

## Walk a Mile

Dale repeats in this chapter that "success in dealing with people depends on a *sympathetic* grasp of the other person's viewpoint." I can't just know what their viewpoint is. I have to be able to sympathize with it, even when it conflicts with how I personally feel or behave. I need to grow towards something Nirenberg calls "cooperative conversation." The goal in any conversation is to show that I consider the other person's ideas and feelings as important as my own. That's just common respect, which like common sense, isn't so common any more.

When I talk cooperatively with people, I'm giving up something. I'm making a sacrifice, really. I am holding a number of things in check that I'd love to say or comment about. However, if I said them, all I'd demonstrate is my total lack of self-control. To cooperate, I need to focus on what the other person wants to say.

For about 15 years I left legions of corpses strewn about the countryside from my tongue-lashings. Cooperation was not in my vocabulary. I had Lambast on the top of my list - in bold 36-point red font. It was an action word, a good strong verb. Cooperation seemed so wimpish. Then I grew up.

Cooperation, like submission, is a word of strength. It requires self-control and discipline. It requires training and practice until I can master my tongue - and I do that by mastering my heart. The tongue always reveals what the heart contains (Mt. 12:34) To change my speech, I had to change my heart. It took a long time and a lot of work. It took me a long time to learn who God wanted me to be, and what He wanted me to value.

That's what Dale is talking about. I need to honestly put myself in the other person's shoes and look at things from their point of view, with *sympathy* and *understanding*. It means setting aside my agenda and actively listening to what they have to say. What I try to do is draw out of the other person their protected feelings. That isn't easy. People are vulnerable and their feelings are fragile. I can get them to open up by showing that I honestly care, and that I can be trusted with what they share.

My goal in any conversation is to spend more time in the other person's shoes than I spend in my own. If I do, then I'm more likely to create a cooperative conversation. If I can do that, then I can build a bridge. If I can build a bridge, then I can start a relationship. With a relationship, I can open them up to new ideas and new possibilities. I can lead them to where they want to be.