

Leadership Bookclub – Leader’s Guide

Chapter 4 – Start with Heart

Q: What does the expression “work on me first” mean? Why is it important?

Cheat Sheet Answer: It means the first step in dialogue is to check your own motives before focusing on others. The only person you can truly change is yourself. Chapter 4 shows how motives often shift unconsciously from solving problems to ‘winning’ or ‘punishing.’ The sisters’ bathroom story illustrates this — they said they wanted relief, but really wanted to be first or right.

Q: What’s the meaning of the expression “start with heart”?

Cheat Sheet Answer: It means beginning high-risk discussions with the right motives and staying focused on them no matter what. Those skilled in dialogue refuse the fool’s choice and commit to both honesty and respect.

Q: Why is it important to stay focused on what we want?

Cheat Sheet Answer: Because motives can change unconsciously when adrenaline takes over. Staying focused prevents sliding into face-saving, silence, or attacking, keeping the conversation constructive.

Q: Why is it important to ask what we want for ourselves, others, and the relationship? What do our wants often change to?

Cheat Sheet Answer: Because true dialogue balances all three areas. Often our wants degrade into short-term goals like looking good, avoiding discomfort, or punishing others. Re-centering on long-term goals helps maintain respect and honesty.

Q: When we stop, take a breath, and ask ourselves what we really want, how does it affect our immediate physical and emotional response?

Cheat Sheet Answer: It re-engages the higher reasoning centers of the brain, calming the fight-or-flight response. Asking the deeper questions shifts focus away from adrenaline-driven reactions and toward long-term outcomes.