



## Leading Second Podcast - Season 8 Episode 199

### How to Handle Division & Strife on Your Team w/ L2 Team

Brandon sits down with some of the Leading Second team in a discussion to explore the challenges of dealing with division and strife within church ministry teams. Dillon Ritchie (Coastlife Church, Venice, FL), Jennifer Martin (NorthRock Church, San Antonio, TX), and Dom Gianino (Elevation Church, Rock Hill, SC) emphasize the importance of addressing conflicts promptly, maintaining team alignment with the church's vision, and the necessity of having difficult conversations to maintain a healthy team culture.

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#### **HAVE YOU EVER BEEN IN THE PLACE WHERE IT FELT LIKE THERE WAS AN UNDERCURRENT GOING ON IN THE TEAM?**

- We need to recognize it when it happens.
  - But we don't need to always view it as the most absolutely terrible thing.
  - People who are on staffs are flawed, messy, and have opinions, ideas, and personalities.
  - We may have swung the pendulum too far and got into artificial harmony territory.
  - Both are bad and we have to find a happy medium.
  - Leading in the middle requires you to lead through the tensions.
    - We don't want an environment without tensions.
      - A team who is told to not have conflict is given the impression that they are not allowed to speak up when they disagree.
      - This can be damaging to an organization.
      - The church has been so good about teaching honor, but a lot of our team has confused honor with not being able to disagree.

*There is a level of disagreement or conflict that has to happen to be on a healthy team.*

*- Dom Gianino*

- Strife
  - An angry undercurrent.
  - Contention.
  - A struggle for victory.
    - The struggle to try to be right.
    - The struggle to win.
  - Healthy tension is good because we're all attempting to win together.
    - But what about the undercurrent on the team where someone's trying to be right?
  - An agitation produced by different qualities.
    - Different qualities are good.
      - But don't allow the agitation to sneak in.
  - To resist someone/another person.
    - The low boil that turns massive if you don't deal with it.
- Matthew 5:21-24 (NIV) ""You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, 'Raca,' is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell. Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.""
  - Ministry is our gift at the altar.
    - My ministry is my gift; my offering before the Lord.
  - My first and foremost job on a team is to seek reconciliation.
    - To seek to get past the low boil of strife and frustration.

## **STRIFE AND DIVISION ARE JUST PLAIN DISCOURAGING ON A TEAM.**

- It's like trying to move forward when someone is holding you back.
  - It's the unforgiveness and offense being carried.
  - If you deal with the resistance, the division, and have the conversation, think about how much faster you could go.
- There can be fears that come to mind about having the tough conversation.
  - Most of those fears never actually happen.
  - This fear of what's going to happen if we do have the conversation holds us back from the very thing that the Bible is teaching us to do.
  - There is fruit in taking the steps that God tells us to take.
  - Most of the time, when we go to have a conversation with someone, we hang on to the last 10%.
    - How important it is that you say the last 10%.
      - If you don't get it out, then you can continue to carry something against someone and they think you've moved on.
- When leading a tough conversation that does not directly involve you:
  - You are simply setting the table.
  - You don't have to do all this work ahead of time.
  - You can help get past motives, emotions, and feelings and get to the facts.
- Conflict on a team is like a tunnel.
  - Sometimes people think that, when working for the church, there won't ever be conflict.
  - It's the opposite of that because the Church is the greatest thing. It's the hope of the world.
    - The stakes are much higher.
    - So we are more passionate than most about what we're doing.
- Ask your leader how they perceive you in a meeting.
  - Sometimes we don't understand how we look or come across.

- On a team, you are either working externally focused or internally focused.
  - There's a time and place for both.
  - Focusing internally for moments is good.
  - But you can't chronically stay there.
  - It can be a momentum killer because you're waking up in the morning thinking about internal issues rather than external mission.
  - That is one contributing factor to why teams just treadmill and stall out.
  - They just get so focused on themselves.
- Division is having more than one vision.
  - Where you see division is when there's misalignment around the vision.
- Strife and division can come when people prioritize their own ideas rather than seeking what's best for the house.
  - The most productive teams are the ones that seek what's best for the house and for the team moving forward.
- There are times where you have to have the conversation with an individual and ask, "Are you with us?"
- At the end of a growth spurt, things can look very different than when you began.
  - All progress brings change. All change brings loss. All loss brings pain.
  - We can create division by not growing with the organization as it grows.

## **STRIFE AND DIVISION ARE NOT ALWAYS A TEAM CULTURE.**

- How many times do we say, "Our team is just not on the same page," when really it's one person?
- Ask ourselves: Am I looking forward to coming to work today? If someone more qualified took my job today, what would they address?
  - How do these answers inform my day today?
  - We can get on autopilot too often.
  - The Sermon on the Mount is a massive heart check.
    - Why do you do what you do?
    - From what perspective are you doing what you're doing?

## **WHAT COULD A LEADER DO IF THEY FIND THEMSELVES IN THIS TEAM CULTURE TODAY? WHAT ARE SOME THINGS WE COULD DO TO LEAD BEYOND IT AND STAY FREE OF IT AS A TEAM?**

- Once division and strife get in your culture, it's more of a poison than a weed.
  - You can't just pluck it and move on.
  - It's something that has to go through a process of removal.
  - The best day to start is today.
    - Resetting a culture around having healthy confrontation will change the dynamic of your team.
    - It starts with a conversation and a change in attitude and perspective.
      - We need to be able to have healthy confrontation.
      - You're going to have to go on a journey of consistently changing and molding your culture to having healthy confrontation.
        - But never getting to a place of division.
        - It didn't happen overnight, so it's not going to go away overnight.
  - You will lose good members of the team if you don't address it.
    - Sometimes, as leaders, we're loyal to a person just because they were loyal to us in a season.
  - If someone's values are not in alignment with the church or the vision, then they cannot stay on the team.
    - They are not a bad person, but they can't be part of us.
    - You have to become more concerned with the response of the person rather than their reaction.
      - Sometimes you need to say the hard truth and let God work that out in them.
    - Our job is to have clean hands and a pure heart.
      - Do the right thing with the right motive.
      - You can not manage their emotions.

- When you're not dealing with something, everyone can see it.
- You're going to lose someone.
- Tell the truth in love.
  - What if telling the truth is love?
    - What if they didn't know? If they lack self-awareness?
  - People are getting better today because leaders are willing to have the honest conversation.
  - God can grow a harvest of righteousness in someone's life.
  - We've got to lead with integrity, clean hands, and a pure heart.
    - And trust God for the outcome.
  - We can do a good job of focusing on saving souls, but sometimes we could do a better job of addressing sin.

*God can do something really great when truth is presented in love.*

*- Brandon Stewart*

## Dig Deeper

1. In what ways might we be unintentionally promoting 'artificial harmony' instead of addressing real issues?

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2. How can we apply Jesus' teaching from Matthew 5:23-24 to our professional relationships in ministry?

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3. In what ways might we be avoiding addressing sin or unhealthy behaviors out of fear of losing people?

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## Additional Resources

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