

Tool #2: Understanding vs. Pushing

Building a Relational Tool Box—part 2

June 13, 2021

Tool #2: Understanding someone vs. pushing our way

DAY 1: The need for understanding

1. It's one thing to *know* something or someone. It's a far different thing to *understand* something or someone.

2. Our human nature's default is to think that:

- We already understand the people around us.
- We understand God enough not to need to know Him any better than we do.
- We understand the problems that come our way.

3. This is what Proverbs calls "*the way of the fool.*"

*Prov. 18:2 **Fools** find no pleasure in **understanding** but delight in airing their own opinions.*

4. How this is most easily seen is in how rarely we see ourselves as learners of the people in our lives, of our need to learn more of God and to be learners toward problems that are complex.

*Proverbs 2:1 My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, ² turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to **understanding**—³ indeed, if you call out for insight and cry aloud for **understanding**,⁴ and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure,⁵ then you will **understand** the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.⁶ For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and **understanding**.*

5. According to Proverbs 2:1-6...

a. Is it wise to assume that we already have an adequate understanding of the most important realities of our lives?

b. How does one gain understanding?

c. Solomon is describing some attitudes we should have if we are to grow in our understanding of God, people and how life works. What attitudes do you notice?

6. How would you describe your own attitudes toward growing in understanding God, people and how life works?

7. Becoming a person of understanding doesn't just "happen" with age. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 2: Types of understanding.

1. Misunderstandings happen easily. Sometimes, misunderstandings are humorous. All too often misunderstandings are frustrating and can easily lead to conflict.

2. What causes misunderstandings?

a. We assume too quickly that we understand what the other person said and meant.

b. We hear what we want to hear and conclude what we want to conclude **more** than wanting to understand what the person is really saying. (We are too proud and self-centered).

c. Understanding someone is more complex than we think. Proverbs calls people who draw quick conclusions “simpletons.”

3. What makes understandings all too common is that understanding has a number of different meanings to it.

Understanding #1: You see and “get” someone’s words. Cognitive understanding. You’ve heard the words and know the words.

Understanding #2: Comprehending the implication of the words; grasping the intent of the words. To see the relative importance of someone’s ideas and feelings.

Understanding #3: Understanding how people tick. Examples: our longing for connection, longing to be understood, respected, loved, affirmation, valued, appreciated, etc. Difference between blurting out “Luv ya,” on the way out the door vs. “I love you.” Understanding #3 can differentiate that difference and does something about it!

Understanding #4: to assent or consent to a situation or condition. Example: your oncologist explaining what’s ahead in your cancer treatment.

Understanding #5: empathy. You are way very familiar with someone’s pain.

Understanding #6: being able to put together the complexities of a problem or a person and their ideas and feelings.

Understanding #7: an agreement. “We have an understanding about something. We may not like what the reality is but it is what it is.”

4. What strikes you from this list of understanding’s different meanings?

5. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

Prov. 18:2 (NAS) A fool does not delight in understanding, but only in revealing his own mind.

Prov. 18:2 Fools find no pleasure in understanding but delight in airing their own opinions.

DAY 3: The tools to understanding someone

1. In 1989 Stephen Covey published The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. That book sold over 25 million copies.

Habit #5 is: Seek to understand FIRST, then be understood.

2. Stephen Covey may not have known that that truth was written three thousand years before his book!

Prov. 18:2 (NAS) A fool does not delight in understanding, but only in revealing his own mind.

Prov. 18:2 Fools find no pleasure in understanding but delight in airing their own opinions.

3. How do we understand what someone is saying? Meaning? How do we understand a person?

We must become learners!

Ecclesiastes 4:13 Better a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king who will no longer take advice.

4. I have been married for nearly forty-three years. We know each other very well. But life has a way of throwing us “challenges” and difficulties which expose something new about each other. I **cannot assume** I know how she’s going to respond even after forty-three years! I am likely to cause a misunderstanding! I am still learning about her.

James 1:19 Be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to be angry.

5. Tools to help us understand each other:

Listen: for words, attitude, demeanor, and tone of the person speaking.

Engage: with the words you are hearing and the attitude you are sensing.

Explore: “Tell me more about ____.”

Ask: Examples: “When do you feel that way? What’s that like?”

Clarify. If you think you understand what someone is saying and meaning, tell them what you think they are wanting to communicate. Then ask, “Am I on the right track?”

The missing jewel: we must communicate that we **want** to understand what someone is saying!

6. That is done by eye contact, giving non-verbal feedback while the person is talking, like simply nodding your head. While they are communicating words, you are communicating *interest*!

7. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 4: What keeps us from understanding someone?

Prov. 15:28 The mind of the righteous ponders how to answer but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things.

Prov. 18:13 If anyone gives answer before he hears it is his folly and shame.

1. The usual culprit to miscommunication is making assumptions. We assume we:

- Already know what the person will say and mean.
- Have all the facts
- Comprehend all the factors involved
- Understand the complexities of a problem
- Understand the relational complexities of a situation.

2. Sometimes, misunderstandings find their roots in our pride:

- We hear what we want to hear.
- We believe what we want to believe.
- We jump to conclusions that are skewed to the conclusion that exonerates me while leaving you feeling foolish. (“Don’t blame me...”)
- We prop up a straw man to avoid communicating understanding. We are deflecting blame we assume is coming our way. (“So you never want me to”)
- We overdramatize what someone is saying (“So you’re saying I’m a terrible person.”)

3. Sometimes, misunderstandings occur when someone doesn’t feel understood. This happens when we:

- Minimize what they’re saying or feeling,
- Dismiss what they’re saying.
- Correct what they’re saying.
- Instruct them as to how they should think or feel about a situation.
- Try to “fix” a situation when what the person first wants is to be understood.
- Expect the person to know us so well that they can “read our minds.”

4. Which of the items above resonate with you?

5. Look at the two verses that begin today’s devotional. What action item do you need to do?

DAY 5: Becoming a person of understanding.

1. Proverbs tells us that left to ourselves we will remain simpletons and fools regarding our understanding of God, life, people, and relationships.

2. But it doesn't have to be this way!

3. Notice how Paul prayed for the Christians in the Colossian churches.

*Colossians 1:9 For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and **understanding that the Spirit gives**, ¹⁰ **so that** you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, ¹¹ being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, ¹² and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. ¹³ For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

4. Paul prays that they will have **God's** wisdom and **understanding**. For what purposes? List at least eight purposes!

5. We need greater understanding to understand ourselves!

Prov. 20:27 The human spirit is the lamp of the LORD that sheds light on one's inmost being.

6. We need greater understanding to understand others!

Prov. 20:5 The purposes of a person's heart are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out.

7. We need greater understanding to **want** to hear and see others—to connect deeply!

Prov. 20:12 Ears that hear and eyes that see— the LORD has made them both.

8. What strikes you from today's devotional?