

Negotiation Secrets of the Apostle Paul

It has been said that in life you don't get what you deserve, you get what you negotiate! Certainly, it seems that life is an endless series of negotiations with buyers, sellers, merchants, neighbors, siblings, even our spouses. That being the case, can we find a reliable Biblical model to apply to our everyday life? If so, can we codify it, communicate it and effectively practice it - not to the detriment of any one party - but in the Spirit of Christ, to the edification and enrichment of all? The answer is a resounding "YES".

Herein, I will attempt to do just that. There are numerous texts we could begin with but my text of preference is the book of Philemon. Here we find the Apostle Paul living in a Roman dominated world where 60% of the population were slaves. People became slaves for a variety of reasons including defaulting on a debt or being born in the wrong family. In this setting, we find a man named Onesimus (whose name means "profitable"), and in all likelihood a runaway slave who through circumstances unknown met up with Paul in a distant city. Paul led him to Christ and wanted to restore Onesimus to his former slave owner, Philemon.

This was not a simple thing, for under Roman law, because Paul had given refuge to Onesimus, he could have been made to pay Philemon for the loss of use of Onesimus during his absence. Furthermore, a runaway slave was a dead man walking, for if caught he could be punished by death! Paul's purpose in this letter was to persuade Philemon to receive Onesimus back into his home, not as a runaway slave but as a beloved brother even as he would have received Paul himself. When Paul spoke, kings listened! We know from church history that Philemon listened. Onesimus was restored and eventually went on to become a bishop in the early church.

Negotiate: *"The ability to communicate information that creates a climate of goodwill and favor (instead of fear) in the changing of opinions, circumstances and agreements."*

In the sales process, negotiating is much more effective if done after the seller has made a heart decision in your favor. If you begin to negotiate terms, price, etc., before the seller has made that decision, you will find yourself in a weaker bargaining position. You only have a certain, limited number of "chips" you can bargain with. Why give them all up before the buyer has settled on the rightness of our client's offer? While some concessions up front can make the buyer more interested in your offer, it

also creates an expectation of more concessions from you with little effort on their part, later.

The Harvard textbook, “The Art and Science of Negotiating” is a very thorough treatment of the subject but sadly includes concepts that we do not condone. One such section is entitled, “Strategic Misrepresentation”. I don’t believe that it’s necessary to misrepresent anything to have a positive outcome. In fact, misrepresentation lays the groundwork for mistrust and without trust an agreement is less likely to be reached. The following strategies outlined next, aren’t always to be used in every circumstance, but they are excellent models for integrity-oriented negotiating and have proven to be highly effective.

31 SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES FOR WIN / WIN NEGOTIATIONS

1) Appeal to the Heart (Emotions) “*Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus...*” (vs. 1) Paul begins his appeal by reminding Philemon that he is in prison for the gospel. He speaks to directly to the heart of his friend. Most experts agree that 90% of any decision is made in the heart (the battleground) and the remaining 10% of the decision is made in the mind (the negotiating table).

This is where we separate the people from the problem. People are emotional creatures first, then rational. Emotions reside in the heart. Make winning the battle for the heart a top priority. Get them on your side emotionally by coming alongside them and take a genuine interest in them and find out what’s important to them.

It’s the old proverb “*If you want friends, be friendly.*” If you want them to care about your position, care about them. How ever you want them to be with you, be that first to them. It’s the golden rule “*Do unto others as you want them to do to you.*” It’s almost an automatic, involuntary reaction. So, think through how you want them to treat you, and lavish that on them first.

People buy for their reasons, not yours. They buy into a “position” based on emotion, and then justify it with logic. When negotiating with someone, find a way to appeal to their emotional side. Give them a compelling reason to buy into your “position”.

2) Reduce Conflict by Stressing Common Goals “*...fellow laborer...our fellow soldier*” (vs. 1-2) Focus on things in common versus what divides. What are the

common goals you share with the other party? Perhaps neither party is happy with where things stand. Both sides want to find resolution to a difficult situation. Work on the problem from the same side of the fence. Agree on the goals in common. Emphasizing and working on common goals reduces conflict & creates a conducive environment for doing business. Get on a common footing and build on that.

3) Include Others to Increase the Impact of the Decision “...and Timothy our brother,...to the beloved Apphia, Archippus...and to the church in your house.” (vs. 1-2) Identify all who will be impacted by this decision. Remind the person you are dealing with of everyone who will be impacted by this decision. For example, if you are talking with one of the managers at an industrial plant, you might remind him that the VP of Operations and the VP of Sales have an interest in the outcome. When you remind someone of the fact that others will be watching their decision, it can have a significant impact on the choice they make. Where appropriate include the others in the decision process. Often times a single decision maker may favor an outcome that serves their personal interest but not the company’s. If you can include others in the process, it makes it very difficult for that person to accomplish their personal, hidden agenda.

4) Express Value for the Relationship “...beloved friend...Grace to you and peace from God our Father. I thank my God...” (vs. 1-2, 4) People need to feel valued. When someone feels they are valued, they are more likely to receive what you have to say. Everyone wants to feel significant. In fact, the need for significance is the #1 addiction in America today. When people feel insignificant they withdraw emotionally and hinder negotiations. If you honor the other party, they are more likely to respond favorably. Value the people, and they will value doing business with you. Express value for the people at all levels not just the “decision maker”.

5) Invest in the Relationship “...making mention of you always in my prayers.” (vs. 4) People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care! How have you invested in the relationship so far? How can you invest in the relationship now? Taking the time to invest in the relationship will limit how many clients you can serve well. But that’s the point, isn’t it? Serving clients well? We have found that when we serve the seller well by listening to their concerns and resolving them, we many times get multiple deals from them. This is because they have already crossed the Rubicon so to speak.

6) Involve Their Good Reputation “...hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints...the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you brother.” (vs. 5 & 7) Recognize their past achievements. Maybe they are well known for their leadership in the past or for resolving difficult situations. At the very least, they have a reputation to protect. It doesn't hurt to remind someone that their reputation may be at stake. A good reputation is of more value than great riches. Many people know this and strive to build and keep their good name. It's hard to build a good reputation and even harder to re-build one. Where appropriate, attach their reputation to the outcome because people want to protect their reputation.

7) Build on Past Gains “...beloved friend...fellow laborer...fellow soldier... brother... partner.” (vs. 1, 2 & 17) Don't re-invent the wheel. Don't lay again the same foundation. Reiterate progress made thus far. Keep in the forefront the gains or progress you have already made together. Perhaps they have been a customer for a long time. You might want to remind them by saying something like, “You've been a customer a long time now” or “We've worked together before.” Customers are hesitant to end a relationship that they have built over many years and exchange it for one of unknown quality. If you have had the customer for a long time, you might remind them of things like their past service history which your company understands better than anyone else possibly could.

8) Affirm their destiny “...that the sharing of your faith, may become effective by the acknowledgement of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.” (Vs. 6) Affirming their destiny or sense of purpose, enhances significance. When you recognize that someone is doing an excellent job, let them know how well fitted they are for that work. If they are doing what they're wired for and you recognize that, it will greatly enhance their own self-worth or significance and when their significance is enhanced, they are more likely to do business with you. I am not suggesting that you comment on someone favorably so you can get their business. What I am saying is that when you recognize their giftedness and how well fitted they seem for the job they are doing, it uplifts and encourages them, and eliminates any sense of threat from you. When people feel encouraged by your presence instead of threatened by it, they are much more receptive to your message which increases your chances of doing business with them. Come alongside their business and help them fulfill their destiny.

9) Affirm Their Positive Attributes That You Would Like to See Manifest “...hearing of your love and faith which you have toward...all the saints...For we have great joy

and consolation in your love." (vs. 5 & 7) Acknowledge their positive character traits. (i.e.: integrity, fairness, visionary, etc.) Magnify that trait by discussing their use of that quality in the past. Remind them of the fair-handed way they worked with you the last time they presented one of our offers. When you talk about their integrity or leadership, etc., they are more likely to purposefully exhibit those traits in this transaction. Establish those desirable traits as part of the context for doing business together.

10) Affirm Their Influence for Good "*...the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you brother.*" (vs. 7) People want their life to count for something good. They want to leave their "mark". Remind them they have the power to do something good at this time. Perhaps their decision can make a lasting positive impact on the entire organization. Let them know they have the power to do something really good. Perhaps you're dealing with someone about to retire and they don't want to affect the status quo. Challenge them to do something that is for the good of the company, which will be a reminder of their influence in the company for years to come.

11) Reveal Your Position of Strength "*...though I might be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting...*" (vs. 8) "*I could force this, but I desire a mutually rewarding & satisfactory agreement.*" Sometimes you need to remind the party that you are dealing with that you could act without their approval but it's more important to you to have a long-term, working relationship. For example, suppose there is a collection issue where they owe your firm for past services rendered. You might need to remind them that you have the upper hand in that situation but are more interested in a speedy resolution and working together in the future. It could be something as simple as, "*Our agreement only calls for.... But in the interest of a long-term relationship...*"

12) Base your Appeal in Humility "*...yet for love's sake I rather appeal to you - being such a one as Paul, the aged.*" (vs. 9) Paul commanded the attention of kings, but humbled himself anyway. People tend to resist a prideful spirit or forcefulness and will look for a way out of the negotiation if it gets too uncomfortable. When you walk in humility and the fear of the Lord, God promises riches, honor and life. He gives grace (divine enablement) to the humble. Wouldn't you want God's divine enablement to help you through your next set of negotiations? Pride, pushes. Humility, draws. When you walk in humility and integrity, opportunities and success are easier to come by. An appeal is better than force, but don't let the other party see that as weakness.

That's why you need to reveal your position of strength and walk in humility. Teddy Roosevelt said it best, "Walk softly and carry a big stick!"

13) Appeal to their good nature "...being such a one as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ." (vs. 9) Paul reveals his disadvantages. He is old and he's a prisoner. He reveals his vulnerability and could be easily taken advantage of but Paul took the risk because he knew the kind of man Philemon was. In negotiations, it's okay to reveal vulnerability. No product can be everything to all people. Freely admit the limitations of your product or service and then offset them with the compensating strengths you have to offer. People trust people who are willing to admit their limitations but suspect and resist those who are not willing to reveal the limitations of their offering.

14) Clarify the Topic of Concern "*I appeal to you for my son Onesimus.*" (vs. 10) When you have a sensitive issue to talk about, whether it be price, property condition, market realities, etc., be direct. The desire to avoid conflict boils down to one simple thing... "*the fear of man*". Nothing limits your success or puts a ceiling on your possibilities quite like the fear of man. The fear of man and the desire to avoid conflict comes down to our desire (self-imposed need) to want to preserve their esteem of us, or their affections, etc.

When you give into the fear of man, you've stepped into a snare, a trap. You have fallen under the other person's dominion, at least with respect to the topic at hand. That's a terrible place to be in a negotiation. Shift the conflict to the transaction or even the client vs between you and them. "*I know this issue (cash amount) is important to you because of your existing debt. It would be to me as well. I have a solution that may resolve that for you. Shift the debt on that asset to another asset. Let me give you a great example. (Walk them through an example where you resolved that issue.) That way, you can transition out of this property quickly, while still getting the total cash benefit you were needing. Make sense?*"

When you are direct about the topic of concern it implies importance, and minimizes misunderstandings. If you hedge, the seller will either want to back away from it, or take advantage of your insecurity, making agreement harder to come by.

15) Re-direct Opinion With Well Chosen Words "...my son, Onesimus, whom I have begotten while in my chains." (vs. 10) In my opinion, this is the central and most

powerful negotiating skill of them all. Paul shapes the argument with his words. He refers to Onesimus as his “son”. That’s a powerful claim. He challenged the supposition that Onesimus was just a runaway slave. He didn’t say, “I want to talk to you about that useless slave of yours who vandalized your property before he left.” He wanted to paint a different image in the mind of Philemon. Paul put the conversation on a whole new level. He claimed Onesimus as his son.

The ability to shape the argument with well-chosen words. To get an idea of how, well-chosen words shape an argument; you need only consider the abortion debate. One side says they are “pro-choice”. The “pro-lifers” call them “pro-abortion”. The battle rages over ideas using well-chosen words. He who frames the discussion, usually wins. Frame the discussion in well-chosen words.

16) Express Your Personal Commitment to a Successful Conclusion “...my son Onesimus whom I have begotten...” (vs. 10) Paul lets Philemon know that he has a personal involvement and commitment in the matter. He wants Philemon to know that it was he, Paul, who personally brought Onesimus to the Lord. He wanted him to know this matter was intensely personal and he was therefore greatly committed to its successful conclusion.

In negotiations, make a personal commitment to see the matter through to a successful conclusion. Let them know that it matters to you and you will walk through the entire process with them. Express a personal commitment to a successful conclusion. If it’s not important or valuable to you, the other agent or seller will likely pick up on this and you will probably fail to reach a positive conclusion.

17) Insist the Outcome be Based on Current Facts “...who was once unprofitable to you, but now is profitable to you and to me.” (vs. 11) Paul established the disadvantages of the previous arrangement, reminding Philemon of how unprofitable Onesimus was to him in the past. He informs Philemon of the new set of facts that Onesimus (whose name meant “profitable”) is now indeed profitable not only to Paul but under the proposed arrangement he will be profitable to both of them. Perhaps your company came through some difficult times and the competition is slandering you with a bad report. If things have changed, you need to let your customer know that the information he is basing his opinion on, has changed. Insist that the outcome be based on current realities not former ones.

18) Reveal Other Available Options “...whom I wished to keep with me... but without your consent I wanted to do nothing.” (vs. 13-14) Paul could have kept Onesimus with him and he let Philemon know that. Let the other party know you have other options. A powerful tool in negotiating is having other options. When you sit down to negotiate with a seller or their representative and feel like you have got to get this sale or else, you ratchet up the tension unnecessarily. **Always be prepared mentally to walk away from the sale.** Never sit down at a negotiating table that you can't get up from! Know in advance what your bottom line is and don't cross it.

19) Affirm Your Respect for Them “But without your consent, I wanted to do nothing...” (vs. 14) Paul showed respect by choosing to not do anything without Philemon's consent. He could have taken matters into his own hands but chose not to out of respect for Philemon. When you show respect, you earn favor, and favor is exactly the climate you want when proposing new ideas to a seller. If your agreement is reached by manipulation or pressure, it will likely fall apart when tested. Cultivate a spirit of cooperation, not force.

20) Assume a Successful Conclusion “... that your good deed might not be by compulsion, as it were, but voluntary.” (vs. 14) Paul speaks of Philemon's good deed before he has ever agreed to do it. Plant the seed early that you expect to arrive at a successful conclusion. Nurture that idea throughout the negotiations. Acknowledge obstacles, but affirm your conviction of a positive outcome. It will create a positive atmosphere of expectancy.

21) Direct Focus to the Positive Side of Negative Circumstances “For perhaps he departed for a while for this purpose, that you might receive him forever, no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, a beloved brother.” (vs. 15 – 16) Paul knew the negative circumstances surrounding the arrival of Onesimus, how he had caused injury to Philemon's property, etc., but he chose to focus on the positive outcome by referring to him as a “beloved brother”. Adversity and opportunity are joined at the hip. Negative circumstances are a passport to something greater. Become a master at discerning the positive side of negative circumstances and causing your customer to see that positive side. The negative circumstance may well be the property condition report or the weak leases. The positive side of that is, that our buyer will still come to the closing table, if we can appropriately compensate for those concerns.

22) Express Mutual Benefits “...*a beloved brother, especially to me but how much more to you...*” (vs. 16) Paul didn’t mind revealing that he was getting something out of this. He was amply rewarded and wanted Philemon to know it. Don’t be embarrassed to discuss what’s in it for both parties. Customers expect that you are getting something out of the agreement also. Most people are leery of the fellow who says he is losing money on the transaction. Of course, you’ll be well rewarded if the agreement is reached. That’s how you stay in business to continue offering the value proposition and serving a growing customer base

23) Recall Prior Agreements “*If you then count me as a partner...*” (vs. 17) When have you worked together on a project or solving a problem in the past? Have you worked a deal with them before? What agreement did you have? Build on the strength of past agreements that you have previously honored. Remind them of the success you have had working together in the past.

24) Ask for a Decision

“*If then you count me as a partner, receive him as you would me...*” (vs. 17) Clarify exactly what you want. Ask for it. When you have made your case and answered their concerns, communicate what the outcome will look like if you move ahead. Paul wanted Philemon to accept and welcome Onesimus with all the love and affection that he would have welcomed Paul himself. Both Paul and Philemon knew what that looked like and so Philemon was very clear on what Paul wanted to happen.

25) Plan for the Unexpected “*But if he has wronged you or owes you anything, put that on my account.*” (vs. 18) Paul anticipates a possible objection and nips it in the bud before it can be raised. He expects the unexpected. Seldom does a deal come together without a hitch. You should have an answer for possible glitches and be prepared for them. Better yet, do a good job of setting expectations. “*Bill, occasionally we get surprises during the due diligence process. Should anything like that occur, I will be in close touch with you so we can adjust as necessary to arrive at a successful conclusion for both of our clients.*”

26) Commit in Writing “*I, Paul am writing with my own hand...*” (vs. 19) Paul wanted to make sure Philemon knew it was really he writing this and wanted to emphasize his commitment by putting his request in writing. When you want someone to commit in writing, you refer to it as authorizing an agreement. When you want them to feel secure that you are committed to them, you let them know that you will sign a written

contract. It implies you cannot withdraw nor would you want to entertain the idea. Always clarify your verbal agreements in writing. Verbal contracts have destroyed many relationships.

27) Provide Logical Justification *“I will repay, not to mention to you that you owe me even your own self besides.”* (vs. 19) Paul provides a little cost justification by reminding Philemon that he owes him far more than Onesimus owes Philemon. He owes him his very life. Sometimes your client needs a little logical cost justification to help settle the matter. This is where you can shine. Present solid financial justification in clear, easy to follow terms. By clearly expressing this in writing, we make it easier for them to say yes!

28) Appeal to their motivational gift *“...the hearts of the saints...been refreshed by you... refresh my heart in the Lord.”* (vs. 7 & 20) Paul recognized that Philemon had the gift of refreshing others and called on Philemon to refresh him. People usually rise to the level of expectation you have of them, as long as it’s clearly understood. If your contact at a customer’s office is a problem solver, and you’re trying to get buy-in within the organization, let your contact know what a good problem solver is and how confident you are in his ability to get buy-in from others.

29) Express Confidence That They Will Do the Right Thing *“Having confidence in your obedience... knowing that you will do even more...”* (vs. 21) The expectation you project is the expectation the seller or agent will take on. If they sense your confidence, it will generate more confidence. If you approach with the possibility they’ll refuse you, it multiplies the likelihood of that happening.

30) Project an Ongoing Relationship Based on a Successful Outcome *“But meanwhile, also prepare a guest room for me...”* (vs. 22) Talk beyond the point of agreement. Discuss what the situation looks like after the deal has closed. Talk about the future as though it was already agreed upon. You might say something like, *“Whom in your organization will be responsible for allowing access to inspect the property?”* Or, *“Once we’ve come to agreement on financial terms, how soon will you want this to close?”* Paint a vision of what the future looks like after the agreement has been consummated.

31) Make it easier to agree than disagree *“...prepare a guest room for me... Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus greets you, as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers.”* (vs. 22-25) Involve others whose opinion matters to the other

party. Paul lets Philemon know who is watching for the outcome at his end. He wants Philemon to know that whether or not he chooses to reveal this letter to others, there are plenty of mutual friends who have an interest in the outcome that are already “in the know” about this letter. Are there others you may want to be involved in this process that are not directly related to the outcome? Mutual acquaintances at the country club or weekly Rotary Club? Your bottom line is that you want to make it easier for the customer to agree than disagree.