly: _____

What I need to own before I say it: _____

My next step and when I will take it: _____

Closing thought: Prayer should be the first response, not the last resort. Ask God for courage, humility, and a heart that wants restoration more than vindication.