When Sheep Squabble

FOR PENTECOSTAL MINISTRY

Staying 30 Heat Is On

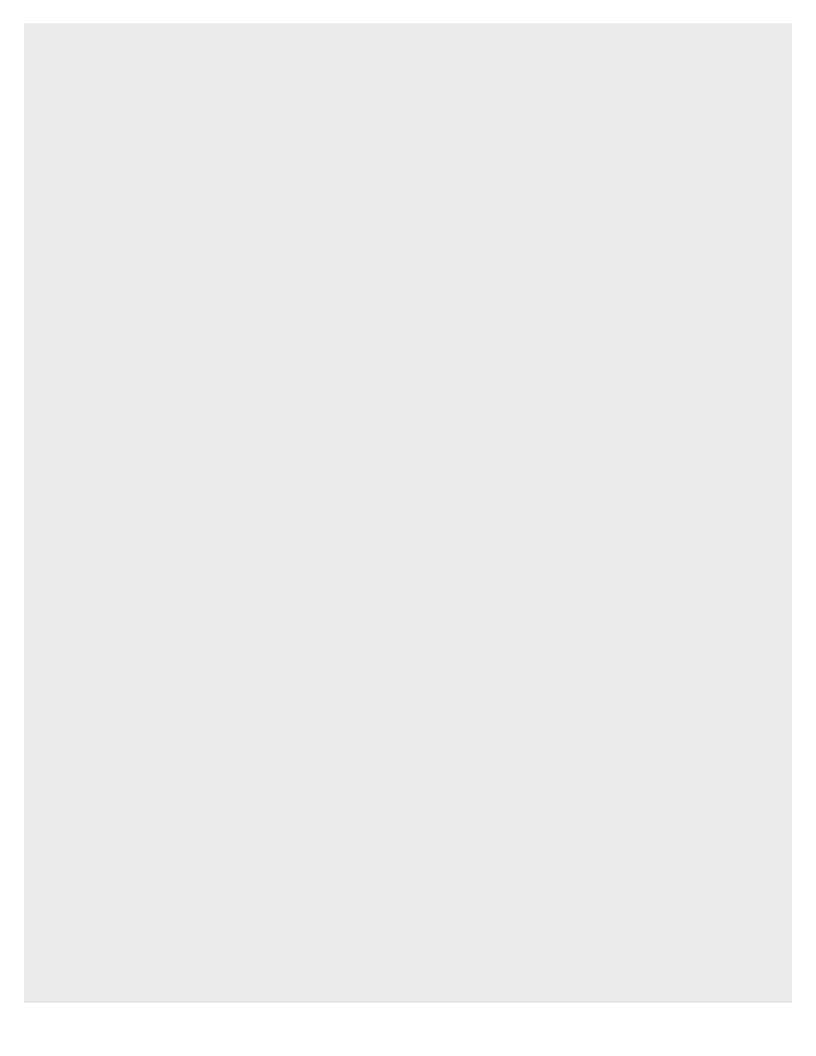
JOURNAL

The Acts 62 Method For Resolving Church Disputes



Managing Church Conflict, Part 1

SPRING 2005



Solution Stress Stress



Minimizing and Managing Conflict

BY GARY R. ALLEN

The primary reason ministers leave the ministry is interpersonal conflict. Interpersonal conflict is also a major reason people leave the church. Years of misunderstandings, mistrust, and layers of destructive conflict have paralyzed many churches, and they have ceased to be effective in reaching their communities with the gospel.

Destructive conflict is detrimental because it:

- undermines our witness.
- drains precious time and resources.
- destroys relationships.
- steals our motivation.¹

Is there any hope that people will get along and build a healthy church? Yes. The staff of *Enrichment* believes conflict management is so critical we are dedicating two issues of the journal to managing church conflict. We will not only describe the problem; we will also offer practical solutions and resources.

THE DYNAMICS OF CONFLICT

Before searching for solutions, we need a better understanding of the scope and dynamics of interpersonal and organizational conflict.

Conflict is inevitable among people and within organizations. The church is vulnerable to conflict because it is relationship based. The very nature of the community of faith puts us into closer contact with one another, making us more susceptible to conflict.

In the church, personal and organizational conflict are deeply intertwined. It is nearly impossible to separate people from policies, procedures, and guidelines that often appear to distance leadership from the people rather than to bring unity and help people be and do their best.

CHANGING LEADERSHIP DYNAMICS

In the traditional hierarchical leadership model, leaders may attempt to hide behind structure, rules, and regulations, temporarily repressing tension and anger. Eventually, though, there will be an interpersonal explosion of destructive conflict.

Team-leadership models are more participatory and interactive and may facilitate managing interpersonal conflict. With more participation, discussion, and feedback, controversial issues are brought into the open, evoking emotional responses.

The goal of conflict management is to lower tension in relationships and within the organizational structure by improving interpersonal relationships and by adjusting and aligning structure.

APPROACHES TO CONFLICT

How we approach conflict and the processes we implement determine whether or not the church will be healthy.

Prevention is not realistic. Conflict is a normal and natural result of God-given human diversity and difference. The issue is not our differences or the potential for conflict, but whether conflict is positive or negative. Therefore, it is not realistic to think all conflict can be eliminated.

Resolution is ideal, but not always possible. Some people approach conflict head-on, thinking that every conflict has an immediate resolution and, if necessary, it can be imposed. This usually increases interpersonal tensions. It is better to think of resolution as the result of the management process, not an event.

Minimizing and managing conflict is more realistic. While we cannot eliminate all conflict, we can work to minimize it. Leadership should manage conflict by applying interpersonal relationship skills that direct conflict into a creative force.

THE LEADER IS THE KEY TO CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

The pastor sets the tenor and pace of the church. He cannot remain passive toward conflict, but must be intentional about managing it. A prerequisite to resolution is understanding that balance is somewhere between being avoidant and aggressively confronting every situation as a major conflict.

The next issue of *Enrichment* will concentrate on conflict management with an emphasis on breaking the cycle of conflict, learning and using conflict management styles, and personal growth through conflict.

GARY R. ALLEN, D.Min., is executive editor of *Enrichment* journal and national coordinator of the Ministerial Enrichment Office, Springfield, Missouri. ENDNOTES

1. Terry S. Wise, "Trinity College and Seminary Department of Conflict Management" (Deerfield, Ill., accessed December 1999).

CONTENTS SPRING

WHEN SHEEP SQUABBLE (MANAGING CHURCH CONFLICT, PART 1) 2005 • VOLUME 10 • NUMBER 2



theme articles

20 ASK THE SUPERINTENDENT — MEDITATIONS ON CONFLICT (PART 1)

Interview with Thomas E. Trask With years of ministry experience under his belt, this pensive Pentecostal leader offers insights into church conflict in this first of two interviews.

22 WHEN CAUGHT IN THE CROSS FIRE

By Michael B. Ross Patterns you develop in your first pastorate can either help or hinder future ministry.

30 STAYING COOL WHEN THE HEAT IS ON

By Norman Shawchuck

Here are a few coaching lessons to keep you from losing your cool during the battle.

42 IN THE SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS: LESSONS ON MANAGING CONFLICT

Interview with Marcus Bakke, Dennis Rivera, Zollie Smith, Jr. Three pastors turned district leaders share practical insights on how to maintain harmony in the church.

50 MINIMIZING DISSONANCE BY BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES OF FAITH

By Gary R. Allen The community of faith is one of the primary environments in which

God intends human beings to demonstrate the dynamics of their transformed lives.

62 THE ACTS METHOD FOR RESOLVING CHURCH DISPUTES

By George O. Wood

These three disputes from the Early Church provide a template for handling any conflict.

70 WHEN CULTURES CLASH: RESOLVING CONFLICT BETWEEN MODERNS AND POSTMODERNS By Lori O'Dea

When modern and postmodern cultures meet in church, the result is an environment ripe for conflict.

80 BATTLE IN THE BOARDROOM

By Paul E. Grabill For many pastors, living with the saints below would not be as hard if it were not for that one meeting every month. Learn how to be your board's best friend.

86 WHEN SHEEP SQUABBLE — DEALING WITH DISCORD IN THE SMALLER CHURCH

By Glenn C. Daman While members in the smaller church may seem to care for each other, the culture of the smaller church can also be the seedbed for conflict.

94 INVOLUNTARY TERMINATIONS: WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU ARE THE SOURCE OF THE PROBLEM

Interview with Speed Leas What two studies reveal about the causes of involuntary terminations and what pastors can learn from them.

$\label{eq:additional Resources: http://www.enrichmentjournal.ag.org click on current issue.$

ENRICHMENT (ISSN 1082-1791) is published quarterly (January, April, July, October), ©2005 by The General Council of the Assemblies of God, 1445 Boonville, Springfield, Missouri 65802. Assemblies of God ministers may reproduce nonbyline material from *Enrichment* in church publications, giving credit to the journal. Except for brief quotations, signed articles may not be reprinted without permission of the authors. Subscription rates: USA–1 year 824; 2 years 842. Outside USA add 810 per year. Subscriptions: All subscription correspondence, including change of address, should be sent to *Enrichment*, Customer Services, 1445 Boonville, Springfield, M0 65802, phone 1-800-641-4310. Periodical postage paid at Springfield, Missouri, and at additional mailing offices. Printed in the USA. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: *Enrichment*, 1445 Boonville, Springfield, M0 65802.

CONTENTS SPRING

6 eShorts

18 VFT update

editorials

1 MINISTRY MATTERS: By Gary R. Allen

144 IN CLOSING By Charles E. Hackett

columns

100 THEOLOGICAL ENRICHMENT Dealing With Conflict and Criticism -Lessons From the Apostle Paul By James D. Hernando

104 POSTMODERNISM AND THE CHURCH

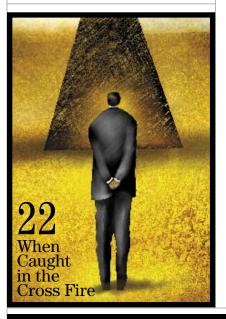
Does Evidence Still Demand a Verdict? The Church's Apologetic Task and the Postmodern Turn By Stanley J. Grenz

108 PREACHING THAT CONNECTS Preaching With the Holy Spirit (Part 2) By Craig Brian Larson

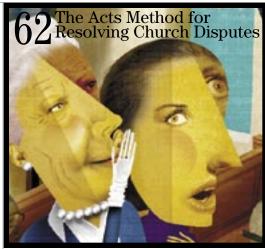
112 HISTORY IS HIS STORY The Faithfulness of Charles Simeon By William P. Farley

116 REACHING SECULAR **UNIVERSITIES** A Campus Atheist Finds What He Wants

By Rusty Wright



WHEN SHEEP SQUABBLE (MANAGING CHURCH CONFLICT, PART 1)



120 COUNSELORS CORNER Counseling Tips Every Pastor Should Know By Ruth Hetzendorfer

122 LEADERS EDGE Child Care for Believers — When Does It Ever Stop? By Roger C. Palms

124 WORSHIP IN THE CHURCH Worship and the Brain: Physical Dimensions of the Worship Wars By Joseph L. Castleberry

126 FINANCIAL CONCEPTS Seven Steps To Retiring Comfortably By Jim LaVallee

departments

128 SERMON SEEDS

- **132 BOOK REVIEWS**
- **136 NEWS AND RESOURCES**
- **141 MARKETPLACE**
- **142** WITH CHRIST
- **143** ADVERTISING INDEX

NEXT TIME IN ENRICHMENT When Sheep Squabble (Managing Church Conflict, Part 2)

The cycle of conflict, and the pastor and leadership's inability to manage conflict, has stifled churches from effectively reaching their communities. Part two of this two-part series on managing church conflict provides practical ways pastors and churches can learn conflict-management skills and use them effectively in managing conflict. Learn from Gary R. Allen, Richard L. Dresselhaus, Kenneth C. Haugk, Terry Raburn, Ken Sande, Norman Shawchuck, and others as they share insights regarding biblical conflict-management principles.

To order extra copies for your staff/volunteers or to subscribe, call 1-800-641-4310.

EXECUTIVE EDITOR Gary R. Allen MANAGING EDITOR

Rick Knoth ASSOCIATE EDITOR Richard Schoonover

ASSISTANT EDITOR Kevin Wilson

ADVERTISING/PROMOTIONS COORDINATOR Steve Lopez

OFFICE COORDINATOR Faith Hamilton

GRAPHICS/DESIGN Creative Center

CIRCULATION MANAGER Terry King

PREPARED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE EXECUTIVE PRESBYTERY

Thomas E. Trask (general superintendent); David W. Argue, C. Dan Betzer, James K. Bridges, L. John Bueno, Warren D. Bullock, Charles T. Crabtree, Charles E. Crank, Richard L. Dresselhaus, L. Alton Garrison, J. Don George, Charles E. Hackett, Nam Soo Kim, Jesse Miranda, Jr., H. Robert Rhoden, Zollie L. Smith, Jr., George O. Wood

EDITORIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Gary R. Allen, chairman; Rick Knoth, vice-chairman; Dayton A. Kingsriter; John Maempa; Arlyn Pember; Harold W. Sallee; Juleen Turnage

ADVERTISING POLICY

For information on advertising, call Steve Lopez at 417-862-2781, ext. 4097. Display rates provided upon request. Online advertising information is also available at enrichment journal.ag.org. or E-mail advertisingenrichment@ag.org

Enrichment does not endorse any advertiser or product. Claims made in an advertisement are the sole responsibility of the advertiser. *Enrichment* reserves the right to reject any advertisement that is inconsistent with the journal's objectives, editorial convictions, and Assemblies of God doctrine.

E-MAIL: YOU MAY ADDRESS ENRICHMENT AT enrichmentjournal@ag.org

OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT http://www.enrichment journal.ag.org



Member of Evangelical Press Association



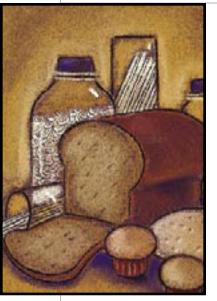
Version.

Member of International Pentecostal Press

- Association • Use of the masculine pronoun for pastor is used throughout this
- issue and refers to both genders. Unless noted, all Scriptures are from the New International

* eshorts *

FIT FOR LIFE CARB CRAZE LOSES INSANITY



USA Today recently reported that the low carb craze is losing steam. While there is no doubt the low-carb trend is here for awhile, the real question is where the business aspect of the phenomenon will settle. Fast-food restaurants continue to adjust their menus to accommodate the carb-conscious customer. Ice cream companies still promote their low-fat, low-carb brands. However, low-carb foods have declined from a 280-percent growth increase to a growth of only 20 percent annually.

The tendency toward obesity continues to rise in the

U.S. Health statistics cannot be taken lightly. But are health gurus public servants or the current pawns of a market economy whose prime concern is to keep profit margins high? In a market culture, the volatility of businesses expanding quickly and crashing even more quickly shows that trends can be co-opted by the drive for a high profit margin.

Not all that glitters is gold, and not all concern for the public good is honorable. A society driven by image-consciousness can become an easy mark for image-enhancement products and services. Eating healthy is the luxury of those who have enough to eat. Common sense, not highpriced prepared foods, will keep us healthy. First Timothy 4:8 says, "Workouts in the gymnasium are helpful, but a disciplined life in God is far more so, making you fit both today and forever" (*The Message*).

BYRON D. KLAUS, president, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary

LEADERLIFE POWER LUNCH



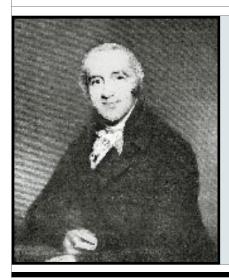
Lunch is often spent juggling work and the burrito on my desk. Then, there is the lunch meeting in which tactical planning is squeezed in between bites of low-carb grilled chicken Caesar salad. This food-for-time trade is a necessary evil. An hour-long break from work spent enjoying a leisurely mid-day meal sounds like a dream.

Lunch, however, can be a powerful tool that leaders underestimate and can be used to great effect if we are intentional. The noon meal is not just another open slot

FIELD TRIP DEVELOPING ORGANIC SPIRITUALITY

Interest in spirituality continues to rise while churches continue to plateau and decline. Why the disparity? First, an aggravating amount of nonsense masquerades under the guise of spirituality. Second, an alarming lack of genuine spiritual vitality exists in the church. Leaders recognize the problem but give precious amounts of time to mere maintenance. Without a comprehensive understanding of the subject or any means of measuring it, many grasp for programmatic solutions. But what does a person do when the 40 days are over?

Randy Walls, in an effort to find an organizing principle for authentic, biblical spirituality, identifies organic spirituality as the solution. Walls contends that the various programs and delivery systems adopted by churches to nurture spiritual development have become merely extra



HISTORY AT A GLANCE THE FAITHFULNESS OF CHARLES SIMEON

185 YEARS AGO — 1820

Charles Simeon, a cofounder with John Venn of the Church Missionary Society in London, is known for his long-standing ministry as vicar of Trinity Church, Cambridge, his promotion of Anglican missionary work in India, and his published sermons. His chief work, a commentary on the Bible entitled *Horae Homiletica*, was completed in 1820 and later presented to King William IV. (See article on Simeon, page 112.)

100 YEARS AGO - 1905

Praying John Hyde directed a convention at Sialkot, India, where people were

in our schedule, but an opportunity to take advantage of. In any given month, lunch can yield at least five powerful forms of influence if we plan well:

- 1. Accountability lunch: meeting with a partner or group regularly to ask tough questions vital to leader accountability.
- 2. Missionary lunch: spending time with unchurched people keeps missions close to our hearts and shapes our leadership toward missions.
- 3. Mentoring lunch: investing our lives in the leaders who are rising up to work with us, and eventually replace us, is one of the most rewarding parts of being a spiritual leader.
- 4. Marriage lunch: there is no substitute for enjoying time with our spouse in a setting where he or she can have our undivided attention.
- 5. Support lunch: spending time with encouraging people keeps us from going it alone, and helps us remember how to laugh.

These format suggestions are not new. But each one has a strong basis in *fellowship* (breaking bread together) and represents an intentional use of time to accomplish specific goals. Also, each of them is a minimum intrusion on other leadership priorities because they happen at lunch.

My recommendation: For the next 90 days, schedule each kind of lunch once a month. I would be surprised if you did not want to maintain this schedule.

EARL CREPS, doctor of ministry director, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary

activities in an already busy life. Organic spirituality, however, is a life-encompassing, mission-focused experience flowing through one who discerns the presence and operation of God's Spirit. Human efforts and systems cannot produce the same spirituality generated by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is active with the believer in seven activities: prayer, Bible study, fasting, worship, community, intimacy, and witness. Surveying these events through the lens of the Luke-Acts narratives and leading authors in the field of Christian spirituality, Walls seeks to create a tangible, attainable, organizing principle of the dynamic, growing spiritual life and an assessment tool that will provide descriptive understanding of its practice.

The assessment instrument offers an extensive series of questions to map organic spirituality. Both answering the questions and the resulting graphics teach and challenge the participant to pursue a deeper spiritual life. The ultimate goal is to embed the instruction in the daily practice of spirituality. To learn more about Walls' thorough research and field-tested results, contact him at: rwalls@agts.edu.

LORI O'DEA, doctor of ministry coordinator, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary

moved to prayer, convicted of sin, and baptized in the Holy Spirit. A Pentecostal revival evidenced by glossolalia and being slain in the Spirit broke out at Pandita Ramabai's Mukti Mission in India the same year.

75 YEARS AGO — 1930

Mecca-born Wallace D. Fard founded the Nation of Islam, also called the Black Muslim movement, through his establishment of a temple and university in Detroit, Michigan.

50 YEARS AGO — 1955

The Fourth Pentecostal World Conference was held in Stockholm, Sweden. Its theme was "The Pentecostal Movement: A Re-valuation." Lewi Pethrus was the host pastor and the meetings were held in a huge tent.

RENEWAL AND REFLECTION DESPERATE FOR A BREAK?

Lillv Endowment, an Indianapolisbased, private philanthropic foundation, seeks to strengthen congregations by providing opportunity for pastors to step away briefly from the persistent obligations of daily parish life and to engage in a period of renewal and reflection.

In the 2004 National Clergy Renewal Program, the Endowment anticipates awarding as many as 120 grants of up to \$45,000 each directly to congregations for the support of a renewal program for their pastor. Congregations can seek more information at: http: //www.clergyrenewal.org.

For a list of vacation resources compiled by the national Office of Ministerial Enrichment, go to: http://www.enrichmentjournal.ag. org/ or, http://www.ag.org/top/ministers/ index2.cfm

Delegates from 34 countries attended including leaders of the U.S. Assemblies of God.

25 YEARS AGO — 1980

The World Evangelization Crusade was held at Yoido Plaza in Seoul, Korea. It was the largest single meeting in Christian history with 2.7 million in attendance and 16.5 million in over-all attendance for the entire 4-day event. Thousands made pledges to support missions through prayer and finances, to dedicate their children to missions, and to become missionaries themselves.

GLENN GOHR, assistant archivist, Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center



* eshorts

EMERGING REALITIES MINISTERS AND MOVIES



Clergy roles in movies and television are usually generic and anonymous, with characters merely on screen to oversee a religious ceremony such as a funeral or wedding, according to a recent study.

In "The Ministry and the Message," a Pulpit and Pew Research Report, Joyce Smith found that the majority of Christian leaders do not even receive a name. Credits list the characters as "old priest," "young minister," or "singing nun." If not voiceless, the pastor or priest often is considered a rather innocuous but somewhat bumbling figure, according to the report.

Movie clergy roles peaked in 1993 in 6.66 percent of theatrical releases (14 films). More is not necessarily better, however. One horror film had a scene where a demon was battling a priest because he wore a clerical collar and comedies portrayed pastors as buffoons.

The chief exception cited is Robert Duvall's portrayal of a Pentecostal preacher in *The Apostle* (1997). "Few films are as fearless in their exploration of a Christian leader as a human being, warts and glory both," Smith writes. "The actor avoided a portrait of

either a pure saint or an evil sinner." Duvall, who also wrote, directed, and financed the film, included several Pentecostal preachers on screen delivering sermons and prayers.

On television, clergy are normally peripheral characters. The leading exceptions are *Amen*, an NBC comedy (1986–91) that depicted an African-American minister, and *7th Heaven*, which quickly became Warner Brother's most popular series after its 1996 debut, about a nondenominational pastor and his family.

Of the motion pictures with clergy, 78.2 percent had a male religious figure, 9.8 percent had a female leader, and 10.3 percent featured both genders, usually a priest and nun together. Men tend to be in dramas while women are usually in musical comedy roles, such as *Sister Act* (1992).

In the 1930s, religious leads often featured kindly Catholic priests portrayed by stars such as Spencer Tracy and Bing Crosby. Today, the Christian minister tends to be unidentified by denomination.

John Huston is credited with using religious figures in 13 percent of his films, the highest percentage of any director. Huston directed such pictures as *Heaven Knows*, *Mr. Allison* (1957) and *The Night of the Iguana* (1964).

JOHN W. KENNEDY, Today's Pentecostal Evangel

UTHTRAX WHAT MAKES LOVE? HEY YA. HEY YA.

When Big Boi and Usher came to the podium at the 2004 MTV awards, they talked about their faith. When one member of the duo Outkast accepted the award for Video of the Year for "Hey Ya," he called out his thanks to Jesus, "My Lord and personal Sa



Lord and personal Savior." Today's teens live in a culture

where the sacred and sexual are often blended. On one hand, Usher and other cultural icons paint images that are explicitly sexual. Yet, these same musical artists are clearly on a spiritual journey. It is a confusing message. Outkast's "Hey Ya" says:

"If what they say is 'Nothing is forever.' Then what makes, then what makes, then what makes, then what makes, then what makes love?"

It is a question many in this culture are asking. The seeker — like Usher or the unchurched teen — wants to know what love is. They live in a society that says relationships are fleeting and you better get what you can while you can. Yet the need for commitment and unconditional love remains in the heart of every person. These cultural icons and many of today's youth are searching for spiritual truth while gravitating to the shallow end of the relationship pool because they are on an uncharted quest for love.

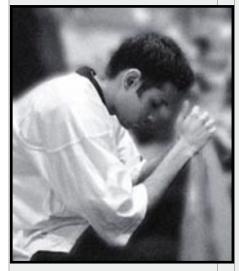
"Hey Ya" lyrics also state: "Uh, thank God for mom and dad for sticking two together 'cause we don't know how."

We can become fixated on the mixed message — it is important that we talk about it — or we can concentrate on the cry of those who say they do not know how to relate to each other or to God. Understanding this need gives us an opportunity to share Christ and the deeper meaning of love with the teens of this generation.

T. SUZANNE ELLER, Muskogee, Oklahoma

🕆 eshorts 🐇

PULPIT & PEW ONLY HALF OF PROTES-TANT PASTORS HAVE A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW



In his recently released book and a subsequent research report on worldviews, author and researcher George Barna made waves by citing statistics showing only 9 percent of all born-again adults and 7 percent of Protestants possess a biblical worldview. That information pricked people's curiosity regarding the worldviews of the nation's religious leaders, prompting Barna Research to conduct a national survey on that topic among Protestant pastors. The numbers are in — and the outcome may again shock many people.

Based on interviews with 601 senior Protestant pastors nationwide, 51 percent have a biblical worldview. Barna defined a biblical worldview as believing that absolute moral truth exists, that it is based on the Bible, and having a biblical view on six core beliefs (the accuracy of biblical teaching, the sinless nature of Jesus, the literal existence of Satan, the omnipotence and omniscience of God, salvation by grace alone, and the personal responsibility to evangelize). The researcher produced data showing that there are significant variations by denominational affiliation.

DENOMINATIONAL DISTINCTIONS

The survey of pastors included ministers from more than four-dozen denominations, each of which was represented in proportion to the number of churches each has in the U.S.

An example of the gap among churches is reflected in the outcomes related to the nation's two largest denominations, the Southern Baptist Convention and the United Methodist Church.

The Southern Baptists had the highest percentage of pastors with a biblical worldview (71 percent), while the Methodists were lowest among the seven segments evaluated (27 percent). Among the other segments examined, 57 percent of the pastors of Baptist churches (other than Southern Baptist) had a biblical worldview, as did 51 percent of nondenominational Protestant pastors, 44 percent of pastors of charismatic or Pentecostal churches, 35 percent of pastors of black churches, and 28 percent of those leading mainline congregations.

THE BARNA RESEARCH GROUP is an independent marketing research company located in southern California. For the complete report go to www.barna.org.

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE SPECKS AND BEAMS ... PROTECT YOUR EYES

Congregations are dwindling in the Catholic Church in the United States and there is a significant loss of participation in church life. Current research shows that the priest abuse scandal is the primary cause of the decline. However, there are other factors that affect the decline of the Catholic Church in the United States:

- Traditional Catholics are moving from cities to suburbs — from the Northeast and Midwest to the South and Southwest — and are not relocating
- to Catholic churches.
- One of five Catholic parishes has no priest.
- Bishops have ministry training, but lack experience handling the huge budgets of multimillion-dollar dioceses. Two large dioceses have recently declared bankruptcy.
- Bishops, who usually act autonomously and without accountability to laity, have lost the trust of the laity.
- After the abuse scandals, Catholic parishioners are saying, "We

cannot trust our priest, we cannot trust our bishop, and our parishes are closing down. We have traded certainty and tradition for uncertain times."

The crisis facing the Catholic Church is a challenge to other churches. Any church that looks at the Catholic Church and says, "That could never happen to us," should take a deep breath and ask these questions:

• Is the church itself the problem? Are its structures not conducive to transforming ministry

- in the 21st century?Is the church failing to be the
 - church? Is it more a product of the times than the visible agent of the kingdom of God?
 - When does Christianity become so morphed that it is no longer Christianity?

BYRON D. KLAUS, president, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary

THE HER BEHIND THE HYMN A LIFE OF SUFFERING AMAZED BY GRACE

"God hath not promised skies always blue, flower-strewn pathways all our lives through." Who hasn't heard of the famous poem "What God Hath Promised"? But fewer people can identify the poet, Annie Johnson Flint. Flint also wrote the timeless gospel hymn "He Giveth More Grace."

Johnson was only 3 years old when her mother died giving birth to her younger sister. She discovered that the skies of her life were often more stormy than blue. Later, her father learned he was terminally ill. Though he loved his girls, he decided to place his daughters in a foster home. His desire was for them to grow up in a stable home where God was honored. When the foster home proved dreadful, the Flint family adopted the girls. The girls loved the Flints. Even when receiving news of their father's death, they felt the security of their care and acceptance.

Johnson's love of poetry punctuated her teenage years. She aspired to be a schoolteacher. But after teaching for only a few years, she was forced to quit because of rheumatoid arthritis. Annie sought medical attention and received news that her condition would only worsen. In time, she would not be able to walk.

As she attempted to eke out a living as a published poet, her heart was broken again. Within a few months of each other, both Mom and Dad Flint died. It is no wonder her verses often deal with life's difficulties. It is clear that her celebration of God's grace was born out of firsthand experience.

Flint continued to utilize her Godgiven gift. Near the end of her life, even though she needed several pillows to sit up with the least amount of pain, she kept writing. She positioned her pen between her twisted and swollen fingers and scratched out words on the pad of human suffering that remind us today of God's available and amazing grace.



He give h more grace when the burdens grow greater;

He sendeth more strength when the labors increase.

To added affliction He addeth His mercy;

To multiplied trials, His multiplied peace.

For out of His infinite riches in Jesus,

He giveth and giveth and giveth again.

GREG ASIMAKOUPOULOS, Naperville, Illinois

WHAT IN THE WORLD? LESSONS FROM THE TRIVIA KING



A year ago Ken Jennings was an unknown software engineer from Salt Lake City, Utah. That was before the 30-year-old businessman made a name for himself (and more than \$2.5 million) on the TV game show Jeopardy. By outlasting 148 challengers and giving more than 2,700 cor-

rect responses, Jennings broke the previous record for most earnings made on a game show. Previously, Kevin Olmstead, a Michigan engineer, claimed that honor by having won \$2.18 million in 2001 on *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?* Jennings became a cultural phenomenon defending his title as Jeopardy champion in more than 74 straight games.

Viewers soon learned that Jennings was not just smart; he was wise. Jennings not only knew the correct questions to the corresponding answers, but he also knew how to play the game. In addition to matching questions with answers in a myriad of categories, he acted on the facts he knew. He usually rang in ahead of the others, which gave him the opportunity to score.

The spiritual principle is: we must act on the truth we know. According to Scripture, knowing the truth (right from wrong) without acting on it is not profitable. It is, in fact, dishonorable. Having Bible knowledge and firsthand exposure to God's faithfulness without going public with it is a poor investment of truth.

The Pharisees knew the Law but did not incorporate the principles of God's truth into their lives. James saw the same potential in Christians and cautioned them, "Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (James 1:22, NKJV). He also added, "To him that knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin" (James 4:17).

GREG ASIMAKOUPOULOS, Naperville, Illinois

SINGLE'S PERSPECTIVE MYTHS ABOUT SINGLENESS — WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE?

Single adults are lonely. Some single adults are lonely; however, the loneliest people may be those who are in a terrible marriage.

Single adults want to get married. Some single adults want to marry. The chances of finding a dedicated Christian date or mate are usually higher in the church.

Single men are irresponsible. Some are. Then again, some married men are too.

Single adults are sexually frustrated. Some adults who are single due to the death of a spouse or divorce are learning to live a celibate life.

Single adults have fewer problems than married adults. Not fewer problems, but different problems.

Single adults are afraid of making a commitment. This is a general explanation for why singles have not yet married. It is largely untrue. Many single adults postpone marriage for several valid reasons.

Single adults have more time than married adults. Single adults have to cook, pay bills, shop for groceries, and take care of children (single parents) with no spouse to help them.

Single adults are a threat to married adults. Some married adults believe this and alienate the single adult.

Single adults are not complete until they are married. The emphasis on marriage and family in most evangelical churches may cause single adults to feel like a half person at times.

Single adults have more money than married adults. There are some who do. Generally, it is untrue, though.

DENNIS FRANCK, director, Single Adult Ministries

MINISTRY TRENDS NEW COMMUNICATION METHODS

Senior pastors under age 40 are changing church services by experimenting with new communication methods in an effort to reach a postmodern audience, according to a 2004 study by Barna Research Group.

The Glendale, California-based research organization reported that baby buster pastors (those born between 1965 and 1983) are trying new preaching and teaching approaches in an effort to minister to audiences that are increasingly more seeker-sensitive and have shorter attention spans.

Compared to older pastors, busters are more likely to use drama during services (32 percent compared with 21 percent); more likely to show videos, movie clips, and DVDs (30 percent versus 21 percent); and more likely to tell stories (28 percent to 13 percent). Barna said younger clergy often believe that multimedia and experiential forms of communication are necessary to reach busters, who do not automatically accept authority figures.

Unlike most of those older than 40, buster ministers tend to ask congregants to shake hands to greet others during worship services. busters are less likely to have a choir or use an organ during worship.

The study also found that only 46 percent of buster pastors have a seminary degree, compared to 62 percent of boomers. These findings indicate that more pastors are hearing the ministry call after their college years and are plunging into ministry before finishing their religious training. In addition, large churches today often train ministers while they are serving on staff, and then release them to be senior pastors of church plants.

These trends are likely to continue as more busters move into the pulpit. The number of busters who serve as senior pastors jumped to 45,000 from 22,000 during the past two years, according to Barna. In all, there are 324,000 Protestant senior pastors.

JOHN W. KENNEDY, Today's Pentecostal Evangel

TIMEWISE HOW MUCH DOES DISORGANIZATION COST?

Disorganization can be costly to your ministry as well as to your wallet. It's not the tigers that eat us alive — it's the gnats. Until you consistently pay attention to nonurgent but important tasks, the urgent tasks will continue to multiply. Answer these questions to



find out if you need to schedule some time to get organized:

- Can you consistently find what you need within a few seconds?
- Is your "In" box constantly overflowing?
- Does your current system keep you focused and remind you of important follow-up?
- Overall, does your current system work, and do you like it?

If you answered no to any of these questions, here are the professional and personal costs to continuing business as usual:

- late payment fees
- overtime pay for staff staying late to do a rush job
- cost to reproduce or repurchase something you have but cannot find
- fees to overnight express something that should have been sent regular mail.

Harder-to-measure costs of disorganization are:

- inability to expand your ministry or workload — you can barely handle what you already have
- missed opportunities
- stress and burnout

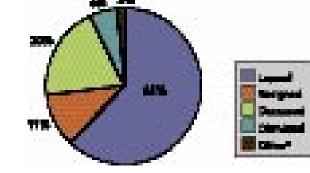
To calculate the costs of disorganization, keep a log of the costs of doing "business as usual" for one month. After a month, multiply the total by 12 to get an annual estimate of what disorganization costs you and your ministry.

FAITH HAMILTON. Excerpted and abridged from *My Organized* Life at MyOrganizedLife.com.

DID YOU KNOW? A/G U.S. MINISTER TERMINATION CATEGORIES, 2003

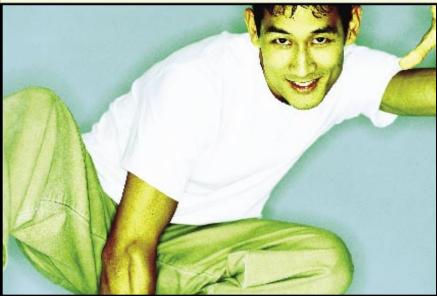
Of the 2,096 Assemblies of God ministers terminated in 2003, 119, or 6 percent, were dismissed. These 119 dismissed ministers represent 0.4% of the 32,556 total ministers in 2002.

Lapsed	1,286	61%
Resigned	234	11%
Deceased	420	20%
Dismissed	119	6%
Other*	37	2%
Total Terminations	2,096	100%



*Not renewed, inactive, or transferred to Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada

BOOMERS TO ZOOMERS HOW 20-YEAR-OLDS SEE THE WORLD



I recently asked a friend about blogging. He replied, "What's that?" I was shocked to discover this GenX adult (in his late twenties) had never heard of creating "blogs," a major art form among younger people (Visit www.xanga.com for an example.).

My friend taught me that there are subtle, but important gaps between groups of people who may look young to middle-aged people like me. For example, Jim Schmotzer reports on Beloit College's Mindset List prepared each fall to help faculty understand incoming freshmen. Here are some highlights from the class of 2007:

- "Ctrl + Alt + Del" is as basic as "ABC."
- Bert and Ernie are old enough to be their parents.
- An automatic is a weapon, not a transmission.
- There has always been a screening test for AIDS.
- Banana Republic has always been a store, not a puppet government in Latin America.

- Computers have always fit in their backpacks.
- They have never gotten excited over a telegram, a long-distance call, or a fax.
- Test tube babies are now having their own babies.
- Stores have always had scanners at the checkout.
- They have always had a PIN number.
- They have never been able to find the "return" key.
- Directory assistance has never been free.
- There has always been Lean Cuisine.
- There have never been dress codes in restaurants.
- Michael Eisner has always been in charge of Disney.
- Gas has always been unleaded.

• Rock and Roll has always been a force for social good.¹

Personally, I cannot relate to most of the items on this list, but neither can many people much younger than I am. The point is: do not oversimplify generational differences.

The remedy is to know people on a personal level, so ministry is based on wisdom and love, rather than on stereotypes. I cannot be young again, but I can love and serve younger people.

EARL CREPS, doctor of ministry director, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary

ENDNOTE

1. Source: http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/2004/003/ 15.65.html. Used with permission.

🕆 VFT UPDATE 🛠

NAME CHANGES REFLECT DESIRE FOR DIVERSITY



When New Life Community Church in Oxford, Mississippi, changed its name to Oasis Church of All Nations last year, the Assemblies of God congregation sent a message about diversity.

While the majority of the congregation is white, blacks and international college students also attend. By changing its name, the church hoped to broaden its demographic scope.

"We wanted the name to reflect the identity of the church, but also attract other people and help them feel like they belong," says Jason Cooksey, associate pastor. Minority congregations are also recasting themselves as multicultural. All Nations Assembly of God in Bismarck, North Dakota, began as an American Indian congregation called All Tribes Assembly of God. The name change 6 years ago demonstrated the church's willingness to embrace other cultures. Since then, the congregation has grown from 7 to more than 100 members and includes Germans, Scandinavians, and Filipinos.

"We realized that to be a New Testament church, we needed to be reaching out to every ethnicity," says Joel Cornelius, senior pastor.

Riverside All Nations Assembly of God, which began as a Tongan church in Riverside, California, now includes people of Mexican, Samoan, and Spanish descent, according to Pastor Mike Fohe.

"It's awesome to speak from the pulpit and see people who are all different," Fohe says.

Scott Temple, director of Intercultural Ministries for the Assemblies of God, says more than 70 Assemblies of God churches include the words "All Nations" in their titles.

"It means that everyone is welcome," Temple says. "It's taking the labels and the limits off."

CHRISTINA QUICK, staff writer, Today's Pentecostal Evangel, Springfield, Missouri.

CHURCH COOPERATION LEADS TO REVITALIZATION

The decision to close an Assemblies of God church in Red Lion, Pennsylvania, became a model for teamwork when Freedom Valley Worship Center in nearby Gettysburg sent a staff member to bring the church back to life. The staff member, Jan Workman, became senior pastor of Family Worship Center in June 2003.

"I had been praying for more preaching opportunities," says Workman, 44, who started the children's ministry at Freedom Valley, "and God didn't want this church to close."

Tom Rees, church planting director for the Pennsylvania-Delaware District, agrees. He served as interim pastor at the church for 3 months after it had dwindled to a dozen congregants.

"They needed something radical to happen," Rees says. That is why he turned to Freedom Valley Worship Center. The 12-year-old church plant with 1,100 attendees decided to take the dying church under its wing.

Today, Family Worship Center attendance is in the 40s. The church recently held a vacation Bible school that 21 unchurched children attended.

Workman says her initial goal was to change the church's reputation in the community of nearly 20,000 people. She placed a banner across the front of the church that read, "Under New Leadership."

"My heart is that in time we will be known as the church that brings healing to families," Workman says.



Gerry Stoltzfoos, senior pastor of Freedom Valley Worship Center, says, "It's time to stop concluding the answer for small dying churches is to close them."

"That church needed to stay open at any cost," Stoltzfoos says. "God wants the Red Lion community, and He wants Family Worship Center to reach it."

ISAAC OLIVAREZ is on staff at Healing Waters Family Center, Denver, Colorado.

SINTERVIEW WITH THOMAS E. TRASK 🛠



Ask the Superintendent — **MEDITATIONS ON CONFLICT** PART

hurch conflict is one of the major issues facing pastors today. Some pastors are forced to leave churches — and even the ministry — over unresolved conflict. As a former district superintendent, and now as general superintendent, Thomas E. Trask has helped pastors and churches through conflict. In part one of a two-part interview with Enrichment journal,

Superintendent Trask shares meditative insights for pastors and churches that are experiencing conflict.

WHAT ARE SOME COMMON SOURCES OF CHURCH CONFLICT?

TRASK: Conflict is often the result of a misunderstanding or misperception. Sometimes the source of conflict stems from a decision that has been made without church consensus; there has not been accountability; or there is a lack of communication with the people concerning a project. For example, the pastor sells the piano that was bought as a memorial for someone; he decides to replace the pews with chairs, but does not consult those who provided the pews; or he decides to arbitrarily remove someone from office because of an interpersonal conflict. In this last situation, we must remember that every church has a constitution and bylaws that serves as a guide for removing someone from office.

Misunderstandings can be prevented through communication. Communication is a wonderful gift. Informed people are happy people. Uninformed people become suspicious. Most conflict in the church is from a failure to communicate what is happening, why it is happening, and where the church is going.

Church finances can also become a volatile issue and create problems. Pastors ask people to support the church with their tithes and offerings. People should not be expected to tithe without accountability from the church. When people tithe, they are being good stewards of the resources God has given to them. They want to be sure what they give is being spent wisely. They have that right.

Trust is not something a pastor can demand; trust financial report to his church. is something he earns.

I do not understand why a pastor does not want to give a Church money is not the pastor's money; it no longer

belongs to those who gave it, either. It belongs to the church and was given to further the Lord's work. The pastor is responsible to keep the church informed and to ensure monies are used wisely. Any other attitude creates conflict.

From my experience as district superintendent I saw that most conflicts could be avoided if a pastor is sensitive, uses wisdom, and does not make decisions rapidly or harshly, and does not become stubborn. If a pastor makes a mistake, he needs to admit he made a mistake. There is no shame in that.

SPRING 2005 ENRICHMENT 21

HOW HAS CHURCH CONFLICT CHANGED OVER THE YEARS?

TRASK: There has not been a significant increase in church conflict. As the number of churches grows and the number of credentialed ministers grows, the number of conflicts grows proportionately. A pastor needs to be reminded that he

The intensity of church conflict has changed, though. The disposition and spirit in today's society is often brought into the

church. A minor disagreement that may have been overlooked in the past might become a major issue today. The church's disposition can be affected when an un-Christlike atmosphere is allowed in the church.

The desire of pastors to become more personally interactive with people has brought a change in the way people view pastors. In many cases, the pastoral office is depreciated because people see his humanity. Scripture shows that familiarity breeds contempt (Matthew 13:57). A pastor is human, but there must be respect for his office. If that respect is lost, the laity will treat leadership with contempt. It does not bode well for pastors when that happens.

A pastor who does not have his congregation's trust cannot lead, and he should not make major decisions until he has built that trust.

When I went to Bible school, the district superintendent taught the pastoral theology class. He said to never call your pastor by his first name — address him as Pastor, Brother, or Reverend. That form of respect is diminishing today. It comes from pastors wanting to connect with people. The desire to connect is okay, but the pastoral office is a Godgiven office. Respect for the office must never be depreciated. Those who hold the office in high regard need to be more careful how they address the pastor, and how they handle interpersonal conflict - where it goes and where it needs to stop.

HOW CAN A PASTOR LESSEN CONFLICT THROUGH HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS CONGREGATION?

TRASK: One thing a pastor can do is build trust with his people. Trust is not something a pastor can demand; trust is something he earns. Sometimes a pastor comes into a new pastorate and the first thing he does is make major changes. Here is where he runs into trouble. A new pastor has not earned the trust and respect of his congregation. Once he has earned their trust, then he can lead them. Trust is built he has our welfare in mind; he does not have his own agenda; he is not out to prove a point; he is not here to demand that we respect him; he is earning our respect and our trust; then the pastor can effectively lead them because he has earned the people's trust.

is to lead his people, not drive them.

Psalm 23:2 says, "He leadeth me beside the still waters." A pastor needs to be reminded that he is to lead his people, not drive them. A congregation will be willing to follow its pastor if he has leadership qualities his people can respect.

Sometimes a pastor tries to force his leadership before he has earned the trust of his congregation. When people respond negatively to his leadership, he may become harsh. One pastor told his congregation, "If you do not like it here you can leave."

But his members replied, "We were here before you came, and we will be here when you are gone." And they were.

How much better would it have been for that pastor and church had he built trust before he initiated major changes. He could have had a long-term pastorate and the joy and fulfillment of a productive ministry. But he had set his heels in and said, "My way or the highway." And he ended up being the one who took the highway. That is unfortunate.

Paul admonished Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:12: "Let no man despise thy youth." Paul then gave clear guidance as to what he should do -- "be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." Paul was right. He was an older, more experienced man helping a young man who was new in the ministry to navigate rough waters.

WHAT POSITIVE RESULTS CAN COME FROM CONFLICT?

TRASK: Conflict can be positive if pastors and churches have a spirit of humility and not arrogance. Good can come when pastors choose not to prove a point. Good does not come from demanding our rights or position, but from a willingness to work with others and what is best for the church and Kingdom. If we learn from these experiences, then they have served us well. The Lord brings these situations and people into our lives so we can learn. If we do not learn, we might need to go through those experiences again.

on proper decisions, attitudes, and relationships. Without those we cannot build trust. A pastor who does not have his congregation's trust cannot lead, and he should not make major decisions until he has built that trust. When the congregation says our pastor is a man of wisdom; we can trust him;

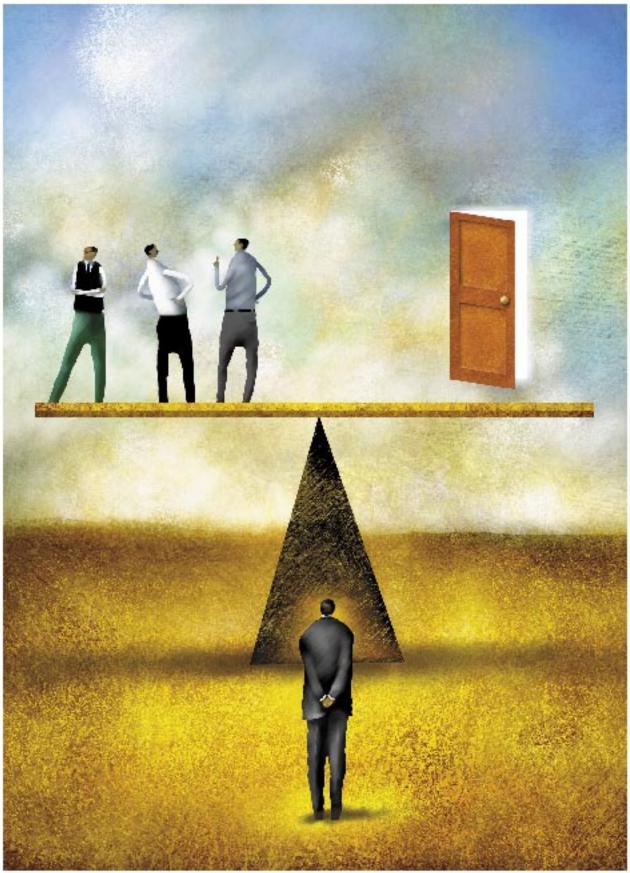


ILLUSTRATION BY: DAVE CUTLER

WHEN CAUGHT IN THE CROSS FIRE

What went wrong? That is the question we asked more than 400 former pastors — men and women who had prematurely left full-time ministry. Some left voluntarily, some were fired by their congregations, but all were no longer pastoring. Furthermore, many of them said they probably would not pastor again.

BY MICHAEL B. ROSS

Why? That is what we at The Pastors Institute wanted to know, so we asked. We used questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups. Why did these trained and gifted ministers, who were committed to a lifetime of pastoral ministry, leave the pulpit? No single answer stood out, and some of the answers were what we expected: burnout, lack of spousal support, and educational loan indebtedness. I immediately assumed the blame for the behavior of the disgruntled board member. Later I learned his conduct that evening was the continuation of a pattern he had begun long before I had become his pastor.

My initial reaction, though, was to take the steps necessary to resign. I had really done it this time. I decided to contact my district superintendent, mass-produce and distribute my

A new pastor can also become disillusioned when he realizes that the church is not heaven, everyone does not get along, and conflict is a part of most congregations' ethos.

resume, and inform my wife that we would soon be leaving.

Some of the congregation's leaders came by my office later that week and told me that I should confront the hostile board member. "Someone needs

We encountered some surprises though. We discovered that most of these pastors had not planned to leave full-time ministry. "It just happened. We did not see it coming," we were told again and again. We wondered how they could have been unaware that they might exit their pastorate when most of those questioned mentioned multiple and escalating flash points — tension-filled incidences where their values clashed with the expectations of their congregations.

The biggest surprise, however, came from the former pastors' willingness to reflect truthfully on their pastoral experiences. After skipping across surface issues and no longer feeling the need to blame someone else, most participants in our focus groups seemed willing to trace their journeys to find honest answers.

The surprise? What went wrong was not in their last church; it was in their first church. Early in their vocations patterns had been established that led to their exiting pastoral ministry. In their words: "It finally caught up with me."

FLIGHT OR FIGHT?

Many times a pastor establishes patterns and develops skills in his first church that enable him to sustain a successful ministry. In his first church he learns to be a leader with a vision that leads to congregational health and effectiveness. It is also where a pastor learns to cope with the realities of congregational life. But a new pastor can also become disillusioned when he realizes that the church is not heaven, everyone does not get along, and conflict is a part of most congregations' ethos.

In my first pastorate I was conducting a monthly board meeting when one of the members became angry at the board's discussion and decisions and announced he was resigning from the board and leaving the church. He exited the meeting and slammed the door behind him.

Another board member approached me after the meeting and calmly said: "Oh, you have done it this time, Pastor." to stop him," I was told. "Your predecessors would not. Maybe you should. We will stand behind you."

Thus, in my first church I began to see conflict as a flight or fight issue. I could either leave, or I could confront the troublemaker. I chose to leave. In fact, the pattern I formed as a young pastor followed me in other churches.

Years later the flight solution I learned in my first church finally resulted in my leaving full-time ministry. I never lacked opportunities to go to other churches, but it was easier to move than to maintain the struggle necessary for a congregation to define its mission. Even though I had successfully pastored one church for 9 1/2 years, I left that church because of the conflict resulting from growth and the need to relocate.

During this time I never took a conflict-resolution course, even though I recognized I was repeating the same behavior — only the location and the name on the church were different. Somehow I felt I did not need counseling or more training. Finally, I resigned from my last pastorate — tired and disconcerted.

It is unfortunate that I never asked for help. In my thinking, only pastors who were weak and incompetent asked for help. It is even sadder because there were many people to whom I could have turned: my district superintendent, a seasoned pastor in my own denomination, or even an area pastor of another denomination. Had I consulted someone, I might have learned that accepting a call to pastor another church was not always the best solution.

Other pastors choose to fight. They publicly and privately confront the people and issues they believe hinder the church's progress. They begin to maneuver people and situations to force their resignation or create an opportunity for those who would fit better in another congregation to peacefully change churches.

A friend of mine was recently asked by his deacon board to resign. He has been pastoring this denominational church for more than 8 years. Tension was wrecking the church and hurting his family. He wanted to know what he should do.

Before he was asked to resign, we met often. I listened and sometimes repeated back to him what I thought he was saying. I felt he was unaware of his anger and his confrontational responses to the congregation's lay leaders. Within a few months a little spat became a full-blown war that quickly became unmanageable, and he was asked to leave. He had chosen to fight and nobody won.

Both options (flight or fight) produce similar results. The flight response leads to a pastor moving on to another congregation. In the fight response, confrontationists are often asked to leave. If not, they soon tire of the battle and seek shelter and rest in another church. Either way, nothing is resolved.

Occasions arise when it is best to leave a church and move on to another pastorate. However, situations may also arise that need to be confronted, even if the short-term impact seems damaging. It is the destructive flight-or-fight cycle that needs to be broken.

Many pastors make a common error. Studies show that the average tenure of pastors is less than 4 years. A fresh start in a new church may seem appealing and renewing for an embattled pastor. He may believe that in a new pastorate the past can be written off and the future will be bright. But what will he do when he experiences conflict in his new pastorate?

It may not be a fresh start for the congregation as well. Short tenures by pastors prevent a congregation from fully realizing its identity and mission. A pastoral change every 3 or 4 years does not give a church the time it needs to focus on its mission. The flight-or-fight approach to conflict tends to keep a church stagnant and ineffective. Also, the departure of its pastor may only provide the congregation a temporary reprieve from the issues that divide it. Electing a new pastor may seem to begin a new era of peace and unity, but this is an illusion. The dynamics creating the congregation's struggle to accomplish its mission have not been resolved. Something, perhaps even something insignificant, can trigger a battle, and the cycle continues all over again.

CONFLICT AND ITS VALUE TO THE CHURCH

Conflict resolution has a third option other than flight or fight. To run from conflict or to confront those causing conflict assumes that conflict is wrong and unnatural. Either response buys into the belief that, if possible, conflict should be slain when it shows its ugly head. I wish I had known in my first pastorate that I could do more than accept another church or confront the perceived troublemaker. The man who stormed out of the meeting may have been on to something. Maybe he had a point worth hearing. Perhaps there were issues I did not see. Could it be that conflict is a friend of the church, not a foe? Could it be that more damage is done when we choose to ignore conflict? The third option, then, is to embrace conflict and welcome it into the rank and file of church membership. Some former pastors would still be leading congregations today if they had, at the first signs of conflict, said, "Come on in. You are welcome here."

One thing is certain — I was too inexperienced and onesided in my perception of my role as pastor to know how to resolve conflict. My understanding of conflict was much too limited — me versus them (my way or the highway). I wish I had known then what I know now about conflict in the church.

Out of my experiences, I organized The Pastors Institute. This institute helps pastors develop effective conflict-management skills. Stories from former pastors and survey results from the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence Inventory have underscored the importance of ministerial relationships. These relationships provide support, accountability, and instruction in managing conflict in the church. (To become a part of this survey, visit http://www.spei.org/.)

My son is several months into his first pastorate. He is fresh out of seminary and pastoring a small

When church members cannot find a better way, they often give birth to their search for lasting values by creating tension in the congregation.

congregation. I asked him recently if he enjoyed pastoring. He said he loved worship, preaching, and the opportunities for pastoral care.

"But," he added, "how do I handle disagreements in the church? We are having serious discussions in our board meetings about things that do not seem important to me. I do not feel I am ready for this aspect of ministry."

I had flashbacks as we continued the conversation. I relived the slamming of a door and a woman's suggestion that it was entirely my fault. I remembered my decision to move to a new pastorate that I hoped would be more peaceful. I thought of the hundreds of men and women who told me they were no longer pastoring because of conflict in the church. They had suffered and bore the scars while taking a stand for the good of the church. They were disillusioned, skeptical, and suspicious of church members. I prayed as my son continued bemoaning what he was discovering about the church and himself. The church has flaws, and he was unprepared or at least unaware of what do to. "Why can't people get along?" he asked. "I think I would enjoy ministry a lot more if they did."

As he talked, I realized he was struggling with more than his lack of conflict-resolution skills. He was battling with idealism — a hope that the church was an Eden of peace and unity. I was honored that he had chosen to follow in my footsteps and accept God's call into pastoral ministry. Yet, I realized I had not taught him about the dynamics of conflict and its potential benefits to a church.

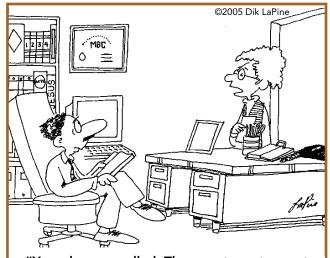
WHAT EVERY PASTOR SHOULD KNOW ABOUT CONFLICT

Many former pastors wish they could talk to the church about the mistakes they made that contributed to their leaving fulltime ministry. Many also feel isolated from the mainstream of the church. They wish they had a forum to teach what they learned the hard way.

Most of what they would say concerns conflict — the conflict they did not survive. The flight-or-fight cycle did not serve them well in the long run. So, I will speak for many of them and tell you what they believe every pastor should know about conflict.

Conflict is like fire. It often burns, but it also gives light

Conflict can be damaging. It can result in anger, revenge, and schisms in the church. It can seem superficial at times. Some congregations have fought over the color of carpet. This type of conflict produces heat.



"Your deacons called. They want you to meet with them tonight at 9 down at the abandoned warehouse. They said you were to come alone."

Conflict can also give light. Conflict is the *great revelator*. It shows the unobvious and the significant. It brings to the surface the issues intrinsic to effective ministry: worldviews, values, and missional development.

Most people I know, both churched and unchurched, are seeking to connect with something unexplainable. It may be a reaction to living in an age of logic and reason. But whatever the cause, there remains a widespread hunger to touch and be touched by the mysteries of God. Many believe their significance comes from outside themselves and their community.

Congregational conflict may indicate that adherents are searching for meaning and function within the kingdom of God. When church members cannot find a better way, they often give birth to their search for lasting values by creating tension in the congregation. If our goal is simply to avoid conflict, the resulting darkness may hinder the congregation's search to know God.

Do not take it personally

Many attacks directed at the pastor are not about the pastor at all. A member may see his pastor as a safe person toward whom he can direct the frustrations he may be feeling about a job or family crises.

I had been Daryl's pastor for 3 years. He had always been one of my strong supporters and close friends. One evening as we rode home from a church softball game, he became vicious. His anger was apparent as he challenged my pastoral abilities and questioned my love for the church.

There was some truth to what he was saying, and I took it personally. I was stunned to hear his attacks and to sense his anger. I was surprised by his feelings toward me and my leadership. I listened, but I was angry. After I dropped him off at his house and continued home alone, in my mind I let him have it.

His wife came by later that week and apologized. She told me that Daryl was losing their life savings in a business that was no longer profitable. They were considering bankruptcy.

I then realized that Daryl was misdirecting his frustrations toward me. He had no one else he could vent to except me. I knew, for his sake, I would never tell him what I had rehearsed in the car after I dropped him off. What I had said alone would not be repeated to anyone.

Was transferring his frustrations over career failures toward me fair? No. I was not to blame for his business failure. But I represented God to him. In his mind, the faithful God I proclaimed had failed him. He said to me what he probably believed he could not say directly to God.

Many former pastors realize too late that they took the attacks of others too personally. They could not get past the injustice of it, and they defended themselves and maybe even retaliated. I am not advocating that pastors should be whipping posts. I do believe, however, that pastors should be aware that what seems to be a personal attack may not be personal at all. Many church members have not learned how to express their frustrations or do not feel they have a sounding board other than their pastor — the one who makes visible the invisible God.

It is not about the music

In 2001, Faith Communities Today released the findings of the most inclusive survey of local religious groups ever undertaken. (To view the entire report, go to http: //www.fact.hartsem.edu/.) Sponsored by Hartford Institute for Religion Research, the study shows that 75 percent of congregations had experienced some level of conflict in the last 5 years. The research also indicates that the degree of conflict was in direct proportion to the amount of change in worship over the same 5 years.

One could quickly assume that worship style is the hot button causing much of the tension in congregations. The Pastors Institute has interviewed many former pastors who have indicated that worship styles were the focal point of the conflict that led to their leaving pastoral ministry. Many defended their desire to change to a more contemporary style of worship. "We just wanted to reach the unchurched and the young," they noted.

FACT makes clear, however, that music and worship styles may simply be the catalyst that triggers the conflict. The greater problem, according to the study, is the unwillingness of congregational leaders to deal openly with conflict. Eighty percent of congregations that consider themselves to be spiritually vital were able to deal openly with conflict. By contrast, the congregations that are least able to manage conflict are not as likely to be vital.

Any issue, whether it is worship style, music, sermon length, or a building project, can become a distraction from what is more significant — openness and authenticity in the church. Many former pastors have expressed regret that they did not spend more time and effort to create an atmosphere that allowed and encouraged church members to struggle with the congregation's culture and mission.

When a congregation has no impetus to fulfill its calling and feels no significance in the kingdom of God, it is more likely to become embroiled in conflict about trivial matters.

THE CORRELATION BETWEEN CHURCH CONFLICT AND LONELY PASTORS

The Pastors Institute uses two tools to gather most of its information. Our former pastors questionnaire is a feedback tool that allows those who have prematurely exited pastoral ministry to express what they feel went wrong.

The other tool, the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence Inventory, is a tested and highly reliable inventory that measures the hallmarks of effective pastoring. The SPEI is for the benefit of those who are credentialed and are presently active in local church ministry. It is designed to help denominational leaders better plan and provide resources that are appropriate to their pastors' needs.

Even though the two tools target different groups, they reveal a common finding: lonely pastors experience more congregational conflict. (See sidebar "Sustaining Pastoral Excellence Inventory Summary.") Former pastors who indicated they felt unsupported while pastoring also listed conflict as one of the major reasons they left the pastorate. Likewise, SPEI results show that pastors who feel disconnected from family and friends are more likely to feel unprepared to resolve conflict in their congregations.

The SPEI is uncovering that loneliness is one of the most

SUSTAINING PASTORAL EXCELLENCE INVENTORY SUMMARY

The Sustaining Pastoral Excellence Inventory (see www.spei.org) was completed by 697 Church of God (Anderson) pastors and associate pastors serving churches in the United States. All respondents were either licensed or ordained.

Of the 697 respondents, 145 (21 percent) indicated it was difficult for them to resolve conflict within their congregation. On the other hand 430 (62 percent) indicated it was not difficult. The others were unsure. (See question #31.)

The following results were indicated in response to these five questions that measure connectedness:

•77 percent of the 145 indicated they have close friends; 83 percent of the 430 indicated they have close friends. (See question #3.)

•40 percent of the 145 indicated they feel isolated; 26 percent of the 430 indicated they feel isolated. (See question #8.)

•72 percent of the 145 indicated it is acceptable for them to have close friends in the congregation; 80 percent of the 430 indicated it is acceptable for them to have close friends in the congregation. (See question #17.)

•43 percent of the 145 indicated it is easy for them to confide in other people; 54 percent of the 430 indicated it is easy for them to confide in other people. (See question #21.)

•74 percent of the 145 indicated they have someone to whom they can go to for guidance; 80 percent of the 430 indicated they have someone to whom they can go for guidance. (See question #38.)

While the differences may not seem overwhelming, they are consistent. Pastors who have difficulty resolving conflict also are less connected and open.

MICHAEL B. ROSS, Anderson, Indiana

critical issues of 21st-century pastoring. Pastors indicate that they find it difficult to confide in anyone about their self-perceived weaknesses and mistakes. In other words, they feel they have no one to turn to for guidance in personal or family issues.

Pastors who feel disconnected and unable to open up are more likely to mismanage conflict in the church. Without

Conflict, managed with care and honesty, can result in a pastor's sense of fulfillment as well as motivating a congregation to fulfill its mission.

objective sounding boards, pastors can lose sight of the issues and fail to accurately assess their own involvement in causing tension in the church. Disconnected pastors are not only without the support they need, but also lack the objective feedback critical to managing and resolving congregational conflict.

CONFLICT: THE KEY TO GROWTH

Conflict in the church is nothing new. The New Testament writers openly discussed conflict because they had learned that tension was often God's way of directing them into effective evangelism and discipleship.

Managing conflict is more than keeping people happy and the church peaceful. Churches that learn to incorporate conflict into the development of the congregation are more likely to discover and implement biblical values.

Had the Early Church refused to acknowledge and address conflict, it may have remained a small Jewish sect. The desire of the Early Church to experience peace and unity was often overrun by tension-causing situations. (See the article "The Acts Method for Resolving Church Disputes," page 62.)

First, there was the conversion of some Samaritans. Philip, fleeing persecution, went to a Samaritan city and proclaimed Christ. Many in the city responded to Philip's miracles and believed the message he preached.

When Christians in Jerusalem were told that Samaritans had accepted Christ, they learned something new. Christianity had broken out of the Jewish ranks.

Next was Saul's conversion. He was an educated man and the ringleader of those who resisted Christianity. He plotted against the early believers, desiring to see them imprisoned and even killed.

A light and voice from heaven changed him. Saul was transformed into a synagogue preacher who began announcing Jesus as the Son of God.

The Jerusalem Church did not immediately welcome Saul,

though they would later consider him an apostle. Many believers looked on him with suspicion. They were afraid of him and assumed he was pretending to follow Christ only to gain access to their ranks. It was a ploy, they feared, that would lead to their deaths. The tension grew.

Shortly after Paul's conversion Luke recorded Peter's visit to Cornelius, a Gentile. Peter proclaimed that God did not

> have favorites and that the crucified Christ had been raised from the dead for all people.

While he was still speaking, Cornelius, his family, and close friends were baptized in the Holy Spirit. Onlookers who had traveled with Peter to Cornelius' house were astonished that even Gentiles were being born into the Kingdom.

The conversions of the Samaritans, Saul, and the Gentiles created tension in the Early Church. Not everyone agreed on the proper response — some were too suspicious; others were biased and threatened by what was happening.

In each case, however, the Church responded with grace and godliness. Church leaders mentored believers, a former enemy was forgiven and enlisted, and converts were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. The Church had found its identity and was well on its way to becoming a worldwide movement.

Much could have gone wrong and caused the Church to remain small and ingrown. They could have chosen to ignore the significant issues of openness and inclusion. They could have withered in their fears and prejudices, but they did not.

The Early Church preached the gospel to all nations and grew because they allowed conflict to be their friend. They understood that the tension of church life was the catalyst that would motivate them to fulfill the Great Commission.

The same is true for you and your church. Ministry has no shortcuts. It requires struggle and authenticity. Conflict, managed with care and honesty, can result in a pastor's sense of fulfillment as well as motivating a congregation to fulfill its mission. The result may be healthier pastors and more dynamic churches.

Conflict allows a church to adjust its worldview and more clearly focus on Christ's call to be His people. Conflict can strengthen a congregation and mature it into a model of Christ's coming kingdom.



MICHAEL B. ROSS, D.Min., Anderson, Indiana, is founder of The Pastors Institute.

STAYING WHEN THE

As a young pastor who had recently graduated from Bible college, I pastored a congregation of about 20 people. Almost immediately I found myself embroiled in conflict. I felt much of this conflict was senseless and debilitating to anything I wanted to accomplish in the church.

Through this experience I learned that conflict is a normal part of human behavior. I also realized that if I was going to help the churches I pastored, I needed to learn how to stay cool when the heat is on and manage conflict well.

BY NORMAN SHAWCHUCK

ILLUSTRATION BY: MATTHEW ARCHAMBAULT

CONFLICT DEFINED

To manage conflict, pastors must first understand the nature of conflict. Conflict occurs when two or more people try to occupy the same space at the same time. Conflict in the church develops when two or more people vie for leadership positions or contend for their personal goals and objectives. As people begin to collide with each other, they feel their goals, positions, or objectives are being threatened. The conflict that erupts is a protective reaction. When people are challenged and their psychological identity is threatened, their feelings and emotions can become stronger than thought or reason.

CAUSES OF CONFLICT

Conflict is a normal part of human relationships, even in the church. The New Testament shows that Paul, Peter, Barnabas, and even Jesus had conflict with people — even with other Christians. Understanding the source of conflict, however, will not only help minimize conflict, but will help pastors prevent and manage it as well.

Interpersonal relationships

Some conflict unique to the church stems from the fact the church is a volunteer organization. In volunteer organizations most people believe they own the organization. This can be positive. If people in a volunteer organization do not feel ownership, the organization will not be effective. Conflict erupts, though, when one or two people or a particular group believe they should be in charge. A hotbed for trouble exists when 25 or 100 people feel they own the programs and personnel of the church.

People care deeply about their church. They also care deeply about their personal goals and opinions. But people may not care as deeply about the same issues or programs. At

Conflict in religious organizations can be brutal when **opposing sides both** claim that God is on their side.

times people may have valid positions concerning different issues. Conflict can occur when the pastor and other church leadership, such as the church board, have strongly held but differing opinions. Conflict may also occur when the goals and values of senior adults differ from the goals and values of younger congregational members.

Another factor that can intensify conflict is what I call an overlay of God. When I believe or cause you to believe that God has told me how or what I should do in the church, then God has also told me how you should behave. This creates an unusual kind of conflict where a God-dimension is introduced. Conflict in religious organizations can be brutal when opposing sides both claim God is on their side. When this happens, people often question each other's motives and spirituality. It is also difficult to deal with conflict when various people claim, "God told me."

Personality issues

Christians are human. When people are converted, they do not automatically shed their predisposition, upbringing, or personality traits. When they bring these into the church, it creates conflict. Sometimes a person's upbringing causes him to have dysfunctional predispositions and personality traits.

Another source of church conflict is the fact the church is a haven for disenfranchised, broken people who may not function well in society. People who do not function well in society often migrate to volunteer organizations because they believe the volunteer organization will care for them. It is one thing to work alongside people who are emotionally healthy, but it is another thing to work with people who are emotionally unhealthy. How do we structure our programs and our goals when we are working with people who can sap hours of our time and energy? In a straight-line organization — a nonvolunteer organization — they fire them; the church cannot do that. It is important, then, that pastors be trained to understand volunteer organizations.

The pastor cannot be and is not intended to be a therapist. But many people come to the church with needs that require a therapeutic structure or approach. For that reason, people who are preparing for pastoral ministry need training in sociology and psychology. Pastors should not be psychologists, but they need some training in human behavior to know their limitations. When a pastor is dealing with this kind of person, he needs to be able to say, "I think it's beyond my limits and

> my training." The pastor must then have the courage to refer this person to a qualified Christian therapist or counselor.

Most pastors are highly reticent to refer a mar-

ginal or dysfunctional member to someone else for treatment. But if these people do not receive adequate help, they take hours of time away from the church staff.

Unclear goals and visions

When there is no vision, people perish. When there is no vision, the church will lose its way. A vision represents the goals a church has for developing its future. A church's vision comes from its values and mission and is often influenced by traditions and boundaries.

Many pastors and board members have difficulty clarifying goals and leading a congregation toward a good, worthwhile vision. Unclear goals and an unclear vision only bring a congregation grief. The important questions are: Are these the right goals? Is this the right vision? These are big and sometimes difficult questions to answer.

Problems in organizational structure

Without structure there is chaos. Too much structure, however, is a straight jacket on the organization. Organizations must have structure, but within the structure accommodation must be made for creativity and entrepreneurship. Because churches are volunteer organizations, they need to accept people who are on the edges and may not be as aligned as pastors might want them to be.

To lessen organizational conflict, each church ministry needs job descriptions and clear guidelines for people who want to become involved. If the church and its ministries do not provide guidelines, people may create opportunities that are not orientated to the church's vision and goals.

Pastoral issues

Sometimes conflict arises because a pastor and the congregation have different views of the pastor's role. Pastors often place unrealistic expectations on themselves. At other times, the congregation might expect its pastor to perform duties he feels should be done by members of the congregation.

Conflict can also arise over the pastor's leadership style. People in the congregation believe the pastor is the source of conflict because of his perceived lack of leadership or his wrong direction in leadership.

One of the most predictable times of conflict is the transition between pastors. This is a stressful time for a church. Anytime there is a pastoral change it is wise to pay close attention not only to the pastor as he is leaving, but also to what might be occurring within the congregation. If the leaving pastor is passing through spiritual or physical disruptions or depression, it can be worse.

RESPONDING TO CONFLICT

Where two or three come together in Jesus' name ... there will eventually be conflict.

A church is as susceptible to conflict as any other human organization. No matter how much you and others in your church want to serve God and advance His kingdom, all of you are still affected by the Fall, which means you will inevitably experience conflict.

Conflict in the church can take many forms. Low-key gossip and slander can slowly poison an entire congregation. Unresolved tensions between pastors, elders, and deacons can destroy cooperation and rob a church of effective leadership. Prolonged family conflicts can lead to rebellious children or bitter divorce. Deadlocks on church committees can cripple needed ministries. Disputes between members who do business with one another can lead to consuming lawsuits.

Any time a conflict between two people in a church is not properly resolved, it can grow to infect an entire congregation. Such conflicts are often more intense and destructive than those in secular organizations. Whenever people take positions based on religious beliefs, they often succumb to self-righteousness and begin to judge others' motives. Thinking that they alone are defending biblical truth, they label all opposing views as unbiblical, sinful, and even "of the enemy."

Of course, some disputes in the church involve nonnegotiable issues of doctrine or obedience to the Word of God. But all too often Christians foolishly magnify minor theological differences or matters of personal conviction or expediency, which can unnecessarily polarize an entire congregation.

This black-and-white thinking tends to magnify differences, harden positions, and make confession, compromise, and reconciliation extremely difficult. Thus, church conflicts often lead to win-lose results, with the more powerful side proudly coming out on top and the weaker side being forced into a resentful submission or angry exit.

Such conduct in the church clashes head-on with Jesus' passionate prayer to the Father for His church: "May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (John 17:23). Instead of letting all people know we are Jesus' disciples by our love for one another (John 13:35), we give the world more and more excuses to label Christians as hypocrites and dismiss our contradictory witness to a God of grace, mercy, and forgiveness.

You cannot prevent conflict in the church. In fact, God may bring conflict to the corporate life of the church to encourage change and spur spiritual growth. How Christians respond to this conflict, however, determines whether it has been prevented from developing further or allowed to progress into destructive sin. Conflicts will come. Will your church be prepared to respond?

Preparing the church for conflict means being deliberate about the preparation process — truly cultivating a "Culture of PeaceTM" in advance of the conflict. Romans 14:19 says, "Let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another" (NKJV). The church must pursue conflict preparation as it would any other ministry of the church. This involves teaching God's Word, providing training in reconciliation skills and principles, and, most important, making a commitment to "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3).

Whether you are a senior pastor or a new member, there are many ways to help your church learn how to respond to conflict biblically, and thus improve its evangelistic witness and ability to minister. Read the Culture of PeaceTM section (http://www.hispeace.org/html/church_COP.htm) for specific ideas and steps to transform your church into a peacemaking church.

KEN SANDE, © Peacemaker® Ministries. Used by permission. http://www.HisPeace.org



Two extremes exist concerning pastoral issues: If a pastor has served well for many years in a congregation and is replaced, displaced, or retires, it is like a father has been taken away. During these times of transition, people often cannot distinguish what is happening in the organization from what is happening in their lives.

Second, if a pastor is going through a serious spiritual or physical disruption or through depression, the church will also be affected. A pastor may have been hurt in a previous congregation and brings that hurt with him to his next pastorate. Church board members can also carry hurt from what a previous pastor has done. Pastors and board members need to be aware of these issues so they can provide healing and support for each other.

Different seasons of the church

Pastors need to understand that certain times of the year



1. EASTER

Easter is usually the busiest time of year — even outdoing Christmas. At Easter there are more programs and worship services. Attendance is up, which creates more stress and tension. This stress can cause underlying conflicts to surface.

2. STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGNS/BUDGET TIME

An every-member canvas for financial pledges can uncover deeper problems in the church, and the problems may have little to do with money. A canvas provides a channel to voice dissatisfaction and complaints on any topic.

3. ADDITION OF NEW STAFF

The most frequent type of conflict in congregations is between the pastor and key leaders in the church. This is particularly true when a new pastoral staff member is called. New staff means not only changes in relationships and procedures, but also changes in directions and priorities.

4. CHANGE IN LEADERSHIP STYLE

When a congregation hires a pastor whose leadership style differs from his predecessor, conflict is a near certainty. Changes in leadership provide opportunities for natural conflict due to the change.

5. PASTOR'S VACATION

Festering problems will often surface while the pastor is away. A dissatisfied group will gather to discuss problems in the pastor's absence, one group begins squabbling with and different events are more prone to conflict than others. Christmas and Easter are often times of conflict. (See sidebar "Ten Most Predictable Times of Conflict.")

Environmental stressors

A church is not isolated from the problems or stressful situations in the community. If the community is in a period of economic downturn or community disaster, the congregation will also be affected.

Numerical decline or growth

During a numerical decline the congregation may try to maintain the structure it had during its prime years. Members may put significant energy into maintaining this structure instead of finding a new structure for its present condition. A church may not have enough qualified people to fill ministry positions, so

another, or the people subconsciously panic because they unduly depend on the pastor.

6. CHANGES IN PASTOR'S FAMILY

Changes in a pastor's family, even for the better, will cause conflict in the congregation. These changes can create jealousy and envy issues. The church may feel neglected.

7. INTRODUCTION OF BABY BOOMERS INTO THE CHURCH

Conflict can occur between younger baby boomers and the older/traditional generation. This is also possible between generation X and the baby boomers. Conflict comes from the difference in lifestyles.

8. THE COMPLETION OF A NEW BUILDING

"After the completion of a new building clergy were vulnerable to firing" (Alban Institute and Pastoral Firings). The change in leadership focus (from building to programs) is the primary issue.

9. LOSS OF MEMBERSHIP

As resources (money or people) dwindle, tension increases. When the pain becomes great, there is a felt need to blame someone. The blame is usually pinned on a person or group, even though the people they blame may have done little if anything to contribute to the difficulty.

10. INCREASE IN CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

As congregations grow, their personalities change. Some people like the old personality better than the new personality.

Adapted from *Mastering Conflict and Controversy* by Edward G. Dobson, Speed B. Leas, and Marshall Shelley ©1992 by Christianity Today International. Used by permission. www.ctlibrary.com unqualified or poorly trained people are placed in positions of leadership. When they fail at their tasks, the situation worsens and people become even more frustrated and discouraged.

Numerical growth is as stressful to a congregation as numerical decline. Numerical growth should cause celebration, but significant numerical growth causes some people to lose their influence. New people bring new and different ideas, and old members find themselves smothered by them.

During numerical growth, the pastor often gives a great deal of attention to the new people. While previous members of the church may celebrate because of the growth, they may also feel neglected.

When a church is experiencing numerical growth, the pastor needs to pay attention to the existing congregation. I have heard people say, "Since my church grew larger it doesn't seem the same." What they are expressing is a need.

The organization of the church must change to accommodate new growth. Different accountability structures and new programs to accommodate new people must also be in place.

CURING CONFLICT

The New Testament contains several examples of conflict. Jesus sometimes evaded conflict. On other occasions He stood His ground. The question is not whether we should have conflict or not. We need to determine when and how to have conflict.

Conflict that is not managed can wear people and congregations down and bring effective ministry to a halt. While some people fight to the end, others will leave the church.

A careful study of conflict management in the lives of Jesus and Paul shows that conflict, when it is handled well, can and will produce important and powerful results. Pastors, then, need to learn how to manage conflict.

Confide in others

A great tragedy in Protestant churches is pastors embroiled in conflict who are too embarrassed to ask for help because they feel it will make them appear inept. The reason pastors experience this embarrassment is because the church has failed to provide training where pastors can talk these matters through.

Pastors in smaller churches are often isolated and may not have anyone with whom they can readily talk. When they cannot handle conflict, they may begin to think they have a personality or spiritual flaw. They believe their inability to resolve conflict reveals their weakness.

Pastors may also be too embarrassed to go to their board for help, but they need to be able to confide in their board. Pastors must have opportunities to talk these things through with church leadership.

One way for pastors to learn how to manage conflict is to talk with another minister or district superintendent. Together they can think through conflict and plan how to deal with it.

Study conflict-management resources

Pastors often circumvent conflict until they can no longer avoid it. One of the main reasons they do this is their lack of formal training or conflict-management skills. However, few leaders realize what conflict avoidance eventually leads to.

Pastors and church leaders will benefit by studying conflict management and family systems theory (dysfunction). Today there are several resources to help pastors learn how to manage conflict. My three-volume workbook *How To Manage Conflict in the Church* can help pastors discover their own conflict-management style and learn how to effectively manage conflict. (See sidebar "Conflict Management Resources.")

Develop a biblical theology of conflict

Every church has a theology that guides its beliefs and conduct. The same is true of every Christian. We develop a biblical theology through the prayerful process of studying God's Word to discern how God thinks and acts in a given situation. Many times, though, our theologies are based on our

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT RESOURCES

Shawchuck, Norman, and Gustave Rath. 1994. *Benchmarks of Quality in the Church: 21 Ways To Continuously Improve the Content of Your Ministry*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Shawchuck, Norman. 1983. *How To Manage Conflict in the Church*. Leith, North Dakota: Spiritual Growth Resources, 1-800-359-7363).

1981. How To Be a More Effective Church Leader: A Special Edition for Pastors and Other Church Leaders. Leith, North Dakota: Spiritual Growth Resources, 1-800-359-7363.

1986. *How To Conduct a Spiritual Life Retreat*. Nashville: Upper Room Books.

1981. *Let My People Go.* Leith, North Dakota: Spiritual Growth Resources, 1-800-359-7363.

Shawchuck, Norman, and Roger Heuser. 1998. *Leading the Congregation: Caring for Yourself While Serving Others*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

1996. *Managing the Congregation: Building Effective Systems To Serve People*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Shawchuck, Norman, and Alvin J. Lindgren. 1977. Management for Your Church: How To Realize Your Church's Potential Through a Systems Approach. Leith, North Dakota: Spiritual Growth Resources, 1-800-359-7363.

Shawchuck, Norman, and Lloyd M. Perry. 1986. *Revitalizing the Twentieth-Century Church*. Chicago: Moody Publishers.

assumptions about God rather than on biblical truth. And these assumptions influence our thinking and actions.

If our theology of conflict is based on our assumption of how we think God views conflict, this theology will influence the way we think and act during conflict. Even spiritually mature Christians can have an incorrect theology of conflict.

I have discovered that Christians have three common misconceptions concerning conflict:

All conflict is bad. Since these people believe conflict is bad, it must be stopped. However, not all conflict is bad. In fact, conflict may at times be good for a congregation. Conflict gets our attention. Normal and healthy conflict can help a congregation clarify its goals. It can also be the catalyst for making necessary changes.

Churches, though, need to understand the difference between healthy and unhealthy conflict. Churches sometimes mistakenly identify healthy conflict as sinful. They may overlook the sinful aspects of conflict and fail to see it as destructive.

Conflict that is ignored or poorly managed often results in sinful behavior. This includes acting in ways that destroy others. When conflict spills over into character assassination and/or psychological or physical destruction, it is sin. Whenever love is lost to hatred, gentleness to maliciousness, truthfulness to dishonesty, and humility to selfishness, it is sin. When this happens, relationships are broken and the mission of the church is blurred and ministry is disrupted.

It is also disturbing when church members who are divided in a conflict try to bring in other people who are not involved in the dispute. This behavior needs to be watched carefully.

Conflict is the result of spiritual immaturity. Some people feel the church should never have conflict. They believe that if everyone were spiritual there would be no conflict. If Christians prayed more, conflict would not exist. But did Paul, Peter, Barnabas, and others have conflict because they were not spiritual enough, or because they were outside of God's will? If the great men and women of the Early Church experienced conflict, we can expect conflict in our churches.

Conflict is the pastor's fault. People often hold the pastor in high esteem. They think he should be able to solve any problem. When he is unable to solve conflict-related issues, someone in the church is blamed, and it is often the pastor.

One of the best ways to prevent, lessen, or help people deal with conflict is to develop a biblical theology of conflict. By studying different conflicts in the Bible, pastors and churches can identify principles to help them develop this biblical understanding. (Volume 1, Section 1, in *How To Manage Conflict in the Church*, by Norman Shawchuck, provides a basic study in developing a biblical theology of conflict management.)

Teach conflict management to your church

Conflict management skills are valuable to the whole church,

but especially to the church board. Pastors and churches in Protestant congregations are often reluctant to train those elected to the board. In fact, most board members have no training or orientation in conflict management. When conflict happens, board members do not have the skills to solve the conflict. If pastors will train leaders, teachers, and board members before conflict happens, the results are far more conducive to growth.

Pastors can utilize a variety of ways to teach their boards and congregations about conflict. Many resources on conflict management are designed to help pastors teach new board members. A pastor in a neighboring church might be available to teach conflict management. District superintendents can provide training in conflict management. Many times the district superintendent comes when the church is overcome with conflict. That is not the best opportunity to teach conflict management.

Handle hidden conflict

Sometimes a pastor comes to a church where interpersonal conflict or church conflict has been hidden and simmering for years. Pastors who find themselves in this situation should not preach about the conflict. That is a temptation. Some people in the church may not know there is conflict. Others may know the conflict is there but are not interested in it. They attend church because they want to worship. They want to be in God's house. We need to find these people and, if necessary, encourage them not to get involved in the conflict.

If a pastor is new to a church and hears rumors about conflict or senses there is conflict in the church, he should be careful not to address the issue immediately. On the other hand, he should not ignore it but should prayerfully wait for



"Well, you heard wrong, Sir. The church is not full of hypocrites. We only run about a fourth of our seating capacity."

THE ISSUE IS NOT THE ISSUE: THE REAL CAUSES OF CONGREGATIONAL CONFLICT

PRESUMED CAUSES OF CONFLICT

Often pastors and members will identify the cause of the pastor-focused conflict as being one or more of the following issues relating to the pastor.

1. Preaching: Inadequate preparation, delivery, and content.

2. Personal preferences: Unsatisfactory grooming,

attire, home, car, vacations, spending, hobbies, friends, and politics.

3. Personal qualities: A perceived lack of warmth, enthusiasm, listening skills, accessibility; poor relations with both sexes, youth, people of all ages, families, and singles.

4. Family members: Unacceptable manners that include:

- How the spouse dresses, drives, acts, looks, prays, sings, and cooks.
- How the children behave in school, church, home, and community.
- Anything the church disapproves that are miscellaneous, nonchurch related items.

5. Congregational administration: A perceived lack in any area of the church including the budget, the time the pastor spends in the office, in visitation, in committees, and in community involvement.

6. Pastoral availability: A perceived neglect of pastoral

duties, adult education, visiting the sick, choir, fund raising, retreats, Sunday School curriculum, teacher training, officiating at ceremonies, and recruiting new members.
7. Theological attitudes: Dislikes can be expressed concerning pastoral prayers, the order of service, selected texts, music, and traditions that are not observed.¹

However, these are just *surface* or what researchers call *content* issues. They are not the real issues. Rather, they are indications of greater anxiety beneath the surface of what is expressed in the content of their concerns.

THE REAL CAUSES OF CONFLICT

Rabbi Edwin Friedman in his landmark book on church conflict, *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue*, researched the real reasons for conflict. Below are some of what he considers to be the real or essential causes of congregational conflict.²

1. Lay overcommitment

"The intensity with which some laypeople become invested in their religious institutions makes the church ... a prime arena for the displacement of important, unresolved family issues."³ **2. Change in homeostasis** (*status quo*): Examples include changes in the...

PASTOR'S* PERSONAL LIFE	PASTOR'S* PROFESSIONAL LIFE	CONGREGATION'S LIFE	CHURCH'S PROFESSIONAL LEADERS
A birth, death, illness, or hospitalization in the pastor's family.	The pastor attains a professional advancement.	The pastor enacts new ideas that introduce a power shift from the few to a new group.	The pastor hires or fires a key professional staff member (especially the administrative secretary).
The pastor has an extended family crisis, such as aging parent.	The pastor earns a new academic degree.	The pastor introduces racial diversity to the congregation.	There is a rise or elimina- tion of interpersonal conflict between two key leaders.
There is a divorce, affair, or sexual misconduct in the pastor's family.	The pastor receives new responsibilities in the extended faith system.	There is a change in the aver- age age of the congregation's constituency.	There are changes in the church hierarchy or extended church system.
There are changes in the family of the spiritual leader.	The pastor is granted tenure (prolonged stay).	There is a change in the church's organizational philosophy.	There is a death or retirement of a founder, builder, or charismatic organizer.
The pastor has new, renewed, or prolonged community involvement.	The pastor receives a contract extension.		There is a restructuring of the hierarchy, a recentralizing, a creating of more or fewer subgroupings.
Or any other recent change which may trigger individual responses			
*MAY INCLUDE OTHER PROFESSIONAL STAFF OR SIGNIFICANT LAY LEADERS.			

3. Life-cycle events: Great stress occurs before, during, and after various rites of passage including marriage, divorce, and funerals.⁴

4. Pastoral over-functioning and

burnout:5 Pastors who try to do it all and become responsible when others do not carry out their responsibilities are prone to burn out (See "Checklist for Self-Differentiation" from article number 49, "Are You Too Involved With Your Church?" by Barb Schmitz at http://www.ministryhealth.net/ index.html.) The most dangerous issue about over-functioning, asserts Friedman, is that if over-functioning is a manifestation of anxiety, it will serve to promote it as well."6 5. Triangulation: In its most basic form, triangulation refers to the proliferation of indirect communication between two principal parties by involving an additional third party to carry the messages between the two principal parties.

THEN WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

When looking at causes for conflict, one must look beyond the presented or content issues. As Friedman wrote, "It is almost never the issue per se that is destructive but, rather, the overall homeostatic conditions that give to any issue its destructive potential."⁷

Before any intervention, be sure to remember this axiom: "The issue is not the issue." Look, listen, observe, listen, learn, listen, inquire, listen, investigate, listen, and then listen before defining and addressing the issue or problem. Remember, "The issue is not the issue."

THOMAS F. FISCHER, M.Div., M.S.A., director, Ministry Health: Support and Resources for Pastors and Christian Ministry Professionals, Rochester Hills, Michigan. For more articles on church conflict, visit Ministry Health website: http://www.ministryhealth.net.

ENDNOTES

 E. Friedman, Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue (New York: Guilford Press, 1985), 206.
 Compare Friedman, 202 ff.
 Ibid., 198.
 Ibid., 214.
 Ibid., 210 ff.

- 6. Ibid., 211.
- 7. Ibid., 204.

the right opportunity to address it. A period of time exists when a new pastor can get by with almost anything. I encourage pastors who are new in congregations to take advantage of this time. During visitation the pastor needs to get to know his people. He can then identify those who are causing conflict and bring them together to talk about the conflict. If a pastor puts this off too long, that moment is lost.

Discover the true source of conflict

Sometimes what appears on the surface to be the source of conflict is not the true source at all; it is only a symptom of the real problem. The source is almost always below the surface. (See sidebar "The Issue Is Not the Issue: The Real Causes of Congregational Conflict.")

Pastors need to find the real source and deal with it. The real source can be found by using our God-given senses. What do I see? What do I hear? What are my senses telling me? These allow us to tune in to the dynamics of the congregation even though we have no hard data. A church that is in trouble has a feeling about it. The Holy Spirit can also reveal things to us that provide insight into conflict. The Holy Spirit will use our five senses. He also provides the gifts of the Spirit, including the discerning of the Spirit.

Conflict management skills are valuable to the whole church, but especially to the church board.

Discernment is important. It was certainly important to Paul. Even though in charismatic and Pentecostal circles discernment has been abused, we still need to allow the Holy Spirit and His discernment in our lives.

CONCLUSION

Pastors should be encouraged to not be afraid of conflict. Conflict can be frightening but pastors need not to run from it.

Unfortunately, most conflict management is introduced after the conflict has become full blown. If pastors will become trained in conflict management before conflict occurs and then allow people opportunity to express themselves before a conflict occurs, conflict can become a friend, rather than a foe. And the undeniable result of church conflict management is that the church functions better.

NOTE: In the summer 2005 issue of *Enrichment*, I will explain various conflict-management styles, how pastors can determine their default style, and how to effectively manage conflict.



NORMAN SHAWCHUCK, Ph.D., Leith, North Dakota, is the president of Shawchuck & Associates, Ltd., and specializes in management consulting to faith-based organizations. He serves as adjunct professor in seminaries across North America. He has authored more than 20 books on spirituality, conflict management, and church leadership. He can be reached at: nshawchuck@shawchuck.com.

* THEME INTERVIEW *

INTERVIEW WITH MARCUS BAKKE, DENNIS RIVERA, AND ZOLLIE SMITH, JR.



MARCUS BAKKE



DENNIS RIVERA



ZOLLIE SMITH, JR.

IN THE SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS: LESSONS ON MANAGING CONFLICT

S everal years ago Ben Kaufman, Ed.D., founder and director of Leadership Development Ministries, a coaching and leadership training ministry, surveyed 189 Assemblies of God district leaders concerning pastoral derailment. In this survey, he discovered that the No.1 derailment factor for ministers is their inability to resolve conflict. To gain a further understanding concerning this important issue, Richard L. Schoonover, Enrichment journal associate editor, interviewed three district leaders concerning pastors and conflict management.

Zollie Smith, Jr., has pastored for 25 years. He is president of the National Black Fellowship of the Assemblies of God and is the ethnic representative on the Executive Presbytery.

Dennis Rivera has pastored 24 years and is superintendent for the Central Latin American District.

Marcus Bakke has pastored for 30 years. He has also served in district leadership for 32 years and as North Dakota District superintendent for 19 of those years.

These leaders share practical advice concerning conflict management from a leadership perspective for pastors and churches.

FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF DISTRICT LEADERSHIP, WHY IS CONFLICT THE TOP ISSUE BETWEEN PASTORS AND CHURCHES?

SMITH: Conflict is at the forefront because most pastors and churches are not trained to deal with conflict. As a result, pastors lack the confidence they need in dealing with conflict. In many cases, pastors do not want to deal with conflict because they want to love everyone and see everyone love each other. They want unity and harmonious relationships. When conflict occurs, it takes pastors away from this focus.

RIVERA: Conflict is unavoidable. In the church people are building relationships. It is inevitable that churches will have relationship issues.

As a church moves forward it experiences change. Motion always causes friction, and most pastors are not equipped to handle the friction that results from change.

Pastors do not go into ministry expecting conflict. When they experience conflict they may feel they are a failure. Conflict, however, is part of the growth process and learning to resolve conflict is part of the maturing process of ministers and churches.

The most negative thing I see happening in churches is when churches are unable to resolve conflict and it reaches a point where the church splits or a pastor has to leave. In those cases there is usually a lot of hurt. Most pastors want to be peacemakers. But through conflict pastors and churches can learn to forgive and to love. If churches can learn to address conflict, if pastors can learn to be secure handling conflict, then they will be successful in handling conflict.

BAKKE: Conflict can also be inherited. Some pastors come from dysfunctional homes. They are excited about ministry, but lack a role model for conflict management. Also, when we lead people to Christ and they join our churches, they bring

their struggles. We are not pastoring perfect people. Conflict happens, and pastors without good role models may be unprepared to handle conflict.



accountable to the congregation or church leadership — it is inevitable that he will have conflict.

SMITH: The lack of management skills, people skills, and defined goals and objectives also combines to create conflict. Most pastors know what they want to do, but lack the skills to bring it about. When that happens, conflict is inevitable. Pastors need to understand that conflict resolution is crucial.

Many pastors do not have a clear understanding of conflict resolution. A pastor must ask himself, *How do I resolve*

Conflict is at the forefront because most pastors and churches are not trained to deal with conflict.—Smith

Another reason we have conflict results from frustrated people

who leave a church and join another one. When people who are unable to resolve conflict are placed in leadership positions or on church boards, this also causes problems.

IN WHAT WAYS MIGHT PASTORS BE THE SOURCE OF CONFLICT?

BAKKE: Pastors often enter ministry with lofty ideas, but without a complete understanding of their pastoral role. Some assume a dictatorial leadership style. They believe they have a right to be the authority. While they do have authority, assuming that right before they earn it causes problems. Then, if they fail to understand their people, this becomes a further source of conflict.

Pastors also make the mistake addressing conflict from the pulpit. Conflict can escalate if a pastor decides to solve a problem publicly. Using the pulpit to correct a private matter will lead to disaster.

RIVERA: I agree. Many pastors misunderstand their role and become frustrated. They expect the church to serve them or fulfill their vision. But the pastor needs to serve the church by equipping it to fulfill its vision and ministry. Pastors complain that their people are not getting behind their vision. These pastors have unrealistic expectations of their people. Pastors need to learn that their people are not there to help them; pastors are there to help their people. Pastors with unrealistic expectations create conflict with their people.

Pastors who have unresolved conflicts will carry them into their ministry. Pastors who do their own thing, or are poor communicators, will create conflict. If a pastor does not practice good accountability — voluntarily making himself *conflict rather than instigate it or participate in it?* A pastor must view himself as a mediator of conflict and strive to find a win-win solution.

IN WHAT WAYS MIGHT THE CHURCH BE THE SOURCE OF CONFLICT?

RIVERA: When a church has experienced a former pastor's failure — whether it is moral failure or pastoral incompetence — it tends to mistrust future pastors. This mistrust results in an unwillingness to follow new pastoral leadership. If a pastor moves too quickly or does not allow the church opportunity to heal from past hurts, it creates conflict.

Sometimes pastors try to take hurting churches in a new direction before they establish a trust relationship. Conflict soon develops. The pastor is usually capable and doing a good job; he just did not understand where the church had been and did not allow healing to take place.

BAKKE: A church can lose its trust in its pastor. In fact, one bad experience with a pastor will carry them for many years. Building trust takes time, love, and patience on the pastor's part. It takes 3-to-5 years to rebuild trust once it is broken, and most pastors leave during this time frame. Because trust is not rebuilt, the cycle starts over again with a new pastor. Pastors need the stick-to-itiveness to stay with it. Hurting churches do not need a new pastor every 3 or 4 years. That only perpetuates the problem.

SMITH: Church conflict, especially between pastors and churches, is relationship based. Relationships need to be established through solid communication. A pastor can use

his leadership as his biggest asset to communicate what he is planning to do. Get feedback. Listen to individuals before presenting it to the congregation as a whole. That will keep people absolutely has to. He takes a dictatorial role because he is afraid the board will limit him.

Many times a pastor has not communicated well with his



Conflict is part of the growth process and learning to resolve conflict is part of the maturing process of ministers and churches.—Rivera

in the congregation. There needs to be a lot of communication. Good healthy communication builds solid relationships.

WHAT CAUSES AN ADVERSARIAL RELATIONSHIP TO DEVELOP BETWEEN PASTORS AND THEIR BOARDS?

SMITH: Adversarial relationships between the pastor and the board can result from territorialism. In many instances, the pastor's job description is not well defined. The pastor sees himself as president and CEO. He is in charge and everyone is to stay in step with him. That aggressive attitude creates conflict.

Some board members feel the church was built on their backs and by their support. No one is going to tell them what to do. If that attitude exists, it will create conflict.

Many problems that arise between board members and the pastor originate in the mapping out of territory. The pastor needs to know what authority he has and what authority he does not have. Pastors and boards must map out the territorial concept of authority.

RIVERA: Pastors often do not define their role and the role

of the board clearly so everyone understands what their job entails.

When a church board has been wounded by a pastor's failure, from that point on the church board wants to protect the church from the pastor. This hinders their team relationship and creates a relationship based on checks and balances. That makes progress with a church board a difficult process. Sometimes the pastor has poor leadership

skills. He does not have a defined vision or has no vision at all. Then both the board and the pastor do not know where they are going.

Church boards have wounded some pastors. As a result, pastors have poor communication with their boards. In some churches the pastor does not hold board meetings unless he



board. He has not been patient in building relationships. As a result, there is no teamwork. Churches do not move forward because of mistrust and poor relationships between the pastor and board.

BAKKE: Board members need to understand from where their pastor has come. Often pastors are in the grief process and are not accepting things too well. They are already frustrated and are trying to lead a church. Soon the church gets frustrated. In one church a new pastor came and in 3 weeks he had created conflict. This is the result of a failure to communicate and have common goals. The pastor must ask, *What does the church need, and how can I help it get there without alienating the people who are there to help me*?

HOW CAN PASTORS DEVELOP HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS AND BUILD TRUST WITH THEIR CHURCH BOARDS?

BAKKE: Pastors can build trust and healthy relationships by being candid and honest, and by loving the people who serve on their church boards. Pastors sometimes develop adversarial attitudes though their experiences. I have listened to ministers discuss church boards. When they finished, I wondered how they were able to pastor. If we view board members as people whom God has called, then we must respect them. If we give them honest respect and are candid about our vision, if we are willing to listen when they do not agree and patiently

Conflict can escalate if a pastor decides to solve a problem publicly.—Bakke

wait for them to understand what we are doing, then we will build trust and healthy relationships.

RIVERA: A pastor must view his board as people called by God to help him facilitate the ministry and vision of the church. They are not adversaries, but friends. A pastor also

44 ENRICHMENT SPRING 2005

needs to practice servant leadership. He needs to consider these men and women as his peers. He needs to validate who they are and their opinions, and learn to listen to them.

Listening is the key to a good relationship with a board. Some boards express frustration because they feel they have no value, and the pastor will do what he wants anyway. They believe their opinions do not matter. They feel like yes men. Pastors can demoralize their board by making them feel they are not needed or valued.

A pastor must define the role of his board and communicate well with them, appreciate them, and learn to practice accountability. Accountability that is demanded causes God's people well. That is why I earned my master's degree in business management of nonprofit organizations, with an emphasis on the church. Pastors need to develop managerial and leadership skills. They need to learn to lead people through common goals.

Today, there is an abundance of material on managing conflict that pastors can use to develop the needed skills if they desire. Knowledge is power. Pastors need to take advantage of these materials.

Richard Hammar has many helpful resources including his book, *Pastor*, *Church and Law*, and his bimonthly *Church Law and Tax Report*. He has also coauthored a book with



Today, there is an abundance of material on managing conflict that pastors can use to develop the needed skills if they desire.—Smith James Coble, *Risk Management Handbook for Churches and Schools.* This is a selfdirected audit program that contains a wealth of information. It helps a church make assessments and identify its strengths, weaknesses,

friction. Church boards appreciate accountability that is voluntary — especially in finances and major decisionmaking — because they feel comfortable serving with a pastor who is accountable.

Practicing confidentiality is important. Nothing is more wounding to a board or a pastor than when confidential things are discussed and then shared outside of a board meeting.

When there are issues with the board, I confront privately. Some issues can be resolved if we deal with them on a personal level first. If issues cannot be dealt with on a personal level, then maybe they need to be dealt with in a board meeting. If pastors will treat their boards as friends and fellow servants, then they will probably have less conflict.

SMITH: The pastor and church board must develop a harmonious relationship that is established on the common bond of building the kingdom of God. If we keep God as the center in everything we do in the church, we will have commonality. Unity comes from our relationship with God through Jesus Christ. The essence of the church is that different languages, different kindreds, and different tongues are one by the Spirit of God. That oneness has to filter down to the grass roots, the local church, and the boards. What makes us one is that we are doing the King's business.

WHAT CAN PASTORS DO TO BETTER HANDLE CONFLICT AND INCREASE THEIR CONFLICT-MANAGEMENT SKILLS?

SMITH: To be successful, pastors need to learn to manage

and areas of challenge. It helps prevent church problems by identifying potential conflict areas. It is an excellent program. I highly recommend that every church use it.

BAKKE: I would recommend attending a conflict management seminar. Beyond that, a pastor must also learn how to manage himself. If he cannot manage himself, he is going to have problems in the church. I dealt with a person who has a degree in small-group conflict management, yet he was a poor example because he did not know how to handle himself.

RIVERA: Not all conflict is negative. Often we want to avoid conflict at all costs, but that is impossible. I heard a minister say that one key to his ministry is that he is at peace with himself. It is difficult to transmit peace to others if we do not have peace in our own heart. Pastors can become insecure because so much is demanded of them. Everyone has expectations of the pastor, and he is trying to fulfill these expectations. But a pastor cannot please everyone. A pastor needs to know what he should not do, and say, "I cannot do that. I need to be at peace with myself." Then learn how to love the people God has placed under his ministry, serve them, and know why he is there. Jesus said the Good Shepherd lays His life down for His sheep. At times pastors must give up their rights and their wants to serve their people and, in doing so, model servanthood.

Pastors can better handle conflict if they focus on the problem and not on the people who may be the cause of the conflict. At times, pastors try to make villains out of everyone who creates conflict, and they make it their goal to get rid of such persons. But pastors need to focus on resolving the problem.

Pastors must learn to listen. Listening is a skill that needs to be learned and practiced. Conflict grows when people are frustrated in relationships and no one seems to listen.

WHAT ISSUES OF ETHNICITY ARE IMPORTANT WITH RESPECT TO CHURCH CONFLICT?

BAKKE: Communities have their own culture and ethnic groups. In North Dakota, for example, we have German-Russian and Scandinavian cultures. They both operate differently. One group deals with issues up front, speaks it loudly and strongly once or twice, and then takes action. Others listen and are careful and gentle. If a pastor does not understand these dynamics, he can make enemies out of either group. He can assume things that are not true.

Hispanic culture, people usually walk out offended. Once hurts take place, there can be many divisions. I have seen Hispanic churches divide over broken relationships.

The best thing pastors can do is to understand their people. Most problems in conflict resolution usually stem from misunderstandings. A misunderstanding may originate from language — the words that are used — cultural backgrounds, or from not knowing what is acceptable or unacceptable, and even misjudging another's spirituality. By being more understanding, pastors will not misjudge their people, the people will not misjudge their pastors, and there will be better relationships.

SMITH: The big challenge I see in African-American churches is the issue of authority. The African-American culture has depended on the church and its leaders over the centuries to



When a church has experienced a former pastor's failure — whether it is moral failure or pastoral incompetence — it tends to mistrust future pastors.—Rivera

Understanding different cultures is important in ministry. I took a sociology course and studied the ethnic backgrounds of our people. I found it is easy to relate to different cultures when I understood them. If pastors love their people, they will try to understand them.

RIVERA: The Hispanic culture is in transition. We now have many first-generation churches that are primarily immigrants from Mexico and Central or South America. They come to the United States with a different worldview, culture, and language from Hispanic Americans. For years our Hispanic American churches were mostly bilingual, and many have transitioned to speaking English.

Latin American people have not grown up with the same kind of church government we have in our Pentecostal churches. Many come from Catholic backgrounds where they do not vote on a pastor because they never voted on a priest. Our immigrant churches do not have as many internal conflicts because they do not question what the pastor does. They are supportive of pastors and love their pastors.

Hispanics are more relational and family-oriented. It is difficult for Hispanics to disagree and separate the issue from the individuals involved. A disgruntled member may leave a church offended because he could not separate the issue from the person. In some cultures you can have disagreement, work it out, and everyone leaves as friends. But in the establish the African-American society in this country. This puts pressure on the African-American pastor. He is not only required to be a minister of the gospel but is also seen as the overseer of social, academic, and financial issues. In other words, he is doctor, lawyer, and judge.

In the past, the African-American pastor led the only legal institution where African-Americans could freely assemble. This has perpetuated itself up to the present time and is evidenced in the apostolic leadership style that many African-American pastors portray. Even if a pastor wants to have a different leadership style, the people push him into their mold. They want the pastor to be a leader and an icon. This is dangerous in many ways and could be manipulative and selfserving. This has caused the downfall of some African-American pastors. An African-American pastor needs to understand this culture that extends back hundreds of years before they step into ministry.

In the last 10 years, there has been a resurgence of this apostolic leadership style that is again bringing people under the bondage of authority. Some African-American leaders promote the problem by preaching on pastoral authority. They reinforce this idea because people are looking for that kind of leadership. This generates conflict between parishioners because they compete for a relationship with the pastor hoping to obtain positions of power. It seems to give self-worth and fulfillment to individuals if they can say, "I met with the pastor, and he said this and he did that." Those who aspire to usurp authority over others frequently use the pastor's name.

Also, the way parishioners view the pastor is unique. Conflict between pastors and parishioners usually leads to splits because of loyalists who support the pastor regardless of what he mayor may not do. When an African-American pastor falls from grace, we think he would be expelled or removed, but his supporters rally around him. He is the pastor. They lift him back up. They continue to follow him as their leader, even to

the point of pulling out of the organizations they are in.

Pastors need to know who they are and to whom they belong. We are God's servants. We cannot think more highly of ourselves than we ought. This struggle for power and authority is not pleasing to God. Many African-American pastors start out with good intentions, but when people roll out the red carpet, start exalt-

ing names, start giving gifts, before long they forget that God's gifts are not something they aspire to on their own. A pastor must realize that humility is success from a Christian perspective. We cannot forget that we are who we are by the grace of God. We must focus on the common bond of love given to us by God through His Son and be empowered by the Holy Spirit to keep the Kingdom in focus. We must do all we can to bring honor and glory to God, and not to ourselves.

WHAT ADVICE CONCERNING CHURCH CONFLICT WOULD YOU GIVE A PASTOR READY TO TAKE HIS FIRST PASTORATE?

RIVERA: A pastor can expect conflict. If he will learn how to resolve conflict, trust God for wisdom to deal with people from many age levels and cultural backgrounds, and build strong relationships with his congregation, he can overcome conflict.



It takes 3-to-5 years to rebuild trust once it is broken, and most pastors leave during this time frame.—Bakke

I would also encourage him to be patient and to go slow in the beginning of his pastorate. Do not change things. Get to know the people first. Let the people hear your heart. Get to know them, and let them get to know you. The best way for them to know you is to hear you preach. Preach the Word to them. Love them. Serve them. Pray for them. If a new minister is patient in the beginning and learns who the people are, he can build a foundation for a long-term pastorate.

BAKKE: Most of our churches are in small, rural areas, so I approach it from that aspect. First, love the people. If you do not love people, you are in the wrong business. Second, learn to listen to them. This takes time. Go to where they work. Watch what they do and learn their culture. Learn how they

A pastor must ask himself, How do I resolve conflict rather than instigate it or participate in it?—Smith

think and how they react to different leadership styles. Then lead them using the four Ls: Love, Learn, Listen, and Lead.

In rural areas, pastors and churches often feel they have run out of people to evangelize. This attitude can create problems and become a source of conflict. People without vision and meaningful activity begin to find fault with each other. A wise pastor will reach out and win people to Christ. Pastors must keep focused on growing the kingdom of God. Rural pastors in small churches can make it happen. If a pastor will get out, start knocking on doors, lead his people, and touch people's lives, he can reduce conflict.

SMITH:Young pastors must love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. God has given pastors the responsibility of representing Him before His people. A pastor's relationship with God needs to be strong. He must love his family. Then, he must love the people he shepherds. The word *shepherd*

involves compassionate oversight. It is oversight that does not lord it over people, or misuse people, but presents them pure to God.

Write out your vision, goals, and objectives clearly so you can share them with your people. Let them hear your heartbeat, and let them know where you are going. Do not be changing here and there,

but be consistent. Have them pray for God's vision and help them become a part of fulfilling it. Doing this builds unity and people understand where the church is going and how it is getting there.



Put together a membership packet — a book that contains your organizational layout. Include in it your vision and philosophy for the church, the names of officers, the church's constitution and bylaws, and policies and procedures, et al. We include a conflict resolution policy. All new members When I work with churches in conflict, I help them understand that conflict comes when grief is not properly managed. The grief process affects both pastors and churches. If the grief of a pastoral disappointment is not resolved quickly, whether it is grief experienced by the church or the pastor, it



Churches do not move forward because of mistrust and poor relationships between the pastor and board.—Rivera

can be carried over to succeeding relationships. In one church I explained the grief process — denial, anger, withdrawal, and frustration — and where I thought the church was in the process. One church member said, "Now I understand why we have had trouble here for 20 years. Now we can deal with it."

When the grief process is explained, it is amazing how people relax and begin to resolve conflict.

get a handbook so they can clearly understand the organization, structure, and policies of the church. If not, you may leave them in the dark, and they will not be able to respond readily. But if you give it to them in advance and share your heart with them, you will build good relationships, and good relationships always result in success.

IN WHAT WAYS DOES THE INABILITY TO RESOLVE CONFLICT AFFECT A PASTOR'S PRESENT AND FUTURE PASTORATES AND ADVERSELY AFFECT THE CHURCH?

RIVERA: When conflict is not resolved, it can bring a church to a standstill. It is important for pastors to learn to resolve conflict in a positive way. When conflict remains in a church, relationships are broken, and the team begins to fall apart. A church cannot be divided and accomplish its mission. Pastoral ministry will suffer or succeed based on one's ability to resolve conflict.

If a pastor leaves a church in conflict and goes to another one, the conflict will follow him and affect his future pastorate. It will affect him emotionally, and it may affect whether or not a church will receive him.

BAKKE: Some churches have quit growing and plateaued because of unresolved conflict. Others have lost their vision.

I tell new pastors to call their superintendent before the problem becomes bad and the whole church is infuriated. Keep in contact with your spiritual advisors and leaders. The pastors who call me before potential problems start seldom have any trouble. When a person is an authoritarian, arrogance comes. A good book on this subject is *The Subtle Power of Spiritual Abuse* by David Johnson and Jeff Van-Vonderen. Pastors who frequently say God told me can abuse people spiritually. When we say, "God told me," something, we appear to make ourselves a great authority. This can upset people and place our focus on the wrong things. If God tells you, people will know it. You will not have to tell them.

method for resolving it. We need to follow this passage. When a pastor follows Matthew 18 and members leave, there is no reason for the pastor to feel he has failed or that he should be ostracized because of a church split. When you do what the Bible says to do, you have done it God's way.

SMITH: Matthew 18:15-17 addresses conflict and provides the

IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD?

RIVERA: A good Scripture for the church is Genesis 45:24. When Joseph sent his brothers to get their father, his advice was, "Don't quarrel on the way!" We need to make it our goal to avoid conflict. Obviously, conflict will happen, but we can decide beforehand not to quarrel.

Also, when churches reach an impasse and cannot resolve an issue, it would be beneficial to bring in an unbiased outside group. Peacemaker® Ministries in Billings, Montana, is a ministry that helps mediate conflicts. They can be found at http://www.hispeace.org.

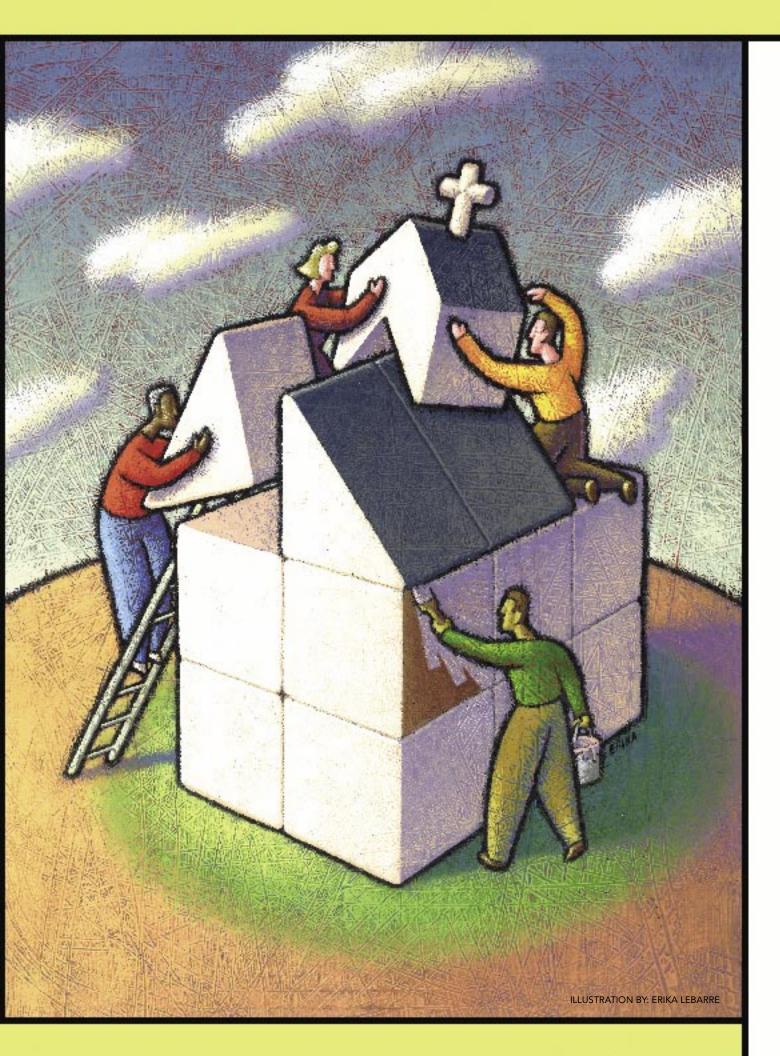
BAKKE: I have a four-page questionnaire I use when I am called to intervene in conflict situations. When there is conflict, most people want someone to listen to them. They are frustrated and want to speak their opinion. I have them fill out this confidential questionnaire and mail it to me. I read them before I visit the church. At the church I listen to everyone who wants to talk. I give them 30 minutes to discuss with me what they have written. This can take a while, so occasionally several people from the district go with me. We analyze the situation and then meet with the pastor and tell him what appears to be going on. Then, we discuss the results with the board. Last, we meet with the church. In most cases, this procedure is helpful.



Love, integrity, and mutual trust among believers are necessary to facilitate a healthy process of conflict resolution.

MINIMIZING DISSONANCE BY BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES OF FAITH

Church conflict can be minimized and better managed by building strong, healthy communities of faith. When courageous leaders and loving people learn to overcome the pain of destructive conflict and experience the tremendous joy of productive interaction, they will eagerly work to sustain a healthy church. Conflict management, then, becomes an intentional, ongoing interpersonal and organizational process instead of a periodic reaction to conflicting events.



THE SEVERITY OF CHURCH CONFLICT

Many churches are immobilized by destructive conflict that destroys personal relationships and paralyzes the ministries of the church. Such conflict is contrary to God's Word that instructs: "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (Romans 12:18). However, when properly managed, conflict can have positive effects on interpersonal relations and church ministries.

Destructive conflict can be a major hindrance in evangelizing unchurched people and assimilating them into the church. H.B. London Jr., vice president of ministry outreach/pastoral ministries for Focus on the Family, suggests, "One of the reasons people use as an excuse not to attend a local church is the level of contention they observe. Pastors and Christian leaders must learn the art of managing conflict to successful resolution if the church is to survive."¹

The unchurched do not expect the church to be free from conflict. However, it is not unreasonable for them to expect the church to resolve conflict with the same biblical principles the church proclaims.

Many churches are in a post-conflict stage. They are not presently in conflict, but their ministries are immobilized. Conflict will either renew or kill struggling churches.² The church's condition is critical, and the urgency of its mission demands resolution.

SPIRITUAL AND PERSONAL INTERACTION WITHIN THE CHURCH

After the family, the community of faith is the primary environment in which God intended human beings to demonstrate the dynamics of their transformed lives. In the community of faith, spiritual, intellectual, and emotional experiences are lived out in interpersonal relationships and in the local culture.

The Early Church took the obligations of community seriously. Luke described their actions: "All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need" (Acts 2:44,45).

The foundation of the Christian community is the Cross. Christ unites different bodies into one Body.³ Believers belong in the body of Christ because He has redeemed them through His suffering, death, and resurrection. He has placed them together in the community of faith, and they now belong to one another.

The community of faith is obligated to one another because they like each other and have similar experiences, but more important because Christ has placed them together. This obligates the believer to behave in ways that are best for one another, not in ways that are best for the individual.

UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH

The church, as a community of faith, is different from other social organizations. It is relationship-based. We are together because of our personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ, and He commanded that we love each other. Therefore, the church is more susceptible to interpersonal conflict than other social organizations.

The community of faith has eternal importance

The church is an integral part of God's eternal plan, comprised of God's people for God's purpose. "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9). Believers need to remember, especially during times of conflict, that they are part of a God-designed community.

The community of faith is supernatural in origin

Only God could create a unique community like the church. The people who come to Christ are so vastly different from each other in personality and culture that without the commonality of Christ there is every reason for them to remain separate. It is reasonable that difference and conflict would prevail in such a diverse community. However, with the help of the Holy Spirit and effective conflict management, there can be unity and missional purpose.

The community of faith has visible local expression

The church is the full expression of the body of Christ, not just a miniature of a greater invisible Church. When only two or three people gather in the name of Christ, all of who and what He is as Savior and Lord is present (Matthew 18:20). In His presence, personal accountability and intimacy are valued and expressed.

The community of faith is a steward of God's grace

The church, while it may develop its own personality, remains a steward of God's grace. If God is light and the church is a prism, then the church must refract the colors of His grace to its culture. The missional purpose of the church is to project and proclaim Jesus Christ, not itself, to its community. Paul said "this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:8).

When in conflict, believers in the church should remember that they are called into God's kingdom as stewards of His grace: "But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it" (Ephesians 4:7).

The community of faith demonstrates in its unity the reality of what it proclaims

The personal life of the believer and the organizational life of the church must be congruent with the gospel they proclaim. Believers' love for one another is the foundational message of the gospeL Love, integrity, and mutual trust among believers are necessary to facilitate a healthy process of conflict resolution.

When one is in need, the community of faith rallies to help: "If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with $_{it}$ " (1 Corinthians 12:26). Managing conflict within the community of faith is everyone's responsibility.

The community of faith is where transformed lives are planted and maturity takes place

God designed the church for believers. He places them in a community of faith to grow and mature. Spiritual maturity does not readily take place outside of the community of faith. Spirituality is a personal relationship with God, yet He intended this relationship to also develop in and through interactions with other believers.

Jesus instructed His disciples to "go and make disciples of all nations... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19,20). Discipling and teaching are interpersonal processes requiring others of more experience to mentor those of less experience. The intentional facilitation of discipleship and spiritual maturity should be nonnegotiable in the church.

The community of faith gives visibility to the presence of Christ

A distinguishing characteristic of the community of faith is the supernatural presence of Christ. The presence of God was evident from the Garden of Eden, to the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire in the wilderness, to the Holy of Holies in the temple, to Pentecost, and on through the Church Age. The presence of Christ should be the distinctive of the church today.

Quite often the first impression the unchurched receive of Jesus Christ is through their interaction with believers in the community of faith. The ability of the church to interact in unity and resolve its conflicts visibly demonstrates the supernatural presence and power of Christ.'

Although the close fellowship and intense personal interaction of the community of faith may appear to make the church more susceptible to conflict than many other social groups, these spiritual characteristics equip the church to better deal with conflict.

RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARD ONE ANOTHER IN THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH

The New Testament gives numerous commands about how

believers should treat one another. These commands form a list of mutual obligations - the responsibilities that all church members have in their relationships with one another. Understanding how important believers are to each other and how they are to treat each other may minimize differences and perhaps eliminate destructive conflict.

Jesus commanded believers to love one another

Perhaps the most comprehensive command Jesus gave is the well-known command to "love one another." He continued,

INFLUENCE OF REVIVAL, RENEWAL, AND REVITALIZATION ON CONFLICT IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

Spiritual revival is often considered necessary for healing conflict. Although revival is certainly desired and can do much to minimize and heal conflict, revival alone may not be enough. The words *revival, renewal,* and *revitalization* are often used interchangeably; however, each has a very distinct meaning.

REVIVING THE HEART

Revival is about the heart. It describes the freshness of personal spirituality. Revival comes when hungry believers seek God, and then God revisits His people with dynamic manifestations of His presence.

RENEWING THE MIND

Renewal is about the mind. It is the process of reconnecting the church to the mission of God. It is a facet of spiritual revival that refocuses the spiritual passion of the church away from itself and back to the community as God intended. Renewal is the regeneration and transformation of the mind, as the apostle Paul describes in Romans 12, that results in specific sacrificial service unto God.

REVITALIZING THE LOCAL CHURCH

Revitalization is both the freshness of power and the correction of misdirected efforts. The spiritual dynamic of combining personal revival and community renewal results in specific ministry actions that revitalize leadership and organizational structure making them more effective. ¹

When the church experiences heart-changing revival and people intentionally begin to think differently about one another and their missional purpose, then they can adjust the function and structure of the church to facilitate more effective ministry.

GARY R. ALLEN, D.Min., Springfield, Missouri.

ENDNOTE 1. Klaus, "Leadership Development," 1999.



"As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34,35). Jesus' command is such a fundamental statement of Christian duty and is repeated more than 10 times in the New Testament (John 15:12,17; Romans 13:8; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:11,23; 4:7,11,12; and 2 John 5). Loving one another is obligatory and foundational to conflict management.

Paul reinforced Jesus' command

Paul further developed Jesus' command: "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves" (Romans 12:10). He also said, "Serve one another in love" (Galatians 5:13). Paul prayed that the Lord would help the Thessalonians' love to increase not only for each other, but also for everyone else. "Always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else" (1 Thessalonians 5:15; compare 3:12). In his second letter to the Thessalonians, Paul thanked God that their mutual love was indeed increasing (2 Thessalonians 1:3).

Believers belong to each other in Christ

In Christ, believers belong to each other and form one Body (Romans 12:5). We are members of one Body: "Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body" (Ephesians 4:25); and "we have fellowship with one another" (1 John 1:7). Paul prayed that the Roman Christians would have "a spirit of unity" among themselves as they followed Christ Jesus" (Romans 15:5). To avoid division in the Body, Paul instructed members to "have equal concern for each other" (1 Corinthians 12:25) and to "offer hospitality to one another" (1 Peter 4:9).



"I wasn't satisfied just changing the bylaws. No, I had to change the order of service, too."

Believers honor one another

Throughout the Bible people are clearly expected to honor God and one another. Paul said, "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves" (Romans 12:10). He further indicated that honoring one another minimizes division within the Body.

Believers live at peace with one another in humility

We see another development of this command in the words of Jesus: "Be at peace with each other" (Mark 9:50). Paul put it several ways: "Live in peace with each other" (1 Thessalonians 5:13). "Live in harmony with one another" (Romans 12:16). "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves" (Philippians 2:3). Peter said, "Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another" (1 Peter 5:5).

Believers accept one another

"Stop passing judgment on one another," Paul wrote in Romans 14:13. "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you" (Romans 15:7). "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Colossians 3:13). "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32). "Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other" (James 5:16). Accepting the personal and cultural differences of others can expand one's likes and interests and thereby minimize conflict.

Believers bear with one another

To bear with one another means to care for those whom we may not like — those who are the difficult people in our life. Scripture says we are to "put up with, bear with, endure, forbear, or suffer"⁵ such people. This does not mean we allow them to take control or that we should not hold them accountable for their words and actions. "We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up" (Romans 15:1,2; compare Colossians 3:13,14).

Believers serve one another

Accepting one another demands righteous interaction with each other. Peter said: "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others" (1 Peter 4:10; compare Galatians 5:13). Jesus gave the same lesson when He told His disciples to "wash one another's feet" (John 13:14). Paul continued this thought when he commended believers to "submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Ephesians 5:21), and "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2).

CIVILITY: HOW WE TREAT ONE ANOTHER

Civility is how we treat each other and is a basic value in how we manage conflict. It is the sum of the many sacrifices we must make to live together and is what enables us to live together.¹

FOR THE GOOD OF THE COMMUNITY

Individual freedom must yield to the good of the community. The idea that we should use our freedom for the common good rather than to seek our own pleasures has long been central to Christian and Jewish ethics.² The church needs to be an example of how people should treat one another and resolve conflict. Believers need to utilize their experience of God's reconciliation power and fulfill their mandate as ministers of reconciliation. Christians should bring civility into their social interactions and lead the way in addressing social issues.

REMAINING CIVIL IN ANGER

Civility is not being passive toward one another or unconcerned about important social issues. Social issues sometimes evoke strong emotions resulting in strained relationships. Certainly we should avoid *fighting words*; however, we should not intentionally make other people angry. To avoid angry words we must recognize that the same things do not anger everyone.³ We should confront potentially volatile issues and deal with one another in an open and truthful manner. It is possible to be angry and not be destructive to one another. Paul said, " 'In your anger do not sin': Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry" (Ephesians 4:26).

Self-condemnation and, at times, specific teaching within the church suggests that truly spiritual people would never disagree. Disagreement, even passionate disagreement, is not incivility; the flip side is that agreement, even consensus, is not civility. Democracy needs dialogue, and dialogue requires opposing views.

CIVILITY CAN INCLUDE CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM

Similarly, criticism, even sharp criticism, is not uncivil. Even the Talmudic stories suggest that love for our fellows requires that we criticize them when it is appropriate.⁴ The goal in criticism, however, should never be to frustrate and antagonize one another. We must come into the presence of our fellow human beings with love and gratitude. Consequently, the obligation of civility entails more than charitable acts. It is a habit of the mind, perhaps an orientation of the soul, toward another person. The one who is outside of us may seem different from us, and yet is part of us through our equal share in God's creation.⁵

CIVILITY REQUIRES RESPECT FOR ONE ANOTHER

We are responsible to others for our attitudes and actions.

Civility involves the discipline of our passions for the sake of living a common life with others.⁶ It is admirable to have passion for life and things we strongly believe. But life should be lived out of obedience to what is right for the unity of the group. Differences must be reconciled, not with uniformity, but with unity.⁷ Civility requires that we express ourselves in ways that demonstrate our respect for others. Civility teaches us to discipline our desires for the sake of others.⁸

CIVILITY BEGINS AT HOME

God intended the family to be the center of human social interaction and the model of community life. He described himself as a *Heavenly Father*, and Jesus often used the term *family* as a metaphor for the kingdom of God. The student of civility should properly understand *family* not simply as an entity but as an act — an act of loving and intimate sacrifice. Family, at its heart, is not something that people *are*, but something that people *do*. Christianity teaches that the family is where we die to self.⁹ However, the vast number of dysfunctional and fragmented families in our culture makes it imperative that the church be intentional in basic civility and conflict management training. The church must be what it wants the community to become.¹⁰

While the church may be a training center for spiritual discipleship, personal growth, and development the home remains central for basic living-skills training. The home is where we learn to get along with each other. Teaching civility to the next generation also requires the establishment of clear rules of respect and simple good manners in the household.¹¹

The freedom that humans possess is not the freedom to do what we like, but the freedom to do what is right.¹² This is consistent with the biblical concept of free will as God intended. Human beings are not created to do what they like, but to do what is best for the entire community.

GARY R. ALLEN, D.Min., Springfield, Missouri

ENDNOTES

1. Stephen L. Carter, *Civility: Manners, Morals, and the Etiquette of Democracy* (New York: Basic Books, 1998), 11,15.

- 2. Ibid., 17.
- 3. Ibid., 162.
- 4. Ibid., 108,109. 5. Ibid., 102.
- 5. Ibid., 102. 6. Ibid., 109.
- 7. Jesse Miranda, "Leading Multicultural Ministries" (Lecture at Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Mo., March 9–13, 1999).
- 8. Carter, 164.
- 9. Ibid., 230.
- 10. Miranda, "Leading Multicultural Ministries," 1999.
- 11. Carter, 233.
- 12. Ibid., 78.

Believers encourage one another

Paul longed to see the Roman Christians so they might both be "mutually encouraged by each other's faith" (Romans 1:12). One of the main purposes of regular corporate worship is to "spur one another on toward love and good deeds," and to "encourage one another" (Hebrews 10:24,25). Believers are also urged to "encourage one another daily" (Hebrews 3:13); "encourage one another and build each other up" (1 Thessalonians 5:11; compare 4:18); "build yourselves up in your most holy faith" (Jude 20). When believers concentrate on encouraging and building one another up, they will not readily perpetuate destructive conflict.

Believers instruct and build up one another

Paul wanted "mutual edification" (Romans 14:19). He instructed, "Teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" (Colossians 3:16; compare Ephesians 5:19). Paul was confident that the Romans could "instruct one another" (Romans 15:14).

Understanding the concept of "one another" in Scripture is foundational to conflict management within the community of faith. Believers are to be committed to the spiritual and moral well-being of each other.

ROLE OF FORGIVENESS IN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

When conflict has been prolonged and people have hurt each other, forgiveness is necessary to reestablish healthy relationships. The term *forgiveness* is defined as "an active process of the mind and temper of a wronged person, by means of which he or she abolishes a moral hindrance to fellowship with the wrongdoer, and reestablishes the freedom and happiness of friendship."⁶ There may be times when those in conflict with each other refuse to forgive and reestablish fellowship, while others are willing to forgive to facilitate their own healing process.

Jesus and Stephen are examples in forgiveness. They forgave their murderers even in the hour of death, even when their attackers were unwilling to consider forgiveness and reconciliation (Luke 23:34; Acts 7:59,60).

While most people will probably not face conflict unto death, destructive conflict can be one of life's most painful experiences. There are times when conflict may not be resolved, and forgiveness is necessary for the wounded person to bring closure to the situation and begin again. Some people willfully hurt others and have no intention of healing the relationship. Those who are wounded in such situations need to learn to forgive those who have hurt them and move forward with their lives.

The term *forgiveness* is more difficult to define than the terms *diversity*, *difference*, *conflict*, or *reconciliation*.

Perhaps defining forgiveness is difficult because people often consider forgiveness only after becoming emotionally involved in a conflict.

Sometimes people use forgiveness as an excuse to avoid resolving conflict when they do not want to confront others or, perhaps, do not have the skills to resolve conflict. They just want the conflict to go away. For them forgiveness becomes a spiritual exercise that relieves them of their responsibility. There are times when the one who has been wronged cannot make peace with the wrongdoer because of circumstances, such as death, and forgiveness is the only solution. But forgiveness should not be used as a substitute for both parties engaging in the healing process, if it is feasible.

There is need for interpersonal reconciliation in the forgiveness process. The real work of forgiveness is not just the release from hatred, resentment, suspicion, and hostility in the forgiver; it is found in regaining the sister or brother as a full sister or as a true brother. Since the community of faith is the image of God, individuals in relationship with others express this communion. The principle, "forgiveness is necessary, reconciliation is optional," is not based on the example of Jesus. Forgiveness that is focused on quieting one's own conscience instead of on the restoration of community is not truly Christian. The goal is community restored, not private perfection maintained.⁷

Strategic timing is important in the forgiving process. Reconciliation is only possible when forgiveness is allowed time to work. Not allowing the time needed to confront, face, and work through one's hurts might hasten the goal of reconciliation, but will not assure its quality. If there is no sure strategy for pursuing reconciliation with someone, then any strategy used to bring reconciliation must be motivated by love for the other person.⁸

The value of a prayerful process for painful memories

Harsh words and actions can create painful, emotional memories that often perpetuate conflict. These painful memories can do one of two things: they can either cripple a person throughout life or they can become a person's gifts of perseverance and conflict management. Each event in life, even conflict, can be understood either as a blessing or a curse.

The perception of whether conflict is resolved or perpetuated is often more influenced by one's feelings than by the facts of the situation. Many people who are emotionally wounded have difficulty forgiving, letting go, and moving on. The healing of the pain caused by destructive conflict is a process. Like physical wounds, emotional wounds heal gradually. The healing of painful memories follows the five stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. As a person moves from stage to stage, he penetrates each stage at ever-greater depths. The five stages of healing emotional wounds point to the natural way the Spirit heals.'

The value of forgiveness as a gift from God John Patton, former president of the American Association of Pastoral Counselors and vice president of the International Committee on Pastoral Care and Counseling, contends that when conceptualizing forgiveness as an act or attitude, many Christians, in spite of their best efforts, seem unable to forgive. Patton believes forgiveness is not a human act or attitude, but is a gift given by God. While shame is a response to rejection and frustration and as such encourages people to build protective defenses, Patton's proposed therapeutic relationship offers the opportunity to explore the defenses of shame (for example, rage, power, and righteousness) within an empathetic context to discover guilt. Once a person understands that he is guilty, he can then recognize that he belongs to a community of sinners loved by God. The pastoral counselor's role is not to supervise and encourage acts or attitudes of forgiveness, but to provide an appropriate empathetic atmosphere that enables a person to shed the defenses of shame and to discover relatedness with others.10

RECONCILIATION: A FOUNDATION FOR CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Reconciliation refers to the sinner being brought back into the presence of God. God made people in His own image so they could have fellowship with Him. But when human beings sinned, they became strangers to God.1 Christians, having experienced personal reconciliation with God, become ministers of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:17-20).

Christians are ministers of reconciliation. They are not only to proclaim the message of reconciliation to unbelievers, but also are to live at peace with and be reconciled to one another in the community of faith. Jesus said, "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5:23,24). Unchurched people seem to understand that conflict is inevitable even in the church, but they do not understand why conflict cannot be readily resolved in the church when a major element of the gospel is reconciliation.

EVERYONE IS A MINISTER OF RECONCILIATION

Every Christian is a minister of reconciliation. The person who occupies the pulpit does not have more responsibility in the ministry of reconciliation than the child of God who sits in the pew. Scripture says God has committed to us the ministry of reconciliation.2 The role of the pastor is to ensure that everyone is equipped with the biblical knowledge of reconciliation and trained in relationship skills that facilitate reconciliation.

The act of reconciliation is the method God chooses to enter into human confusion and violence. Reconciliation occurs because God is invited and is eager to respond. But God who knows each person's heart responds in a way that creates reconciliation yet unheard of by either party. To improve our understanding of the power of reconciliation, it may be necessary to die to preconceived notions of reconciliation so God might be free to resurrect our hopes and dreams in a new form.'

RECONCILIATION IS A GIFT

Theologically, reconciliation, like grace, is a gift from God. It cannot be earned or created by hard work, by following the Law, by following behavioral-science principles, or by being sincere or prayerful. The goal of conflict management, then, is to help one another be faithful and to seek to create environments where the possibilities of reconciliation are increased.'

MINISTERS OF RECONCILIATION ARE PEACEMAKERS

Jesus described the ministers of reconciliation as *peacemak-ers*. In the Beatitudes, Jesus placed peacemaking high on the list of Christian characteristics when He said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God" (Matthew 5:9). James described the harvest of those who sow in peace: "But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness" (James 3:17,18).

Not only are Christians expected to make peace with one another after relationships have been strained or broken, but they are also expected to be peacekeepers. Paul said that we are to make every effort to get along with the people around us and to live in peace: "Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (Romans 12:17, 18).

GARY R. ALLEN, D.Min., Springfield, Missouri

ENDNOTES

- Manford G. Gutzke, Plain Talk About Christian Words (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1965), 71.
 Dwight J. Pentecost, Things Which Become Sound Doctrine
- (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 91. 3. Joan Mueller, *Is Forgiveness Possible*? (Collegeville, Minn.: The
- Liturgical Press, 1998), 80.
- 4. Speed B. Leas, *Moving Your Church Through Conflict* (Washington, D. C.: Alban Institute Publication, 1998), 9

The value of redemptive remembering

False forgiving corrodes the moral fiber of society, but redemptive remembering focuses on hope-filled and redemptive future possibilities without forgetting the past. Those who forgive, since forgiveness is grounded in reality rather than in deception, do not fear confrontation and are guided by a freedom stronger than hate. Those who forgive as love's revolution against life's unfairness are guided by respect and commitment to each other. This provides insight into the realization that no person is totally pure. A person forgives because he realizes that God has forgiven the evil in his own heart. To not forgive one's neighbor, therefore, is a dishonest denial of the mixture of good and evil in every human heart.¹¹

Forgiveness is partnering with others and with God. Forgiveness as reconciliation is not merely the effort of an individual, but is also God's choice to enter human confusion and violence. Reconciliation occurs because God is invited and is eager to respond.¹²

Remembering how we have been hurt and how we often hurt others can be a valuable guide in how we react to and treat others. Forgiveness does not mean accepting further abuse or continuing destructive relationships. We need to establish boundaries for what is acceptable to us and make those boundaries clear to others. We need to hold others accountable for their actions.¹³

ROLE OF WATER BAPTISM AND COMMUNION IN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

God has provided the Church with two ordinances, water baptism and Communion, to facilitate a regular and ongoing means of addressing our relationship with Him and our



relationships with each other in the body of Christ. The obligation of believers to resolve their conflicts is rooted in their commitment to Christ and to each other.

The role of water baptism

Water baptism provides two specific helps for conflict management. First, water baptism is our identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. Second, water baptism is our identification with and commitment to those who "received a faith as precious as ours" (2 Peter 1:1). In our identification with Christ, we give testimony in water baptism to having died to self, burying the old nature, and being raised into new life in Him. His transforming power in our life has delivered us from the power of sin. We are no longer at enmity with God and rebellious toward Him and His law. Our hearts have changed, and He has placed us in the community of faith to live in unity.

Paul addressed both the Ephesians and the Corinthians concerning this: "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit — just as you were called to one hope when you were called — one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" (Ephesians 4:3–6). "The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free — and we were all given the one Spirit to drink" (1 Corinthians 12:12,13).

Water baptism identifies the believer with others in the community of faith. We not only give testimony of a similar salvation experience, but we also commit to the support and well-being of the fellowship in the body of Christ. This involves both privileges and responsibilities for maintaining unity. We are obligated to love one another, resolve our differences, and forgive one another.

The role of Communion

Communion, like water baptism, also provides two specific helps for conflict resolution: First, Communion is the remembrance of and reflection on our Savior who redeemed us by His broken body and shed blood. The bread and the cup represent what He has done for us. This should evoke humility from us as we remember what He did for us when we could do nothing for ourselves. We also remember that each person in the community of faith is present only because of His broken body and shed blood. This should bring a sense of awe and reverence toward God and a sense of unity with one another.

Second, Communion is a time to examine our own relationship with God and with others in the community of faith. During Communion we reaffirm our baptismal identifications and commitments. We partake of the emblems of the body and blood of our Lord in remembrance of Him. We also share it with our fellow believers to reaffirm our love for and commitment to them as brothers and sisters in the body of Christ.

A central purpose of Communion is to let "a man examine himself" (1 Corinthians 11:28).¹⁴ At the Lord's table, differences can be settled before they become destructive to our relationship with God and/or with fellow believers. It is at the Lord's table that God's love and our love for one another become measurable.

The word *love* refers to the intent of a person's actions. When a church has agape love (sharing with each other), it means that the strong, the weak, the rich, the poor, the big, and the little care for each other and do things to help each other. The fellowship of the church that springs from the communion of love is pictured for us during the Lord's Supper. The church gathers together in fellowship around the table in the warm, informal, family atmosphere created by eating together. Believers symbolically partake together of Christ's broken body and drink together His shed blood, and as a congregation affirm together that their salvation comes from Him. In the Apostles' Creed, Christians confess their faith and say they believe "in the communion of the saints." The "communion of the saints" emphasizes that all believers are to belong to each other and have fellowship with each other.

God offers to us several means of grace, including Communion, which give us the grace to deal with conflict and difficult people. People should not excuse each other's dysfunctional behavior, but should hold each other accountable in God's presence. The "communion of love" may be compared with what happens when a person brings in his poor relationships and includes them in the church family situation. In the communion of love, people are willing to include those who are disobedient and cantankerous, even though they might need to be disciplined. They will be cared for; they will not be shut out.¹⁵

The ordinances of water baptism and Communion are not only continual reminders of God's love and our commitment to the practice of our faith, but are also practical avenues for addressing and confronting our differences to strengthen our relationships and defuse conflicting situations. In water baptism we accept one another and commit to one another regardless of personal or culture differences. In Communion we are obligated to confront any differences that interfere in our relationships with each other.

CONCLUSION

Training in interpersonal relationships and conflict-management skills is essential for everyone in the church. It is imperative that national leaders, district leaders, pastors, and church leaders receive adequate training and, with God's help, provide hope for peaceful resolution to every conflict situation. The church is a community of faith that can live in unity and in the glorious hope of Christ who said, "I am making everything new" (Revelation 21:5).

Conflict management is the responsibility of everyone in the church. Everyone needs to make every effort to minimize destructive conflict and be committed to love one another.

Many people in our pews have learned leadership, team building, and conflict-management skills in the workplace and could easily transfer these principles into the church. Often, our churches have great people with great skills who go unrecognized and underutilized.

By understanding the source and nature of conflict and the process of conflict management, we can confront conflict with less fear and with the hope for resolution that strengthens personal relationships and enables the ministry of the church to be more effective.



GARY R. ALLEN, D.Min., is executive editor of Enrichment journal and national coordinator of the Ministerial Enrichment Office, Springfield, Missouri.

ENDNOTES

1. H.B. London Jr., "Trinity College and Seminary Department of Conflict Management" (Deerfield, III., accessed December 1999); available from http://www.trintysem.edu/tccm.html; Internet.

 Norman Shawchuck, "Managing Conflict and Change" (Lecture at Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Mo., October 1999).
 Miroslav Volf, Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Control of Cont

Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 47. 4. Byron Klaus, "Leadership Development for Church Revitalization" (Lecture at Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Mo., June 1999).

5. Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary (Seattle, Wash.: Biblesoft and International Bible Translators, 1994).

6. Lewis B. Smedes, Forgive and Forget: Healing the Hurts We Don't Deserve (New York: Pocket Books, 1984), 50.

7. David Augsburger, Caring Enough To Forgive: True Forgiveness and Caring Enough To Not Forgive: False Forgiveness (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1981), 32–40.

8. Doris Donnelly, *Learning To Forgive* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979), 84–89.

9. Dennis Linn and Matthew Linn, Healing Life's Hurts: Healing Memories Through Five Stages of Forgiveness (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 1–17.

10. John Patton, *Is Human Forgiveness Possible*? (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985), 16–18.

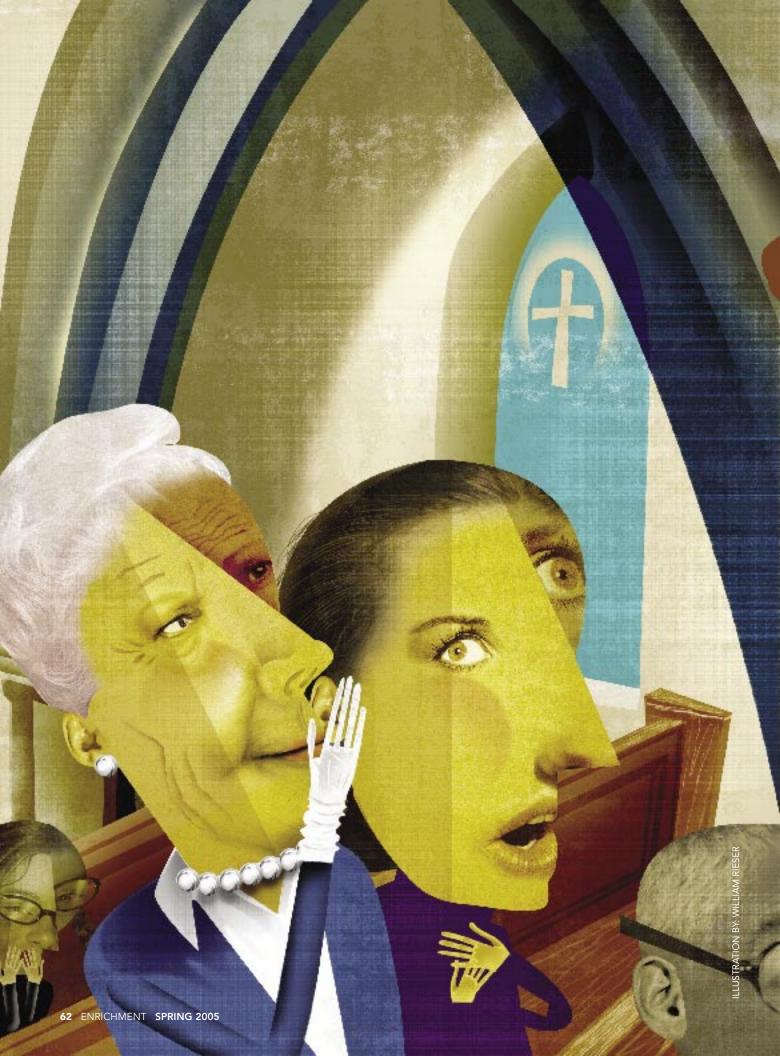
11. Smedes, 94–101.

12. Joan Mueller, *Is Forgiveness Possible*? (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 61–63.

13. David W. Schell, Forgiveness Therapy (St. Meinrad, Ind.: Abbey Press, 1993), 7.

14. Richard D. Dobbins, At the Table of the Lord (Akron, Ohio: Totally Alive Publications, 1999), 8.

15. Manford G. Gutzke, Plain Talk About Christian Words (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1965), 216–17.



uke's history of the Early Church candidly reports three conflicts: the disputes arising from the unfair treatment of the Hellenistic widows (Acts 6:1–7), the inclusion of the Gentiles (Acts 15:1–35), and the usefulness of John Mark in future ministry (Acts 15:36–41).

I admire Luke's honesty for including the imperfect elements of the New Testament church. He could have papered over these Early Church fights and left us with the public relations impression of a perfect Spirit-filled community.

Several years ago we found a photo of the Hot Springs Opera House where the Assemblies of God first convened and was formed in 1914. We had commissioned a scale model of the opera house for placement in our Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center. But this photo showed something no one had seen before — engraved on the window facing the street was the word *Saloon*. We had not known that the Opera House included a saloon. So, the question we faced was: "Do we omit the offending word on the model, or admit that we began in a place that served strong drink?"

We followed Luke and let the facts speak for themselves. Likewise, conflicts with believers are not meant to be papered over in an effort to pretend they do not exist. When disagreements are handled well, the end result honors Christ and His church grows. Acts indisputably shows us that.

BY GEORGE O. WOOD

CONFLICT #1 — SOCIAL FAIRNESS

Acts 6 begins, "In those days when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a *murmuring* of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration" (verse 1, KJV, emphasis added).

Think back to a similar situation in the Old Testament. The Children of Israel, fresh out of Egypt, commenced their trek toward disaster by complaining (Numbers 11:1). Murmuring is the first step to unbelief and outright rebellion.

The disagreements related to treatment of widows, inclusion of the Gentiles, and the utilization of John Mark ultimately advanced the Kingdom.

dynamic growth — "those days when the number of the disciples was multiplied." Understandably so, leaders become so busy coping with the growth that sooner or later some people are neglected and their feelings are hurt. Here is how Peter and the apostles handled this outbreak of discontent.

They frankly admitted the problem existed

Nothing is gained by letting problems fester. The 16th-century Italian political philosopher, Machiavelli, said that sedition is

> like a disease. In its early stages it is easy to cure and almost impossible to detect. In its later stages it is easy to detect and almost impossible to cure. Leadership must not bury its head in the sand when serious problems arise. Wisdom helps you know when to let something die of

The murmuring in the Early Church was no less serious than that of ancient Israel. The murmuring began after the Early Church had witnessed the outstretched arm of the Lord in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and after the pouring forth of the Holy Spirit. Would entering the promised land of the Great Commission be derailed at its first stage, even as the journey to Canaan had gone off track at its beginning?

Murmuring is no small matter. It involves a direct violation of Jesus' teaching that complaints be taken directly to those involved (Matthew 18:15–17). Instead, murmuring is a gathering of simmering discontent that spreads by word of mouth from one person to another. Rather than seeking a solution, murmuring stirs up sedition.

At an annual business meeting in the peaceful church I pastored, one of the older members asked, "Can we have some time in this meeting to register complaints?" She evidently had a list of grievances. I believe the Spirit gave me a word of wisdom.

"There is a time and place," I replied, "for handling grievances and making complaints. The last step is bringing the complaint to the whole church. The first step is taking it to the person directly involved. When accord cannot be reached, then the second step involves the pastor and, if necessary, church leadership. Only if the complaint cannot be resolved at the first two steps should it be brought to the church. A church business session is not the proper setting for the open airing of grievances because we are to follow Jesus' direction in Matthew 18 for resolving complaints." I said this kindly, and the dear saint received it graciously.

Every church has its problems. No church is perfect. If I were given a choice, I would rather have the problems of a growing church than the problems of a stagnant or declining church. The first church problem occurred during a time of its own accord, or when to deal with it. In the Acts case, the apostles knew this problem was not going to go away by itself.

They avoided blame

Peter had every right to give the people who were murmuring a tongue-lashing. He could have chastised them for not following Matthew 18, being a bad example to the new converts streaming into the church, and their unwillingness to suffer gladly when discriminated against.

The pastor of a northeast Assemblies of God church blistered his congregation one Sunday morning for what he perceived to be their many failures. He sheared, skinned, flayed, and barbequed the sheep. When his sermon was over, the congregation sat in stunned silence until a not-too-bright older man stood and said, "Thus saith the Lord, 'Aye, yi, yi, yi'."

Surely, there is a time for correction, but we do not need to correct every time. And when correction is given, it must be with grace.

Peter, on this occasion, chose not to correct even though he would have been justified in doing so. Blaming people does not generally bring resolution to an issue.

They avoided self-pity

Peter and the apostles had every right to point out how hard they had been working — preaching, praying, being persecuted, and receiving and administering funds (Acts 6:2; 4:35). Imagine how a self-centered leadership would have handled this problem.

You Hellenistic (Greek-speaking, Greek-acculturated) widows should be ashamed of yourselves. We apostles are out working our fingers to the bone. We are preaching and praying, getting flogged and thrown in prison, waiting on tables, trying our best to serve you and win new converts — and all you do is sit around and complain. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves. Each one of you. And from looking at many of you, it would not hurt some of you to miss a few meals. If you do not like the way we are running the church, then the door you entered is the same one by which you can leave. God has appointed us to lead in this church and if you do not like it, get out. We are God's anointed, and don't you dare touch God's anointed.

Pastors who use that kind of rhetoric decimate congregations. Their ego-driven need to control, dictate, and blame, and their willingness to twist Scripture to suit their own ends, scatter the flock of God and destroy the future of the church.

During my first year of pastoring, the congregation grew from less than 100 to 200. I was 30 years of age and ready to set the world on fire. No one taught me in seminary that the last thing to change in a growing church is the governing board. They were elected into office before the new people came. apostles did not throw the proverbial red meat on the table and say, "What do you all want to do?" That would only have invited more discord from persons who had not worked through the problem in the first place.

Instead, the leadership made a disarming proposal by saying. "You are right. We have been too busy. We have neglected the widows. We apostles need to reprioritize. We will concentrate on prayer and ministering the Word. You appoint a new tier of servant-leadership to handle the need." It takes courage to admit mistakes.

The church is always better off when top-tier leadership does what it is called to do and makes room for team ministry.

The proposal from the apostles "pleased the whole group" (Acts 6:5). The church then made a remarkable selection. The Hellenistic widows were being neglected so they chose seven Hellenistic men to serve as deacons.

When conflict is solved, the church can move on. That is

In the long run, both Barnabas and Paul were right. They were just not right at the same time.

I wanted to hire an associate pastor. The board opposed my plan, and only reluctantly agreed to interview my nominee. Although they liked the person I presented, they did not want to add the position. I blew up — fortunately, not to them, but to a trusted elder. I said to him, "If they do not do what I want them to do, I will go over their heads to the congregation. More people have become members since I became pastor than there were members before I came. I have the votes, and the congregation can choose the board or me."

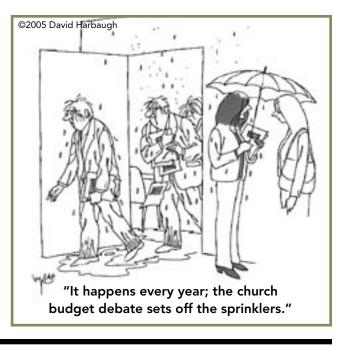
He listened to my outburst and said nothing. After the conversation, I picked up my Bible and headed for the Sunday night service in the sanctuary. The Holy Spirit dropped four words into my mind that revolutionized my thinking, *George*, *fast your tongue*.

From that night on I said nothing. The next Saturday morning when the board met they had changed their minds and agreed unanimously (without any effort on my part) to accept my recommendation. That event taught me that if your leadership is not united, your congregation will not be either. I had been ready to demand my own way when the Holy Spirit stopped me in my tracks. Had I proceeded to bluster and fight in that situation, I doubt we would have ever experienced the kind of growth that followed in the next 16 years. Avoiding self-pity and blame saved my ministry.

They put forward a positive solution

Leadership should never present unsolved problems to members unless they can also present a solution. Peter and the what happened. Immediately upon resolution of the problem "the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7).

Another positive consequence in resolving this conflict should be noted. The cause-and-effect relationship could read like this: If there had been no church problem, there would have been no deacons. No deacons, then no Stephen. No Stephen, then no persecuting Saul consenting to Stephen's death. Had Saul's persecution of Stephen not



become a goad in his conscience, he would not have traveled to Damascus and became Paul. Had there been no Paul there would have been no missionary journeys and 10 remarkable churches would not have been planted; neither would there have been Paul's 13 letters nor the writings of Luke and Acts. After all, it was Paul who found Luke at Troas (Acts 16:10).

The end result of this church conflict was positive. Without it we would be missing more than half of the New Testament. The next time you have church trouble remember that God wants to bring a positive outcome.

CONFLICT #2 — DOCTRINE

During my tenure as pastor, our congregation faced the doctrinal issue of women serving on the governing board of the church. People I loved were on both sides of this issue. I will not tell you the outcome, but I will tell you the process. We simply followed the procedure used in the first doctrinal controversy of the Church (Acts 15).

Clearly define the issue

Conflicts cannot be resolved until the root issues are dealt with. Therefore, it is vital at the outset that all parties have a clear understanding of the forthcoming discussion. In the Early Church, the succinct definition of the doctrinal dispute was put forward by the party of the Pharisees (who had evidently not checked their legalism at the church door): "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the Law of Moses" (Acts 15:5).

By clearly defining the issue, the speakers in Acts 15 were prepared to address the issue rather than attack each other. *Ad hominem* (against the person) attacks kill responsible dialog. The Judaizers did not call Peter, Paul, and Barnabas names or characterize them as compromisers. The Pauline group refrained from reminding the Pharisees of the headaches they had caused Jesus before their conversion, or of their personal rigidity in substituting the letter of the law for the spirit of grace.

Open discussion

Luke does not record how long the debate lasted, but in Acts 15:7 he records that prior to Peter's comments and the testimony of Paul and Barnabas, there was "much discussion."

Leaders of meetings must be careful not to attempt to ram things through. People want to be treated fairly. They also want to know they are valued and that their opinions are valued.

It is fascinating to observe that Peter, Paul, and Barnabas did not jump into the debate at the beginning. They avoided a mistake that is often made by those who are seeking to advance a cause. The temptation is to speak first, get in your licks, and tamp down the opposition through an overwhelming opening salvo. Peter, Paul, and Barnabas let some steam out of the kettle before they weighed in.

Testimony of Spirit-led leaders

I suspect the open and full discussion contained back and forth arguments. The Pharisees likely quoted Old Testament Scriptures supporting circumcision and keeping the ritual law. The Pauline group probably responded by quoting texts that pointed to the inclusion of the Gentiles, by making reference to Jesus' own practice of permitting His followers to pluck grain on the Sabbath, eat with unwashed hands, and the declaration that all foods are clean.

Both sides accepted the full authority of Scripture but could not agree on its interpretation. Therefore, they paused to hear what God had been doing through the apostles. Peter shared his experience with Cornelius' household (Acts 15:7–11); Paul and Barnabas recounted "the miraculous signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them" (Acts 15:12).

We have faced our own scriptural interpretation issues in this Fellowship: the ordination of women, credentialing those with a preconversion divorce, and the use of new Bible translations. People in our Fellowship have expressed different opinions on these matters. We listened carefully to one another and considered Scripture that applied to the argument, but we also looked to what the Spirit was doing. Let me be clear — experience must never stand over or apart from Scripture. However, when believers have good faith disagreements over how to interpret the Bible, experience also has a part to play in making the decision, just as it did in the Early Church. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would guide us into all truth.

A win-win result

James, the Jerusalem Council's chairman, stated the consensus result, in essence declaring "whom Christ receives, let not the Church reject." James cited Amos 9:11,12, and echoed the expansive tent spoken of in Isaiah 54:1–5 as support for the testimonies given by Peter, Barnabas, and Paul. Gentiles were to be admitted to the Church without the requirement of circumcision or adherence to ritual law.

However, deference is shown to the party of the Pharisees by asking the Gentiles to abstain from eating food offered to idols, strangled meat, or blood. Paul later picked up these issues in his discussion of the strong and weak brothers (Romans 14:1 through 15:13). If Gentiles and observant Jewish believers were going to have table fellowship together, it was vital that the Gentiles did not do things to offend the other participants. Additionally, the Gentiles were told to abstain from sexual immorality — a moral requirement that binds all believers at all times.

The Acts 15 decision gives this principle: hold fast to the essentials of the gospel and compromise on differences that involve individual preferences. Imagine what would have happened if the Gentile believers had said, "No. We will

continue to eat strangled meat. We will establish a church across the street and name it after our doctrinal distinctive, 'First Strangled Chicken Church'." That "my-way-or-the-highway" attitude would have forced the Jewish believers to establish a church named "First Non-Strangled Chicken Church."

If you will keep the love of Jesus and seek the wisdom and guidance of the Holy Spirit, your conflicts will also bring great advances for His cause.

Too often, believers have divided over inconsequential matters.

Communicate. Communicate. Communicate

What good is a decision if no one knows about it? Once a decision had been made, the Jerusalem Council communicated it clearly by sending a letter to the Gentile believers. They commissioned two of their own, Judas Barsabbas and Silas, along with Barnabas and Paul, to carry the letter and verbally convey the decision.

The results are always positive when God's people wisely solve disputes. Look at the good that came: (1) The Gentiles were gladdened and encouraged, (2) Judas and Silas exercised ministry in venues where they had never been before, and (3) the Word of the Lord continued to be taught and preached by not only Barnabas and Saul, but by "many others" (Acts 15:30–35). The stage had been set for the next great expansion — the second and third missionary journeys.

CONFLICT #3 — METHODOLOGY

Sometimes believers disagree over perceived inequities (Acts 6) or doctrine (Acts 15:1–35); more often than not, they disagree over methods — the best way to get the work of the Lord done (Acts 15:36–41).

The third and final conflict recorded in Acts deals with this latter issue. Paul said, "We get the work of the Lord better done by leaving Mark behind." Barnabas replied, "We do God's work better taking Mark with us — and besides, what did the Lord put me in the ministry for if not to help my relatives?"

The first two conflicts described in Acts ended with amicable resolutions. This one did not. Paul and Barnabas' "sharp disagreement" resulted in each going his separate way. These two great friends parted because they could not agree. Regretfully, most of us have memories of divisions that resulted because persons of good will could not agree on the best way to do church or advance the Kingdom.

In the long run, both Barnabas and Paul were right. They

were just not right at the same time.

Paul was right. If John Mark had flaked out on the first journey, the rigors of the second journey (that included the flogging at Philippi) would have flattened him.

Barnabas was right. Mark deserved a second chance. In

the less stressful environment of Cyprus, Barnabas' home island where the church was already established, John Mark had a chance to get back on his feet.

Mark recovered his courage and years later during Paul's final imprisonment in

Rome, Paul sent for Mark because Mark was "helpful" to him (2 Timothy 4:11).

Is there a conflict you cannot resolve — a conflict where neither of you are disobedient to the Lord, violating Scripture, nor stubbornly protecting your own self-interest? There is wisdom in parting ways when you cannot agree over methodology rather than trying to make the unworkable work. You can tie two cats' tails together and get union, but you will not have unity.

If you must part, then keep a good spirit. Neither Paul nor Barnabas slandered each other, nor did they go somewhere and pout. They each went on with productive, fruitful ministry. They maintained a good heart and left the door open for reconciliation. First Corinthians 9:6, written from Ephesus during Paul's third missionary journey, lets us know that they were working together again years later after they separated.

CONCLUSION

Our conflicts today may not match apple for apple with those found in Acts. Perhaps there are conflicts you face that fall into categories other than social fairness, doctrine, or methodology. The category does not matter.

These three disputes from the Early Church provide a template for handling any dispute. The bottom line for all conflict resolution is that the Kingdom is advanced. The disagreements related to treatment of widows, inclusion of the Gentiles, and the utilization of John Mark ultimately advanced the Kingdom. If you will keep the love of Jesus and seek the wisdom and guidance of the Holy Spirit, your conflicts will also bring great advances for His cause. You may not see it right away, but He makes all things beautiful in His time.



GEORGE O. WOOD, D.Th.P., is the general secretary for The General Council of the Assemblies of God, Springfield, Missouri.



RESOLVING CONFLICT BETWEEN MODERNS AND POSTMODERNS

"On the last day of summer, 10 hours before fall my grandfather took me out to the Wall.

"For a while he stood silent. Then finally he said, with a very sad shake of his very old head, 'As you know, on this side of the Wall we are Yooks; on the far other side of this Wall live the Zooks.'

"Then my grandfather said, 'It's high time that you knew of the terribly horrible thing that Zooks do. In every Zook house and in every Zook town every Zook eats his bread with the butter side down!

" 'But we Yooks, as you know, when we

breakfast or sup, spread our bread,' Grandpa said, 'with the butter side up. That's the right, honest way!'

"Grandpa gritted his teeth. 'So you can't trust a Zook who spreads bread underneath! Every Zook must be watched! He has kinks in his soul!' "¹

Today, Dr. Suess' book is shelved in the children's section of the library, but in 1984, years before the Berlin Wall came down, it topped the New York Times bestseller list. The Cold War threat of nuclear war led adults to search for the solace and simplicity of childhood.

BY LORI O'DEA

Now the Wall is gone, or is it? Sometimes the familiar geographical, ideological clashes of old seem almost desirable compared to the complex cross-cultural differences presently facing our world. We continue to stumble over differences in personality, generation, and religion, especially the differences presented by the modern and postmodern cultures.

When these two cultures meet in church, the result is an environment ripe for conflict. It is not a simple matter of young versus old, liberal versus conservative, or contemporary versus traditional. The Yooks and Zooks no longer fall into distinct categories. Instead, the church will encounter moderns and postmoderns of all ages, and more commonly, a hybrid of both.

Modern culture is characterized by linear thinking, appeals to reason, and adherence to absolutes. Postmodern culture tends to shun these things and instead, embraces life subjectively. The postmodern prefers possibilities to propositions, inclusiveness to restrictiveness, and the supernatural to the rational.²

Postmodernity presents some of the greatest challenges and opportunities the church has ever faced. Interaction with postmoderns has already birthed conflict. Some try to demonize this cultural shift and view it as something to take a stand against. Others encourage embracing the change, but may not have the understanding needed for true effectiveness. Neither approach will work. It is senseless to deny or denounce what has already impacted the church.

Then why study church conflict through the lens of postmodern culture? Christian leaders must examine the issue because the stakes are higher than ever. Churches that dare to fulfill their God-given mission will *create* conflict, and they must know how to use it to their advantage. To mishandle this opportunity is to risk a permanent disconnect at a cultural nexus holding too much promise to ignore.

FAIL-SAFE WAYS TO CREATE CONFLICT WITH POSTMODERNS

In growing relationships, we gradually learn more about one another. Identifying things that set someone off or press a hot button equips us with knowledge that must be handled responsibly. We can use this information to purposely irritate someone, or we can use it to build healthy relationships. Clearly, we want to help our congregations, where modernity is still predominant and postmodernity is beginning to emerge, avoid obvious relational pitfalls. The following areas are the easiest to avoid:

Act like an expert

If asked, none of us would pretend to have all the answers. We know our limitations, and we are honest about them before God. In front of others, though, we often try to validate our competence with a veneer of authoritative confidence. While there is nothing wrong with competence or confidence — both are ours through the Spirit — neither is there anything wrong with being honest. We need to avoid simplistic answers that do not take the realities of people's lives into account.

Refuse to listen

Listening to an opposing opinion is not compromise; it is smart. It is smart to demonstrate common courtesy, gather as much information as possible, and then allow the Spirit to lead as you learn the other side of the issue. Taking time to allow another person to be heard does not compromise the gospel or our witness. Rather, they are enhanced dramatically when we take time to listen to others. If newcomers are expected to fall into step, we essentially deny them their rightful place in the body of Christ — a place that adds value to the Body through diversity and unique giftings.

Lead like a dictator

Though your leadership style may not seem dictatorial, you may want to check for dictatorial-like actions. Some of the worst, yet easy to adopt, include making most decisions solo, brushing off suggestions for improvement without any serious consideration, and believing — even jokingly — that you are superior in any way to the people you lead.

Be a gatekeeper, not a door opener

A gatekeeper keeps people out; a door opener allows people in. Which one are you? Your staff? Your congregation? Allowing people a seat at the table requires more food, not less. This means you present the full gospel, not a watered-down message. Being a door opener guarantees that the potential for productive multiplication in evangelism, discipleship, and ministry is highly probable.

Expect unquestioning followership

A question is not a sign of disloyalty. A question is not a denigration of the past. A question is not necessarily indicative of disagreement. Rather, questions can provide an opportunity for deeper commitment, better performance, and spiritual growth. Any culture where questions are not welcomed and thoughtfully handled is one where conflict will be kindled and, worse, growth crippled.

POTENTIAL SOURCES OF POSTMODERN CONFLICT

Good news. All of the relational pitfalls listed above are preventable. If we seek accountability, a fresh perspective, and the help of the Holy Spirit, we can change habits that cause cultural conflicts. Then we will be ready to function as the

New Testament church — almost ready, that is.

Shedding behaviors that cause conflict is only half of the battle. The real test comes in learning the new culture — the good and the bad. The nature of postmodernity lends itself easily to both.

Understanding and discernment are required to resolve the conflict created when the fluid postmodern culture encounters the rigid structure of the modern.

Tolerance

Tolerance is a plank in the postmodern platform. It allows postmoderns to be genuinely glad for others who have found what works for them while simultaneously rejecting it for themselves. Churches will experience conflict frequently here, as tolerance affects life choices. Holiness will need to be taught from the basis of who God is rather than from historical traditions or membership codes of conduct.

When conflict erupts in this area, there will be opposite reactions. Tolerance tends to make postmoderns deal with conflict through avoidance. But tolerance may have the opposite effect on a modern who may, in reaction to his frustration, be more confrontational with a person who claims acceptance of everything. When modernism and postmodernism meet in the arena of tolerance, the result can be deadly to redemptive resolution.

Tolerance is not, in itself, an evil thing. It is important that Christians avoid the tendency to treat tolerance with disdain, especially in our reaction to the hypocrisy in which it is presented in the media. Publicly, tolerance seems to be available to everyone but the Christian. This is creating an entire generation of believers who consider *tolerance* a bad word.

On the personal level, however, where we have an opportunity to make a difference, we must remember the positive



implications of tolerance. On the front end of redemption, its presence can ensure a fair hearing for the gospel. And in terms of ministry it ushers in an entire group of people who are open to both contemporary and traditional means of worship.

Pluralism

Postmoderns are actively curious about anything that may contribute to their well-being. Many practice pluralistic piety — picking and choosing the appealing elements from a variety of faiths. Conceivably, postmoderns could hear the gospel, ask Jesus to be their Savior, attend church faithfully, and still have not comprehended the exclusivity of Christ. This demonstrates the need for solid discipleship. Conflict will accompany this process of change as the value of pluralism is reconciled with God's love for all and salvation through Christ alone.

Conflict resolution plays a huge role in this issue. Those who deal with conflict through compromise seek to legitimize pluralism. Postmoderns and fundamentalists, using avoidance, simply walk away from one another. Resolution will not come either way.

Pluralistic tendencies, like tolerance, nurture openness to the gospel and promote a teachable spirit. If we will demonstrate openness — not to the detriment of the faith, but to the interests of others — we will be able to prevent and resolve unnecessary conflict.

Spirituality

Postmoderns have an insatiable, even admirable, hunger for spirituality. Without the discernment of the Spirit, they can create pseudo spirituality through an eclectic approach to religion. Again, this will not stop at the doors of your church. Both seekers and believers are influenced by postmodern values and will undoubtedly carry those values into their relationship with the Lord.

The problem emerges when mixed values cripple the relationship by creating a false concept of spirituality rather than learning a true spirituality from the Lord. Telling people who think they are drawing nearer to God that their activity is repugnant to Him is sure to create serious conflict.

Spiritual communities have never existed without faulty versions of spirituality (think of the Pharisees and their modern-day counterparts). The postmodern cry for spirituality is for the real thing. Leadership is critical here. Help your constituents gain an appreciation for the spiritual hunger in this culture, instead of condemning the junk food used to satiate it.

Relativism

Relativism creates a loose system of ethics and decisionmaking based on ever-changing variables. There is no inclination or awareness of a need to look for a higher authority. Though it is easy to see the downside of moral relativism, its prominence requires us to accept the challenges it offers as well. Assumptions, pat answers, and incongruent lives and actions on the part of Christians will not be taken seriously. Instead of resting on the shores of black and white, it is time for believers to wade into the gray waters of reality with integrity, reflection, and Spirit-filled responses.

If you think this complicates discipleship, get ready for the difficulties it can create within your ministry context. Relativism in leadership is the lead pastor who talks team, but practices hierarchy. In the team relationship, it manifests itself in departmental turf wars. Often, team conflict resembles the Paul and Barnabas controversy over John Mark. Both parties have valid points. Individuals on opposite sides think they are correct. Without conflict-resolution skills, though, parting ways may be the unnecessary outcome.

Now, for the identities of the opposition parties, insert your name and your staff member's or your congregation and this Sunday's visitors. Can you afford to lose this battle? If you define winning as the triumph of your opinion, you have already lost. Postmoderns will vacate the premises. But if you understand winning as a redemptive resolution — one where Jesus is glorified and relationships are strengthened — then you are ready for conflict management in a postmodern culture. The deed to common ground is available to those who take time to understand the culture and appeal to its strengths.

RESOLVING CONFLICT WITH POSTMODERNS

Cross-cultural conflict is inevitable. Leaders must be equipped and must also equip others to bring redemptive resolution. Unfortunately, there is no one right way to respond to conflict. Even Jesus did not respond the same way to the same kind of conflict. The Pharisees received bold confrontation, avoidance, open conversation, personal and group counseling, and other conflict-management techniques. It is a mistake to believe that pluralistic thinking will always be corrected by blatant confrontation or that circuitous conversation will always provide the proper solution. Conflict resolution is not that simple.

Instead, conflict management requires *life-on-life literacy* to proffer peace when cultures collide. This is the correct response to the biblical illiteracy of both moderns and postmoderns in our churches. It is daring to live and teach Christian truths in a way that attracts, not repels, the person with whom we are in conflict. This involves leading moderns and postmoderns to what they desire most — a genuine experience in God's presence.

Waving a Bible, shouting opinions, and footnoting them with Scripture will not bring resolution. Arguing, even politely, through a rational syllogism that even Aristotle could not refute will not bring resolution. The only way we can bring redemptive resolution is to live according to God's principles, and to teach and hold every believer we influence accountable to those truths.

WHAT'S A LEADER TO DO?

The pastor or leader has unique responsibilities in managing church conflict. Unfortunately, leaders have the same dislike for conflict and tendency toward avoidance as most other people. That is why it is imperative for leaders — particularly with the challenges raised by postmodern culture — to understand their essential responsibilities.

LEARN ABOUT CONFLICT

Every leader must become a student of conflict resolution. Start at your local library. Read everything you can on the subject. Take a class at your local Bible college, seminary, or university. Avail yourself of opportunities to study ministerial conflict. Train your staff, board, and ministry leaders in conflict management.

STIR THINGS UP

Conflict offers many benefits, including the potential to solve problems and enhance vision attainment. Leadership creates tension by identifying the current reality and communicating God's vision for the future. The necessary tension between the two yields a creative conflict environment for growth. (Read George Barna's *A Fish Out of Water* for a more detailed explanation.)

ENCOURAGE GOOD CONFLICT

Conflict can be an indicator of a healthy staff, which naturally lends itself to more productive ministry. The leader should allow, even encourage, positive conflict in meetings where all opinions are aired and no one holds back. (For more information, read Patrick Lencioni's *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* and *Death By Meeting*.)

COACH WITHOUT TECHNICAL FOULS

Direct your pastoral heart to the sidelines when you see conflict between members of your congregation. Be slow to intervene and avoid triangling (being made a complicating third party) at all costs. Instead, provide direction and encouragement to follow Matthew 18:15 until it becomes absolutely necessary to call a time-out and proceed further.

CAPTURE THE POSITIVE

In addition to learning *about* conflict, be sure to learn *from* it, especially in cases of modern versus postmodern conflict. The situation can provide fresh perspective on previously foreign issues. Walk away from resolution with a short-term memory of any unpleasantness, but a long-term memory of cultural awareness, stronger theology, and strengthened relationships.

SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY

Avoidance can cause irrelevance, ineffectiveness, and hardheartedness. We cannot afford this in today's demanding ministry climate. Take time to regularly reflect on interactions you have with those you lead, and carefully evaluate your responses to conflict situations (accountability from an administrative assistant may be helpful). Try to improve your response time, while simultaneously lowering your avoidance ratio.

LORI O'DEA, D.Min., Springfield, Missouri



By moving cross-cultural conflict to the common ground of shared values, we can find resolution. Below are a few of the preferred means of transportation:

Become better listeners

A friend recently suggested that we needed to teach people how to listen better. The comment came after he had spent a significant amount of time with a group of ministers, listening to them share stories from their past experiences. I asked, "Do we need this lesson because we will learn so much from others or because the conversation resembled a wrestling match with each participant vying for the first opportunity to tell his story?"

He replied, "Yes."

You have probably had the same experience. Everyone wants to express his point of view. It is a valid human response. Everyone includes the people who hold opposing views of the issue. Many of us, reacting from the mindset of modernity learned from countless sermons, react to conflict with a barrage of arguments. We forget dialogue and move to imaginary pulpits, and then expect others to listen in silent anticipation.

If we do not become patient listeners, we will not recognize conflict with postmoderns when it happens. The postmodern value of tolerance will validate your opinion without ever giving it serious personal consideration. Good listeners will see the subtle difference and recognize that conflict, not connection, has occurred. The key to better listening is compassion. Do I care enough about the other person to make sure my relationship does not pivot on whether or not he mirrors my understanding of truth?

When Jesus saw the condition of the people, His heart ached with compassion for them (Matthew 9:36). Is your response the same or are you more likely to be repelled (even fascinated) by the ornamentation or attitude of the postmodern person before you?

Confront personally, immediately

"Pastor, my niece, who is a new Christian, is attending our church. She was at the mall recently. She entered a store and was treated terribly by an employee, a member of the choir. My niece is so upset that she is considering leaving the church."

I sighed on the inside, and asked, "Did your niece talk to the choir member?"

The answer was no. It never occurred to the niece or aunt to take this course of action. It rarely occurs to believers to deal with conflict at the starting point of Matthew 18:15, which gives instruction applicable to relationships. Conflict resolution demands personal confrontation. Delays and third parties only escalate the intensity of the controversy.

The key to personal confrontation is authenticity. No matter what your native culture, confrontation is rarely a natural first step. For postmoderns, though, it can be the difference between resolution and resentment. They could

NOT EVERY CONFLICT IS CULTURAL

Conflict is complex. It is rarely about one thing or caused by one part of our personality. Take time to recognize the contributions in the following areas.

PERSONALITY CLASHES

Every leader needs to take a basic course in identifying personality types (do a web search for DISC, Myers-Briggs, or choleric, sanguine, phlegmatic, melancholy assessment tools). There are strengths and weaknesses to each personality type. Knowing your own personality type, as well as being able to identify the personality types of others, will help you understand the strengths and weaknesses of others.

EXPERIENCE AND CALLING

Our past history, experience, and calling create a lens that can distort our perspective. If you have been in a particular ministry context for several years, you will see things different — for better *and* for worse — from someone coming into that context for the first time. Recognizing that these areas can create sharper vision as well as blind spots may prevent us from dwelling in the black hole of super-sensitivity.

GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES

Modernity and postmodernity are not age-restricted. Millennials and postmoderns are not synonymous. Like personalities, generational characteristics are not meant to pigeonhole people, but they can provide insight. Learn the basic qualities of the builders, boomers, busters, and millennials.

GENDER DIFFERENCES

Yes, men and women are different. Without going into great detail, can we agree to this fact and be willing to admit that those differences can and do lend themselves to occasional conflict?

SPIRITUAL CONDITION

Obviously, a person without Christ is disadvantaged in conflict-management resources. Just as impoverished, and even more responsible, is the believer who is not availing himself of the love, light, strength, guidance, and fruit of the Spirit. Conflict is sometimes caused by being out of step with the Spirit, and the best way to resolve it is to own up to your personal contribution to the problem.

LORI O'DEA, D.Min., Springfield, Missouri

care less about rules, but they will pay attention to someone who is genuine. Confrontation done well (privately, immediately, carefully) provides an opportunity to speak openly about the issue causing conflict, but more important, it shows concern for the person, passion about the issue, and respect for the future of the relationship.

Speak the truth in love

One of the earliest lies we tell ourselves is, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." This is a vicious lie and a wholly inadequate response to conflict. The truth of the matter is that words do hurt. When a child slings a hateful accusation, it is a sign of immaturity. When a believer does this, the same is true. It is time to grow up.

Ephesians 4 contains indicators of spiritual maturity, among them a powerful admonition to speak the truth to one another in love (Ephesians 4:15). Long abused as a sanctified reason to let someone have it with both barrels, this instruction begs rightful resurrection. Words have a tremendous power to heal, but only if the words are true. Truth is the content of righteous confrontation.

The key to speaking the truth is doing it with love. Genuine love is irresistible. Love strains the poison of condemnation and tenderizes the heart of the hearer to receive the truth. Unfortunately, we have used another childhood teaching — "If you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all" — as an excuse for avoiding confrontation. We fail to understand that the best thing we can do for another person is to confront him with the truth in love.

Open the doors to community

My neighborhood is typical of many these days. One by one,



"I fear commitment, but don't hold me to that."

backyards are being surrounded with privacy fences. When and where do these neighbors meet? At the curb on trash day? There is a lesson for the contemporary church here. Where does the postmodern culture intersect with the modern? At the curb of conflict where we often view others as unworthy of redemption?

Do we understand that this is the statement we make when we choose to ignore conflict or, worse, perpetuate it? That is not the kind of church our Lord described. The postmodern culture needs to see the church as a place where diversity is welcomed, where it is safe to speak your opinion, where hardened hearts are transformed into teachable ones, where there is generosity of time and attention, and most important, where you can bring your garbage with you. A church schooled in the principles of cross-cultural conflict resolution is a prime place for this kind of community.

The key to quality community is participation. Community is never one-sided. It cannot be forced on a person. We must invite a person to participate. The believer steeped in the tradition of modernity wants a newcomer to agree to a common set of rules before participating. The believer skilled in crosscultural conflict will welcome a brother or sister who needs to grapple with those issues in a loving, truth-telling community.

ARE YOU READY TO RUMBLE?

The church needs to see more cross-cultural conflict. This will indicate engagement with the postmodern culture rather than withdrawal. Healthy conflict provides an impetus for positive change and the momentum for forward movement in our churches. Instead of backing away from a seemingly foreign culture, pastors need to embrace it with a fresh perspective on the cross-cultural conflict they encounter.

The cross-cultural challenge is not easy, but we cannot ignore it. We need an undivided heart (Psalm 86:11) that will not be torn by different cultures, compromised by conflicting viewpoints, or hardened by consternation during the discipleship process. Postmodern people "think with their hearts, and listen with their eyes."³ In the raw environment of conflict, the right response by believers will provide plenty of worthwhile matter for the heart to ponder and the eyes to hear. Better yet, the right response will remedy the "kinks in his soul" to which Dr. Suess referred.



LORI O'DEA, D.Min., is doctor of ministry coordinator, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri.

ENDNOTES

 Dr. Seuss, *The Butter Battle Book* (New York: Random House, 1984), 1–6.
 For one of the best books on postmodernism, read Stanley Grenz, A *Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).
 Ravi Zacharias, "One Week in October," *Apologetics and the Postmodern Mind*, Oxford CA605

Battle in the BOARDROOM

BY PAUL E. GRABILL

PHOTO BY GETTY IMAGES

To live above with the saints we love Oh, that will be glory; but to live below with the saints we know Well, that's another story.

Another story, indeed.

For many pastors, living with the saints below would not be as hard if it were not for that one meeting every month. The mere mention of the words *board meeting* can cause pastors to break out in a cold sweat.

Today many are debating what constitutes the most biblical system for congregational leadership. As a result, some congregations are changing their church polity to do away with elected boards.

I believe the elected board system is not only workable, but can also be the vehicle that develops a deep trust within the congregation when board meetings are conducted properly. For most pastors, elected boards are still in their foreseeable future, so how do pastors best minister with them?

I confess that I have had a few less-than-ideal board meetings. But I have had more disagreements with my family than I have had with elected boards, and I would never disown my family.

Many pastors agree that managing pastor/board conflict is their primary challenge in ministry, and yet it is often an element of pastoral ministry in which they have received the least amount of training prior to pastoring. There may be no other single element of our ministry that can affect our overall ministry effectiveness more than understanding the causes and cures of pastor/board conflict.

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

Why do pastors and boards, who serve the same Lord, who read the same Bible, and who serve the same congregation, become adversarial? Some reasons are obvious; some are not. Here are a few.

Unwritten cultural rules

This one factor helps explain many disappointing pastor/ board relationships. The kingdom of God is filled with cultural diversity, but not everyone is gifted for cross-cultural ministry. Cultural diversity affects more than world missions. There are many subcultures in the United States, even within the predominant, yet shrinking, Anglo population.

An experienced preacher told me that he felt most pastors do best when they minister within a 150-mile radius of where they were raised. I see the wisdom in this statement.

In my district, I have seen pastors come from other regions of the country and have wonderful honeymoons with their congregations. Then, they begin to deal with a culture that can be demanding in many ways and few stay more than 3 or 4 years. What happened? They violated the unwritten rules and probably did not know it. Either they were unprepared for the expectations they would face in their new surroundings, or they did not understand how important the local values were to the congregation. A fatal loss of ministerial credibility is often the result.

What are some examples of unwritten cultural rules? The list is long and may include: work ethic, punctuality, definitions of honesty/integrity, attire, use of personal finances, kind of car one is expected to drive, tidiness, personal hygiene, and visitation expectations.

Remember, many board members were born and raised in their current surroundings and have limited appreciation for other cultural systems. To them, "this is the way it should be." It is virtually impossible to convince them otherwise.

It is important for a pastor to communicate (nonverbally as well as verbally) his love for the community in which he is ministering, whether it is in Africa or Arkansas. I often say from the pulpit, "I love central Pennsylvania." A pastor will have a short-lived ministry if he takes a negative attitude toward the area he is called to pastor (remember Nineveh?) or refuses to adapt to cultural norms that do not violate Scripture. An old saying comes to mind, "Love it or leave it."

Unresolved hurts and disappointments

Many pastors accept new pastorates, but may feel beaten up from experiences in their previous pastorates. While a honeymoon in the new congregation may give them time to heal, they must be prepared to minister to a hurting congregation as well. The congregation may be hurting from the actions of a previous pastor or from the loss (and possible feelings of betrayal) of a loved pastor.

The board often has deeper hurts than the congregation as a whole because they have dealt with previous difficult issues more closely. Sometimes spouses of board members carry the hurts more than the board members themselves. Although they did not serve on the board directly, their hurts are just as serious.

Even though it is God's will for you to be where you are, a double healing process may be needed. The healing process may take only a short time, but it is good to talk with the board about the possible need for you both to heal. Like hospital patients in a semi-private room, you can encourage and strengthen each other.

Who has the primary responsibility to diagnose and lead the healing process? The pastor does. Much has been said about the wounded healer, yet the healer must have recovered sufficiently to tend to others' wounds.

Unspoken fears

Unresolved hurts can easily breed paranoia on both the part

of the pastor and the board. The board may think all pastors are trying to get away with as much as they can, and the pastor may feel all boards are out to destroy pastors. Unfortunately, the fear can become self-fulfilling on both parts.

Due to fear, the pastor may be less accountable than he would be otherwise; the board, also from fear, looks to find what is possibly being hidden. The pastor hides from the board; the board presses harder to find out what is being hidden, reinforcing the pastor's fear. He hides even more, and the cycle repeats itself until some real or imagined dirt is discovered, and a crisis unfolds (often, again).

Some years ago, another experienced preacher told me the one thing to remember in church conflict, "People are not against you, they are for themselves."

Unholy fleshly fixation

While the previously mentioned old preacher's conflict maxim is often helpful in diagnosing conflict dynamics, there is also the danger that pastors and boards will constantly focus on each other's flesh.

People have mixed motivations in life; some are holy and some are self-serving and fleshly. The more godly we are, the less fleshly we become.

It is helpful, however, to assume that both pastors and board members have, at the core of their motivation, a desire to serve God and see His kingdom advance.

Undeveloped empathy

Most pastors have no idea what it is like to serve as a board member — to give one's time without remuneration, to serve in what is often a thankless role (when was the last time you had a Board Appreciation Day?), to even hear deacon jokes at gospel concerts. On the other hand, few board members have a grasp of the overwhelming demands pastors face.

The inability to put ourselves in other peoples' shoes creates the difficulty that results in many kinds of human conflict, not just church conflict.

We cannot lead people by trying to get them to feel sorry for us. I have tried it. It does not work.

Uncertain role definitions

The continual challenge for those with a congregational polity is the role of the primary board. Who is in charge — the pastor or the board?

On one hand, the pastor is the leader, but the board often controls the purse strings (including the pastor's salary). Is the board merely advisory or (as has been my perspective) a team of leaders with the pastor?

Early in my present pastorate, we changed the name of our board to the board of elders, though they are still nominated and elected the same way they were when they were called *deacons*. This acknowledges that many of them are seasoned, mature believers who are perceived as elders by others in the congregation.

I have learned that holding people down holds me down with them. Lifting people up usually results in the leader also being lifted up. I prefer the latter.

Unsure leadership

One of the greatest challenges in pastor/board relationships is when the pastor, the titular leader, abdicates leadership to someone else who may be a more gifted leader. This can either be the pastor's spouse or a leader in the congregation.

This arrangement may work temporarily; but when it becomes apparent that the real leader of the congregation is not the pastor, his respect is diminished. If he leaves, the succeeding pastor will have difficultly wresting the leadership role back.

Someone has to lead. The pastor must be more than a chaplain or counselor. If the true leader is not the pastor, the system may adapt, but will eventually become dysfunctional. Thankfully, God has raised up ministries, such as John Maxwell's, to help pastors develop their leadership skills.

Unfairness

We all know how lonely pastoring can be. It is difficult for a pastor to maintain a balance in relationships so he is not perceived to have favorites on the board and in the congregation. The more imbalanced our relationships are perceived to be, the more problems we will have. This is particularly true in a smaller congregation, where everyone expects to be close to the pastor.

Maintaining this balance can be a challenge when the pastor has knowledge of an individual's giving records. Some pastors feel they need to be aware of their members' giving, but I choose not to. While knowing may not influence my evenhanded treatment of parishioners, the perception within the board and congregation may be different. Perception becomes reality.

Some districts and sections have recognized the need ministers have for close relationships and fellowship. They are restructuring to provide opportunities for friendships to develop between ministers so their need for fellowship will not have to be met within their congregation. Other pastors are finding close, accountable relationships with evangelical pastors and spouses in their local communities.

Unnerving change

It is the role of leaders to lead, and that often involves change. When pastors lead churches into new territory, they need to be sensitive to the pace of change, ownership of the change process, and the perceptions of the motivation behind the proposed change. Excellent material is available today on leading change. One or two of these books should be in the pastor's library.

NOW THAT WE ARE HERE, WHAT DO I DO?

We may understand how the difficulties have developed between pastors and boards, but how can pastors work with adversarial board members?

Treat them with love and respect

First, remember that the adversarial board member is within your pastoral charge. He may be your worst nightmare, but you have been called to pastor him. Not only does he need your unconditional love, but also your pastoral wisdom to help him understand his own frustrations, even those he has with you. If God did not think you could handle him with His help, He would not have placed you where you are. Treat the board member with respect even when he does not deserve it. It will pay rich dividends in the end.

Listen and be understanding

Second, listen, listen, and listen some more. Do not interpret what adversarial board members are saying as artillery rounds. Listen objectively and empathically. Objective listening is not influenced by preconceptions or reports from others. Remember, everyone filters information through his own lens. Filter what you hear through the Throne of Grace and utilize the empathy of Christ. Do you understand what it is like to be in their shoes? Do not respond until you do.

Deal with issues, not personalities

Third, deal with issues rather than personalities. Find areas of disagreement and deal with them instead of labeling some people as *loyal* and others as *troublemakers*. Doing that does not require wisdom or guidance from the Spirit. When I have dealt with issues rather than with personalities, I have won over those who have been troublesome to previous pastors. They were not devils. They only needed to be talked to, loved, and understood. If you always assume a group of troublemakers will be against you, then there will always be a group against you. In a previous congregation, I had my biggest differences with a couple that loved me as a son. I loved them, too, and they knew it. I was often at their house, eating their food ... and sometimes even arguing. Everyone in the congregation knew it was not personal, and respected me deeply because of it.

Seek counsel from mature pastors

Fourth, seek counsel from other mature pastors to diagnose the problem. Sometimes the core of the matter is quite simple; sometimes it is deeper. It may be one or more of the symptoms of dysfunction listed above. Nevertheless, it is your primary responsibility to seek God for understanding before moving on the problem. Remember, the wrong medication can kill a patient. You should seek to determine what the adversarial board member (or spouse) wants, since it is usually true that they are more for themselves than they are against you. An objective person will not be clouded by the fear, or even paranoia, that can occasionally grip a pastor's spirit. You may not be able to give them what they want. You will be able, however, to deal with the core issue and distinguish between it and the many peripheral matters and feelings that often surround it.

Apologize

Fifth, apologize when you have offended other leaders. This is the right thing to do. An apology will often open the closed heart of the leader who has been offended. Once I inadvertently offended a leader here at State College Assembly. When I discovered what I had done, I apologized and offered to apologize publicly, since it was a public offense. The leader said, "Oh, no. It is okay." I watched as his heart opened up to me more than it had been before. Resolved problems can often draw people closer together. A willingness to apologize comes from walking by faith, not from fear.

Ask a trusted third party to help resolve the issue

Sixth, if you are unable to resolve difficulties one-on-one with a single adversarial member (that is the preferred way), consider bringing in another party to assist you. If possible, choose someone that is reasonable and whom the other party trusts. Otherwise, the adversarial member will feel outnumbered and defensive. I do not mind feeling outnumbered if I



am doing the right thing. If God is on my side, I feel safe. If not, my problems are bigger than a difficult board member.

Remember, solving most congregational problems is a process. A pastor who follows preventative and positive steps to develop a strong, healthy board can influence the whole board and weaken the power of a single adversarial member. In an extreme situation, it may be warranted to ask an adversarial member to step aside for a season for the sake of unity.

Address the problem; take the heat

Seventh, if it becomes necessary, be prepared to pay the price. It is better to deal with multiple adversarial members and take the heat if it is the best way to fix a deep, systemic problem. These issues need to be resolved before you give your resignation. Do not leave the problem for a new pastor to deal with.

If after you have sought trusted, objective, outside counsel, and are certain you occupy the moral high ground, gently inform the adversarial board members that a church cannot function properly if the pastor is not permitted to lead. If this has been a reoccurring problem with pastor after pastor, try to diagnose with them (yes, *with* — we may be at odds, but we are sharing the problem) when the problem began. If the problems originate from a pastor's actions years ago, address the need to forgive and let go of the past. If it is the result of a previous pastor abdicating his leadership, discuss how this hinders a church's growth. As a last resort, invite district leadership to assist you.

Our district recently launched a conflict reconciliation ministry with three regional teams (because of regional differences and travel distance). Each team consists of trained clergy and laity who are available to intervene when invited.

SHEPHERD OF HERMAS

One of the most challenging things I read was in an Apostolic Fathers class in seminary. The text was so highly valued by the Early Church that some felt it should be in the New Testament canon.

It is a hard text, but I agree with it, and it has saved me from much heartache over the years. I have (usually) chosen not to take what parishioners say too personally, much like a good psychiatrist would not take personally abusive speech from a client.

Shepherd of Hermas, Parable the Ninth, 31b:

"For if the shepherds themselves shall have been found scattered, how will they answer for the flocks? Will they say they were harassed by the flock? No credence will be given them. For it is an incredible thing that a shepherd should be injured by his flock; and he will be punished the more because of his falsehood."

PAUL E. GRABILL, State College, Pennsylvania

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

What are some preventative and positive steps to develop strong and healthy relationships with church boards?

Spiritual growth

The best thing I can do as a pastor to improve my relationships with God, my family, the church board, and with everyone else is to keep growing spiritually. Remember to practice what you preach. Do you believe your loving Heavenly Father will care for you and your family in every situation? Then walk with a confidence that will win you respect and admiration. Otherwise, your insecurity will breed problems and create a self-fulfilling crisis. When you walk in fear, you become the problem that others will feel forced to fix.

If I focus on myself, if I minister in a controlling spirit, if I am not the spiritual leader at home, if I tell everyone else that they need to be more like Christ, but they do not see growth in me, it does not matter what wisdom or techniques I employ, I will always have trouble with the people I have been called to lead.

This admonition is not intended to cause anyone undue guilt and shame. Even Jesus had trouble with His followers, but He overcame the same way we overcome. We live by faith, we walk by faith, and we overcome by faith.

Sowing respect

We reap what we sow. Sow respect and you will reap respect. I have already spoken of treating elders with the respect they deserve.

Some may disagree, but I take this even further. I chose early on not to have other pastoral team members regularly attend board meetings. If the church staff agrees, then board members feel ganged-up on. If they disagree, it is even worse. They show staff disunity before the board.

When I came to my current pastorate, we quickly came to an understanding that the pastoral staff was accountable to me, and I was accountable to the board. I told our hardworking pastors to enjoy that night of the month with their family. Then I moved the chairperson's seat to the side of the table (not the end) to indicate that we are a team, with me serving as the player-coach.

In addition, I bless the board members before the congregation. I engage them in the ministry of praying for the sick and praying for the offering. I also frequently express appreciation for them. Occasionally, I reassure my congregation their board is not made up of yes people.

When there is a difficult decision to share with the congregation, I try to take the brunt of anything that is unpopular. Conversely, I make the board the heroes when something is popular. They (and their spouses) do not forget when they are treated with respect.

Shepherd first, CEO second

In today's environment, pastors with growing congregations are sometimes told they need to become ranchers more than shepherds. This may be true, but a good rancher must demonstrate the heart of a shepherd before he can oversee undershepherds.

The board members may be wowed by your management expertise, but they will not follow you to the end of the earth on that basis. They will follow you if they see the heart of Christ in you. This is particularly important as you determine the pace of change. The pace of change is determined by the needs you have and by the amount of change your church can handle. Pastoring is not a mechanical operation, just as doctoring is not working on living machines.

The saying, "I would love the ministry if it were not for the people," may elicit a laugh in a preachers' gathering, but can speak of a lack of love on our part. Can you imagine Jesus' earthly ministry as a pseudo-loving, mechanical enterprise? I hope you cannot.

How you express your shepherd's heart will be determined not only by your gifting, but also, to some degree, by the culture in which you serve. Is home visitation expected? How much time are you expected to spend with people at the altar? Will you be expected to go hunting, fishing, or golfing with congregational members? These questions are best asked during the interview process, but can be ascertained by asking your board.

Shepherd with fairness. If your role includes hospital visitation, do not visit a select few. Also, an occasional phone call will bless people. Call those whom God lays on your heart. They will be blessed and will not forget that you were thinking of them.

Securing trust

I minister under the assumption that most board members respect the church as well as the office of pastor, or they would leave. (Would you give as much time and energy as your board members do if you received nothing tangible in return?) I also assume that I was elected because the board wanted me to succeed, not fail.

I do not take respect for granted. Most of the respect and trust I am given will not be given automatically because I am called "Pastor Grabill." Most will come because I earned it.

Most pastors reading this article have probably discovered that they cannot effectively minister with a deficiency in their board and congregational trust level. In any relationship there are times we need to make withdrawals from our account. For pastors, it may be a sermon on a controversial issue; it may be addressing a sensitive personal issue with a key board member. But how do we add to our account? How do we avoid becoming overdrawn?

Many activities that pastors do as part of their ministry are considered winner activities. Hospital visitation, attending family members' funerals, and home visitation are ways you can minister to your people and show love and concern. These quickly add to your account. I still remember those from our congregation who traveled 1 hour to attend the viewing and funeral when my father passed away. Congregational members remember times when you went out of your way to minister to them as well.

There are a myriad of other winning activities. Consistent follow-through is another. If decisions are made at board meetings but nothing changes within the month, the pastor loses ministerial currency. Live by this maxim: "Do it now."

The list is long: returning calls within 24 hours (4 hours is better); being an example in personal evangelism; spending time with board members outside of formal meetings; taking criticism as constructive even when it is not meant to be; honoring the older, faithful members in your congregation; loving children; being a good loser (especially in board meetings, winning 90 to 95 percent of the time is probably the ideal range); asking for forgiveness (publicly if need be); loving the community where God has called you to serve; keeping fresh by constant reading and growing.

You primarily determine whether your board members hear good reports or bad reports about your ministry. While the motive for doing these activities is not to add to your account, these activities done in love will help you develop the kind of deep, caring relationships you need with your board and people.

Pastoring is the greatest privilege in the world. It may be challenging, but you and I can do it, with God's help.

I have loved the boards with which God has given me to work. Not all of God's great saints will get the credit they deserve here. I know, because I have had the privilege of serving with some of them on the local level.

Pastoring is what we make it to be. There are joys and tears — even after board meetings. But as colonels in God's army, we will never accomplish what God has called us to do without a team of captains and lieutenants. They can become our best officers and our best friends as well.

Take a moment and thank God for them. God will honor your gratitude.



PAUL E. GRABILL, senior pastor, State College Assembly of God, State College, Pennsylvania.

When Sheep DEALING

86 ENRICHMENT SPRING 2005

ILLUSTRATION BY: GARY LOCKE

IN THE

Squabble-WITH DISCORD SMALLER CHURCH

BY GLENN C. DAMAN

The small church revolves around the close relationships formed within the congregation. Because of this, many believe that a small church is a place where deeply caring people who love one another and mutually support each other gather to worship, where conflicts are nonexistent, and where "never is heard a discouraging word."

While this is true of many smaller congregations most of the time, it is not true of every congregation all the time. Conflict is a reality that confronts a congregation regardless of how loving and caring the people are. The difference between a loving congregation and one settling into patterns of warfare is not the amount of conflict or the intensity of conflict, but the way they respond to and resolve conflict.

Loving churches resolve conflict with minimal damage to long-term relationships. Warring congregations allow conflicts to fester and grow. They never seek resolution and often add new conflicts to their existing problems.

Since conflict is a reality pastors face in small-church ministry, they need to understand the dynamics of conflict within the small church and develop godly methods for resolving it. While conflict can affect a church of any size, when it arises in a small church it can devastate the spiritual well-being of the congregation and undermine its ministry for years to come.

THE DYNAMICS OF SMALL-CHURCH CONFLICT

When tensions develop because people disagree, even two or three individuals within the congregation, the small church experiences spiritual stress and emotional upheaval. Conflict can be especially traumatic for the people and pastor as they try to deal with the crisis.

Conflict undermines the morale of the pastor

One significant problem in a small church is the isolation of the pastor. In a small church there are no staff members from whom to obtain emotional and spiritual support. When issues arise the pastor often faces them alone.

This isolation is especially acute when pastors are

embroiled in a controversy that involves the board. Because pastors do not have anyone to confide in, they lack the input and wisdom that could be gained from someone who understands the issues and can provide the unbiased counsel needed to resolve the problems.

Many pastors in small churches in isolated communities also experience the compounded effects of isolation. They often feel overlooked and abandoned. Even their denominational leaders may sometimes seem distant and unavailable to them and their congregation.

Some pastors find comfort and counsel from other pastors in the area, but small-church pastors often do not have this option. There may be no local ministerial association and the nearest church may be miles away. As a result pastors become easily discouraged and soon feel overwhelmed by the conflict. When they can no longer maintain a positive perspective, they start seeing the situation as hopeless and soon leave the church or ministry.

Conflict undermines the morale of the small church

The morale of a small church is often fragile. Because the church may struggle with finances, staff, and resources, there is a concern that the church will no longer be viable. A small church can become discouraged if other churches grow and it does not. The people can become discouraged if new families visit, but go to the church down the road because it offers more programs. The positive characteristic they cling to is "we are a loving church." If, however, the church becomes embroiled in a conflict, it undermines the one characteristic that is the strength of the church. The discouragement this causes adds fuel to the conflict, especially when people start blaming each other for the current problems.

Small churches often mask conflict under the guise of relational unity

A small church has a relational culture. The people can appear unified in public, but conflicts often remain hidden



below the surface. Members may be resentful from past hurts and offenses, and even be angry and bitter.

In a small church there exists a cultural obligation for people to get along, to help one another and work together. This cultural expectation pressures people to overlook their differences and look beyond the petty quarrels that divide people. This can often challenge people to resolve their conflicts, but it can also become a mask behind which conflict simmers and festers, and eventually explodes and divides the church. The tensions may never degenerate into open warfare, but a cold war can exist where people manipulate church politics to undermine their opponents' programs or ideas.

Conflicts affect the whole

A disagreement between two individuals in a larger church may remain unnoticed by the rest of the congregation; but

in a smaller congregation, the whole church feels the tension. A small church operates as a whole. People want to know what is going on in every program and ministry, even if they while all conflict cannot and should not be avoided, many conflicts within the small church can be prevented.

are not directly involved. Consequently, everyone becomes aware of a conflict between two individuals. They will intuitively sense the tension, even if they are not fully aware of the issues.

This can be beneficial if the congregation puts pressure on the individuals to resolve their differences, but it can also be destructive when people start choosing sides. This polarization can happen because of existing bloodlines in the church. When the conflict involves two prominent families, clan warfare can arise as each tribal chief fights for dominance.

Conflicts affect the testimony of the church

The future ministry of the church can be affected when people become angry and bitter with one another. This is especially true for churches in smaller communities where the population remains static. People in the community say, "Well, I used to attend that church, but. ..."

The ongoing conflicts that hinder the outreach of the church may not only stem from internal conflicts within the church, but also from conflicts within the community. When invited to attend the church, people say, "I would go to church, if so-and-so did not go there."

A church that has a history of conflict may become known as "the church that can't get along." These scenarios are especially true when a past conflict was never resolved. Before the church can begin any significant outreach into the community, it may need to bring resolution to issues that happened decades ago.

STRESS POINTS IN THE SMALL CHURCH

Many issues can cause tension within a church. People have conflicts over values and goals. They disagree over issues of urban areas create the potential for cultural tensions when traditional rural values and culture collide with urban values and culture. This not only affects relationships within the community, but it also affects relationships in the church.

power and authority. Conflicts also arise because people are

discouraged and morale is low. These can undermine unity

within the congregation. The small church is no more exempt

from these issues than a large church. There are issues,

however, to which a smaller congregation is more susceptible.

In the past, small churches, especially those in rural areas, were a homogeneous group unified around established cultural norms

and values reflecting the homogeneous nature of the whole

community. In recent years, however, there has been a dramatic

Conflicts because of cultural tensions

Congregations become involved in tensions over music, versions of the Bible, dress codes, and other cultural differences. Concerns that are cultural become biblical issues when the division between cultural values and biblical values becomes clouded. When tensions arise, people not only disagree, but also see the opposition as being liberal or legalistic, and thus ungodly.

Conflicts also develop over nonreligious issues such as the environment, land-use policies, and other political issues being debated within the community. These political hot potatoes not only dominate the political landscape, but they also infiltrate the church. People on opposite ends of the political arena may be sitting on the same pew on Sunday. The tensions they experience in the secular world create tensions within the congregation and affect the congregation's interaction and involvement with the secular community.

As these opinions collide, the church can provide reconciliation within the congregation and community. The church can have a significant witness, not by taking sides in the cultural battles, or remaining indifferent to them, but by demonstrating the ministry of reconciliation between people and pointing people to spiritual reconciliation with God (2 Corinthians 5:18–21).

Tribal warfare

Quite often a person or family within a small church becomes the tribal chief. This individual or family, because of past involvement, possess significant authority and influence in the church. This person may be in an official position of authority such as on the board, or he may not hold any recognized position. His influence, however, significantly controls the decisions and direction of the church. The congregation looks up to him.

Conflict arises in a small church when the tribal chief's authority and influence are challenged. Often the challenge comes from the pastor as he finds himself at odds with this individual over the decisions and direction of the church. The result is tribal warfare in the congregation.

When the conflict is between the pastor and the tribal chief, people often will not openly oppose the pastor, but they will

Since conflict is a reality pastors face in small-church ministry, they need to understand the dynamics of conflict within the small church and develop godly methods for resolving it.

begin to withdraw from ministry positions and from financially supporting the church. In many cases, when the tribal chief conflicts with the pastor, the rest of the congregation will support the tribal chief and the pastor becomes isolated from the church and is eventually forced to resign.

Change

Change inevitably leads to conflict, even when the change is unavoidable. Change creates a conflict with the past as the church seeks to move forward to the future. Small churches have often been criticized for being rigid and unwilling to change. While this at times is true, in most cases people are willing to change, but they do not want to be forced into a change they do not understand or do not perceive as beneficial to themselves and to the church. When making a change creates a problem, most often it is not a reflection of the people's attitude toward change, but the way the leader has introduced and handled the change.

Because the small church is relationally driven, people are not willing to embrace changes that may negatively affect relationships within the congregation. They will not embrace a change that is perceived to destroy a relational connection with past and present members who have built the church. For example, the church may resist changing the pews even though the old pews are terribly uncomfortable because John, who was a founder of the church, purchased the pews. For them, the issue is not the discomfort they feel during a service. The pews are a testimony to the heritage John left the church. Changing the pews would destroy the visible and tangible testimony of that heritage.

When making changes, the pastor must determine what the relational connections are and how to maintain them during the process. In the case of the pews, it may mean placing a plaque on the new pews that recognizes John and his contribution to the church.

Personalities

People disagree because people have different personalities. Some people enjoy country music, some enjoy classical music, and some enjoy contemporary music. Some people like red carpet, some prefer green, and some want no carpet at all. A church of 75 people has 75 different personali-

> ties. In a small church, people freely express their preferences and desires. While people may develop skills to work through the personality differences, there are times when those differences clash profoundly. Individuals become hurt and angry if they interpret the

rejection of their ideas as a rejection of themselves. What seems to be a minor disagreement becomes a full-blown war as individuals fight for their personal identity.

While pastors encourage people to live out their faith as Paul challenges us in Philippians 2, placing the needs of others above their own rarely happens. People remain self-serving rather than self-sacrificing due to their uncontrolled carnal nature. Leaders must foster an atmosphere where people value the differences they have and realize that the strength of the church is not found in the homogeneity of the group, but in the diversity of the group, both in giftedness and personality.

RESOLVING CONFLICT WITHIN THE SMALL CHURCH

Conflict in itself is not wrong or necessarily destructive. What is wrong and what causes the destruction of relationships is how people respond to conflict. The key to dealing with conflict is not to avoid it, but to properly resolve it. Many resources are available that can assist the pastor and board in conflict resolution.¹ The following issues are relevant to resolving conflict in the small church.

Personal interaction

Because the small church is relationally driven, the first and most crucial element of conflict resolution is personal and direct interaction with the other person. Many conflicts between two people can be handled by a personal phone call or visit. The pastor can serve as an informal mediator between the two parties, helping them understand one another and come to a common and agreeable solution. The foundation of this approach to problem solving is the relationship the pastor has with the two people. If a pastor develops solid relationships with his people, they will respect and welcome his involvement in the situation. If the pastor, however, remains aloof and distant from his congregation, his involvement will be seen as an intrusion and cause the conflict to escalate. When issues arise between people that cause tension, the pastor should be able to go to them, listen and assess the issue, and provide suggestions for a quick and fair resolution. In a small church, the pastor is quickly aware of conflicts and usually has a positive, personal relationship with the people involved. This relationship provides opportunities for pastoral involvement in conflict resolution.

Board intervention

If the conflict affects a group of individuals, the whole congregation, or if the pastor becomes involved in the conflict, then the board must be included in the resolution process. The issue may be minor, and it may be one the pastor can address. But if the conflict is on a church issue, the board needs to be aware of it.

The board can provide prayer support for the people involved and emotional and spiritual support for the pastor as he seeks to bring about the resolution. It is a mistake for a pastor to make decisions that affect the congregation without first communicating to the board. The pastor then becomes the center of the conflict and is without any support. If the pastor has communicated clearly with the board and is acting on decisions that were jointly made, the board will unite and support the pastor even when people are critical.

Active intervention

A small church has a tendency to overlook conflict and sweep it under the carpet. This does not bring resolution, but creates subversive hostility. The people involved begin to develop bitterness and anger toward each other. When tensions arise, it is important for the pastor and board to become actively involved in making sure the issues are resolved.

To resolve the problems, the pastor and board chairman need to first meet with the individuals involved and determine the issues that gave rise to the hostilities. Second, once the issues are identified and clarified, then the pastor and board need to meet to discuss the problem and the kind of intervention needed. Third, in many cases the pastor and the board need to meet with the people involved to help them find a solution to the problem. When meeting with the individuals, the board should try to find a solution that both parties can support. Once a solution has mutual support, the people involved need to be asked to make a covenant with the other party stating that they will work toward the solution. Finally, once both parties agree to the solution, it is the responsibility of the board, not just the pastor, to hold the people accountable by ensuring that the agreement is lived out.

PREVENTING CONFLICT IN THE SMALL CHURCH

While all conflict cannot and should not be avoided, many conflicts within the small church can be prevented. Many tensions can develop, not because of sinful behavior, but because pastors fail to communicate clearly and learn how to work with others.

Working with the tribal chief

Pastors can avoid being entangled in controversy by learning to work with the tribal chief of the congregation. Remember, this individual has considerable influence in the church. A pastor sometimes wrongly assumes that the tribal chief disagrees with his ideas because he is carnal and power driven. In most cases, however, the tribal chief has risen to the rank he holds because of his faith and long-term involvement in the church. A tribal chief often provides the spiritual stability small churches need during changes in pastoral leadership.

Because small churches tend to experience rapid turnover in pastoral leadership, people in the church do not always look to the pastor to provide the stability needed to see the church through difficult times. Rather, the tribal chief is the stabilizing influence. When a pastor seeks to unseat a tribal chief, he finds himself not only at odds with the tribal chief, but at odds with the congregation. When the church becomes unsettled because the pastor and the tribal chief have entered into conflict, the people will not look to the pastor for stability and security, but will turn to the tribal chief.

If a pastor desires to have influence in the growth and stability of the congregation, he must learn to work side by side with the tribal chief, gaining his trust and support. When the pastor enlists the support of the tribal chief



for a new ministry or a change in ministry, the entire congregation will readily adopt the idea. They will no longer see the change as a threat to the stability of the church.

Orchestrate change carefully

Most change results in conflict as the desired new methods clash with the established old methods. As a result, change involves a loss as well as a threat to the stability of the church. This is especially critical to a church that is struggling to exist. Even though the change may be necessary for the church to remain viable, people fear that the change may be the final action that pushes the church over the edge.

When a pastor seeks to make changes within a small church, it is important to orchestrate the change in a way that minimizes the threat and loss to the congregation. This involves clearly communicating why the change is necessary, communicating both the positive and negative effects the change may have, and then allowing people the freedom to accept or reject the change. It is important to gain the people's consent and support when seeking approval for a change. The people need to give their support to the proposed, otherwise it will not be effective.

Maintain communication

Pastors often create tension because they assume everyone has heard and understood what has been communicated. Conflict usually arises because pastors have under-communicated rather than over-communicated. The rule of thumb is: the more significant the issue and the more it affects congregational life, the more pastors must communicate clearly and continually what is happening and why. This is especially true in the small church. The people want to know what is going on in every aspect of the ministry. The adage, "communicate on a need to know basis," does not work in the small church. Communication in a small church is as critical and necessary as it is in a larger congregation, perhaps even more so. The people are interested in the church's ministry and have a need to know.

CONCLUSION

Conflict is a reality in every church, whether it is large or small. The task of pastoral leadership is not to eradicate every conflict in the church, but to help people resolve the conflicts in a way that honors Christ, protects the people, and manifests love within the congregation. To achieve this, the pastor of a small church must be proactive in conflict resolution. Too often, pastors assume that love will override the conflict because a small church is relationally driven and enjoys close interpersonal relationships. This is often not the case.

Unresolved conflict becomes the seedbed of dissension

CONFLICT INTERVENTION:

- What is the issue that is causing the conflict?
- Who are the individuals involved?
- What needs to occur for resolution to happen?
- What are the possible solutions to the disagreement?
- What is the best solution?
- Are the parties willing to accept the solution?

and division and can destroy the closeness of the church and undermine its ministry. Pastors need to be active in assisting people to communicate openly and honestly about disagreements and to work toward mutually agreeable solutions.

When the board becomes involved in the resolution, the effects of the tension on the whole congregation will be minimized. When the congregation knows the board is united, they are more willing to remain on the sidelines rather than become involved in the dispute. Furthermore, when they see the issue being resolved by the board, they are less likely to become stressed by the crisis. Instead, they will remain confident that God is at work in the church.

When pastors resolve conflict in a godly manner and communicate clearly with the board, they maintain a spiritually healthy and vibrant church even in the midst of disagreements. Conflict does not need to destroy the ministry of the pastor or the church. It can become a springboard for spiritual growth as people learn to communicate clearly, love unconditionally, and forgive completely. It is not the absence of conflict that distinguishes a loving church, but the resolution of it. When pastors successfully resolve conflict within the church, it distinguishes the church from an unloving world where bitterness, anger, and hostilities destroy relationships. When the people in the church love their enemies, accept one another in spite of their differences, and resolve their disagreements, then all men will know that they are Christ's disciples from the love they have for one another (John 13:35).



GLENN C. DAMAN, D.Min., is pastor of Stevenson First Baptist Church, Stevenson, Washington, and Cascade Locks Community Church, Cascade Locks, Oregon. He is author of *Shepherding the Small Church*, and also serves as director of Western Institute for

Small Church Health, Western Seminary, Portland, Oregon. For more articles on small-church ministry, visit his website at: http://www.westernseminary.edu/isch/ichsmall.html.

ENDNOTE

1. Norman Shawchuck, *How To Manage Conflict in the Church, vol. 1 and 2* (Glendale Heights, Ill.: Spiritual Growth Resources, 1984). Also, Edward G. Dobson, Speed B. Leas, Marshall Shelly, *Mastering Conflict and Controversy* (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah Press, 1992).

STHEME INTERVIEW

INTERVIEW WITH SPEED LEAS



INVOLUNTARY TERMINATIONS: WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU ARE THE SOURCE OF THE PROBLEM

hen a pastor is forced to leave the pastorate either through being voted out or from conflict that escalates to the point where he is forced to leave, blame for his early departure is often placed on the church or various members within the church. These conflicts have to do with disputes between some of the members and the pastor's values or goals, conflicts about worship leadership and who has the right to make what decisions in the congregation. But sometimes the source of conflict, or the events that cause him to terminate his pastorate, stem from his own behavior. Speed Leas, senior consultant at The Alban Institute, and Visiting Professor of Congregational Leadership, Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley, California, has conducted two surveys concerning pastors who were forced into involuntary termination. Richard L. Schoonover, Enrichment journal associate editor, interviewed Leas about the findings in these studies and what pastors can learn from them.

DESCRIBE THE STUDIES YOU HAVE CONDUCTED CONCERNING PASTORS AND INVOLUNTARY TERMINATIONS.

LEAS: In the late 1970s I conducted a study of all of the involuntary

terminations in the Episcopal Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church, and the United Church of Christ. In 1992 I repeated the research. That year we looked at 194 cases where involuntary terminations took place and the criteria involved. We found that the majority of pastors are terminated because they lack ministerial and professional competence. Within this category, the primary issue was the pastor's ability to plan and conduct corporate worship and how satisfied the congregation was with the worship services. I must note that some of the conflict generated here comes from a difference in priorities or values about worship with members of the congregation. Nonetheless, the most frequently noted dissatisfaction related to involuntary terminations had to do with preaching and worship leadership.

The second biggest factor for involuntary termination is the pastor's inability to teach. Third, pastors were evaluated by their ability to help people deal with personal grief. Fourth is their level of pastoral care, followed by outreach to the community, then helping people deal with corporate grief as opposed to personal grief.

We also examined two other major categories that bring about pastoral termination: administrative and political ability, and interpersonal competence.

DIFFERENCES IN WORSHIP STYLES IS AN IMPORTANT ISSUE IN CHURCHES TODAY. WHAT FACTORS ARE IMPORTANT IN A PASTOR'S ABILITY TO MANAGE WORSHIP?

LEAS: Worship issues revolve around whether worship is contemporary or traditional, informal or formal, and the pastor's skill in implementing these various styles or forms of worship. I would also include disputes about the theologies expressed in worship. I recently had a situation with a church where there was a dispute over whether or not to include an altar call. Another issue is the use of inclusive language. This is sometimes seen as a theological dispute, not just a stylistic one. It is certainly not the fault of pastors that they have theology A and a layperson has theology B, or they both have different ideas about worship. But the key for pastors is to respect differing opinions while providing leadership in appropriate theological positions.

To lessen conflict in these areas, pastors need to reduce their defensiveness and negative reactions toward others and their suggestions. Pastors need to acknowledge what others bring to the discussion. If it is fundamental to the values of the congregation, these ideas need to be taken to the board or the appropriate group within the congregation. Together they can explore the position leadership is taking on a specific issue.

Closely tied to the issue of worship is the pastor's ability to teach — to speak clearly, to organize his sermons, and to put together a worship service with a theme. The

Churches want leadership that is not boring and passive. They want leadership with a sense of excitement and contagious enthusiasm.

congregation also expects its pastor to be prepared. This means he should teach in ways that are interesting — to involve and help people understand and grow without overwhelming them with huge amounts of information that they find difficult to integrate into their lives. This involves using good methodology.

Doctrinal issues can sometimes cause conflict. But it is appropriate for pastors to share their strongly held doctrinal views especially if these views come out of the tradition of the congregation. One main ingredient, though, is how pastors deal with those who challenge their teaching and raise questions about doctrine. You will notice I mentioned defensiveness earlier. Pastors who respond defensively out of their deeply held convictions will almost certainly escalate the conflict.

HOW DOES A PASTOR'S INABILITY TO DEAL WITH INSTANCES OF PERSONAL AND CORPORATE GRIEF AFFECT HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS CONGREGATION?

LEAS: Helping people deal with personal grief is probably one of the most important opportunities a pastor has for nurturing life into the people of the congregation. People open themselves up, listen to what the pastor is saying, and appreciate what he is doing for them. People are ready to hear the gospel and explore the meaning of life and what has happened to them, especially if they have lost a family member or

a friend. Grief often comes through circumstances outside the counseling ability of pastors. I can think of a number of instances where members of the congregation complained because the pastor never did anything, never said anything, and never took a position on anything.

congregation is taking.

In such cases, pastors need to offer an appropriate referral. People bring family problems involving teenagers and children. These situations often require long-term, in-depth counseling a pastor cannot provide. Pastors sometimes want to go beyond their therapeutic competence with some of these care issues. If they do, they can get in over their heads.

Pastoral care also involves outreach to the community by enabling, helping, and facilitating the congregation to recognize needs in the community. This not only includes needs for services such as food, clothing, and safety, but also needs in

> terms of justice and social-issue concerns. It is appropriate for pastors to give leadership and help people respond compassionately to these areas. But sometimes pastors don't do well in distinguishing between what is a political or compassionate position and what the church's response should be to justice

issues within the community. Sometimes pastors are afraid to get out in the community, and they hide in their offices rather than reach out to the community around the church. When they do this, they miss the part of the gospel which is to give a cup of cold water.

Some pastors do not do well dealing with corporate grief. Examples of corporate grief include losses experienced by a large number of people in the congregation — the building burning down, the loss of a pastor, or any kind of crisis that has implications for the larger group as well as individual.

IN WHAT WAYS DOES THE PASTOR'S LACK OF ADMINISTRATIVE ABILITY AFFECT HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS CONGREGATION?

LEAS: Administrative ability was the second major area we examined. The greatest number of problems in this area involves planning, budgeting, and establishing direction for the congregation.

Let me first address planning. Many congregations simply do not conduct any kind of planning. This includes basic strategies such as identifying what makes a congregation special, or establishing its vision for ministry. Envisioning and focusing is the No. 1 way to energize people and get them involved within the church. This also is a very important dimension of managing church conflict. If a congregation establishes clearly identified priorities, it is much easier to

Budgeting is related to planning. Budgeting should be tied to the congregation's planning and priority setting. Instead,

deal with minority groups who snipe at the direction the

many churches often base their budget on last year's budget rather than thinking about their priorities and where they want to develop them. Sometimes a short-term, manageable conflict will help break this cycle and help a church discover and agree on its priorities. When a church defines its priorities, it doesn't get into the same kind of trouble it would if it tried to continue without priorities.

Another part of a pastor's administrative skills involves motivational and inspirational skills. Some pastors lack these skills. Churches want leadership that is not boring and

Among those things for which clergy are responsible are: worship leadership, the pastor's ability to teach — to speak clearly, to organize his sermons, and to put together a worship service with a theme.

passive. They want leadership with a sense of excitement and contagious enthusiasm. A small minority of pastors in the research are boring. They don't leave their offices. They aren't able to communicate in ways that inspire people. They don't work well with staff and volunteers to empower and motivate them.

Other pastors have problems directing the church and helping it run by its policies. Some pastors spend too much time worrying about the church and dotting the i's and crossing the t's and not enough time fulfilling its mission. In other churches, there is no organization. People don't communicate well, they don't have regular operating procedures, and they don't understand appropriate ways to make decisions.

Sometimes clergy are not skilled at hiring staff or enlisting volunteers. This also includes supporting staff, understanding their needs, helping them do their work, and placing the right people with the right gifts in the right positions. A booklet I recommend for pastors who are working with

multiple staff is *Strengthening the Multiple Staff* published by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Pastors can order this booklet by calling Augsburg Fortress Press, 1-800-328-4648.

In larger churches senior clergy sometimes get anxious about associate ministers and their developing cohorts that relate more closely to them rather than to the senior pastor. The senior pastor sometimes sees the behavior of the associate as undermining the pastor's leadership within the life of the congregation.

This also happens on the part of the associate pastor. In my

consulting practice, I see a lot of this. Some of it comes from the needs of the associate to be praised and adulated. Some pastors and associates are thin skinned, especially when criticisms are raised about their work within the church. This sometimes exacerbates the conflict.

We did not have any associate pastors in our research, by design. We assumed that when an associate is terminated, it does not come to the attention of the denomination in the same way as the termination of a senior pastor. This is because associate pastors often have much shorter tenures

> than senior pastors, or because the senior pastor removes them and it doesn't come to the attention of the denomination as their having been removed.

> Another significant area is the pastor's ability to solve problems. Problem-solving has to do with decisionmaking. This involves being able to identify options, choosing among the options, and then taking action and following through on what has been decided. This is especially an issue for smaller congrega-

tions. They take a long time to make decisions, and when they do make a decision, no one follows through on it. They just sabotage the decision. Churches get tired of doing this over and over, and it rubs the congregation raw. Pastors in smaller churches sometimes lack the ability to deal with these issues. Tied closely to this in the smaller church is the pastor's ability to work with the tribal chief in solving problems and casting vision for the church.

WHY IS INTERPERSONAL COMPETENCE HIGHLY SIGNIFICANT IN A PASTOR'S INVOLUNTARY TERMINATION?

LEAS: Interpersonal competence is the third major area. This is probably the most significant of the three competencies

About 51 percent of pastors who are terminated by their churches go to congregations that are larger.

> we looked at. Clearly interpersonal competence is much more of an issue in all of the congregations we studied than are the other two competencies. In this area, we look at a variety of behaviors.

> Getting defensive is clearly the most problematic behavior for pastors. A pastor is defensive when he works toward protecting himself and loses sight of the goals and needs of the church — and sometimes the goals and needs of the person or persons who challenge him.

> Defensive behavior can lead to inappropriate expressions of anger that can range from yelling or storming out of the

of anger that can range from yelling or storming out of the room to withdrawal or trying to make other people feel bad by not spending time with them. An aggressive person has gone beyond being assertive. A defensive pastor goes beyond stating his position and begins pushing his position at cost to himself, at cost to the church, and at cost to others.

On the other end of the scale is the passive pastor. I was surprised to learn that almost as many clergy were terminated for being passive as were terminated for being aggressive. I can think of a number of instances where members of the congregation complained because the pastor never did anything, never said anything, and never took a position on anything. A number of pastors were too frightened to take positions and stand up. They didn't want to get their head chopped off. That aroused dissatisfaction within the congregation as well.

This can be especially true in relationship to working through conflict and bringing it to resolution. A lot of people blame the pastor for conflict, whether it's the pastor's fault or not, simply because the conflict does not go away. Some pastors do not have the type of personality to handle conflict. They hate conflict. When it rears up, they disappear.

A pastor's inability to take feedback from members of the congregation is the secondmost problematic issue. In these situations, the pastor does not actively listen to people. Some pastors don't practice good listening skills nor do they demonstrate caring toward those who are critical of them. They become reactive. Pastors may second-guess a person's intentions. They may think this person is trying to hurt them or the church.

We found that pastors who are manipulative are also involuntarily terminated. Manipulation is trying to get people to do things without telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. When I explain to you that what I want you to do is important, and I tell you why, that is not manipulation. However, manipulation is when I try to get you to do something you don't know I'm trying to get you to do.

The pastor's attitude toward his congregation was another factor in his being terminated. If a pastor has had trouble with a certain leader in the congregation over the years, it's hard for

MINISTRY GROUPS

The call of God to be a minister of the gospel carries an awesome responsibility. Ministry is not just conducting church services. It is bringing the lost to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and discipling believers until they mature in spiritual knowledge and take on the likeness of our Lord. The minister "wrestles against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness." A supernatural empowerment of the Holy Spirit is necessary for effective ministry.

The permissive amoral climate that saturates our society creates a stressful environment in which the man of God must minister. Assemblies of God pastors and ministers are subject to the same pressures and frustrations as others; even greater since we call people to the biblical standard of living a holy, Christlike life in the midst of a perverse generation.

Within our Fellowship, the organizational structure that once provided a forum for encouraging and equipping our pastors in their ministry has become ineffective. A new model using ministry groups has been developed and is being adopted by districts across the Fellowship.

The creation of these ministry groups is intended to relieve some of the inhibitors to sustaining effective pastoral ministry. Active participation in the ministry group helps pastors become:

ENGAGED, EQUIPPED, AND ENCOURAGED THROUGH MINISTRY GROUPS

The ministry group is intended to engage, equip, and encourage ministering families for a more effective ministry. Each ministry group is comprised of 8 to 10 ministers. The minister's spouse is also encouraged to be involved. The group meets regularly with a structured, yet informal format intended to personally and spiritually enrich each group member. As ministering families grow personally and spiritually, their ministry will become more effective.

ENGAGED THROUGH FELLOWSHIP

The ministry group provides a setting where meaningful personal and ministry-building relationships can be developed. Research indicates that many ministers feel isolated, disconnected, and alone. They have failed to find enriching, strengthening relationships through traditional structures of our Fellowship. The ministry group meeting provides for relaxed times of fellowship and discussion where close friendships can develop.

EQUIPPED THROUGH GUIDED DISCUSSION

The ministry group meeting provides an environment for continued growth through discussion and mutual discovery. Resources and discussion guides are provided for the ministry group leader. In each meeting there is discussion on ministry related topics. Ministers share insights and practical helps as they strengthen and equip one another during the planned discussion and resource review.

ENCOURAGED THOUGH INTERACTION AND PRAYER

Time is provided for praise and victory reports as well as time for sharing struggles and challenges. Ministers rejoice together and pray one for another. Through prayer and sincere concern for each other, ministers and their spouses are uplifted, strengthened, and encouraged in the work of the ministry. As ministers meet together in one accord to worship, learn, and pray together, the Holy Spirit will anoint and enable them to accomplish that which God has called them to do.

Adapted from the Ministry Group Leadership Manual.

the pastor to be polite or even civil. If he is not careful, he will respond to other people in the congregation using hostile humor and sarcasm. A pastor needs to learn to bite his tongue and think before he speaks.

In other cases, the pastor may come to a new congregation with unresolved resentment and hurt from previous pastorates. These unresolved issues are often evident in what the pastor says and does.

YOUR RESEARCH LOOKS AT THE CONGREGATION'S ROLE IN A PASTOR'S REMOVAL.

LEAS: I was careful to sort out substantive issues that are probably caused by laity as much as they are caused by pastors. The most frequent substantive issue for which pastors are fired has to do with the authority. The issue of pastoral authority resulted in 73 percent of pastors being fired.

Denominational polity has little to do with how people feel regarding the pastor's authority to make all the decisions. People in the congregation don't care if the pastor has the

Sexual misconduct has to do with inappropriate sexual relations with adults or children in or outside the congregation. Part of the problem with sexual misconduct is that it scares people so much they often don't want to deal with offenders themselves. They try to get pastors to leave rather than take disciplinary action when the sexual misconduct takes place.

Certainly forgiveness and opportunities for restoration are vital. But forgiveness needs to take place in a context where the person forgiven has demonstrated he is trying to live a new kind of life. We do this with drug addicts and alcoholics. We need to do the same with other kinds of misconduct.

Financial misconduct is another source of pastoral termination. Issues of pastoral financial misconduct can be as blatant as taking money from the offering, or a more subtle form like abusing expense accounts. Some pastors are given credit cards without much clarity about the limits on that account. One church gave its pastor a credit card for entertainment. He took his staff and laypeople out to eat. He thought

Clearly interpersonal competence is much more of an issue in all of the congregations we studied than the other two competencies. of a discretionary account.

he was operating within the guidelines; the board thought he was not. It's important to clarify beforehand the terms

Issues of perceived lying

authority. They are annoyed when he takes authority, especially if he makes major changes too quickly without involving the congregation or helping them understand why the changes were made. The congregation expects to be involved in the decision-making process.

The second-most frequent substantive issue has to do with perceptions of appropriate and inappropriate behavior on the part of the pastor or others in the church. One pastor in a downtown church developed a ministry to people in bars. He and others talk to them to find out they are up against in their lives. The pastor invites these people to church and gets them involved in the congregation's life. Some members of the congregation feel it is inappropriate for the pastor and members of the church to even be in these types of places.

The third-most frequent substantive issue has to do with the mission of the church. What are its goals and vision? Other issues involve liturgy, theology, and finally ethics - issues like abortion, women's issues, and ordination of gay people.

SOME CLERGY ARE DISMISSED FOR MORAL REA-SONS. HOW PREVALENT IS THIS IN YOUR STUDY?

LEAS: This issue did not come up with the same percentages as the others. The study reveals 23 cases of sexual misconduct — 13 substantiated, 10 not substantiated — 7 involving fraud, and a few involving a mixture of severe types of misconduct.

can arise as well. One church interviewed a pastoral candidate and asked if he liked to work with young people. He said he did. But when he came to the church, he refused to work with the young people. The church thought he had deceived them. It is deceitful when a pastor says he is in favor of certain things, or implies that he is, and then doesn't follow through. Some pastors say they have called on members who are in the hospital or home ill, but no one can find evidence of pastoral visitation ever occurring. These types of deceitful behaviors are problematic.

WHAT STEPS CAN A PASTOR TAKE TO EVALUATE PROBLEMS IN HIS MINISTRY? HOW CAN PASTORS FIND HELP WHEN PROBLEMS ARE IDENTIFIED?

LEAS: I encourage pastors to pay attention to their own anxiety. If a pastor can't stop obsessing about certain people or issues, he should consider that as a warning sign. Too often pastors have a difficult time letting go of issues and getting on with the more important matters of pastoral ministry. To compensate, they become overly obsessed with their work, thinking hard work will fix the problem. Suddenly the pastor's professional life is converging with his family and personal life. Every pastor's work interferes with his family life from time to time. But when it interferes too much, a pastor needs to ask himself if he is running away from a deeper issue. Other escape activities — sleeping too much,

getting caught up in activities that pull him away from the congregation — may indicate that his anxiety level is getting out of control.

It is also important to monitor the anxiety levels of church members. What is their level of attendance and participation in worship, in Bible classes, in fellowship dinners, or other churchrelated activities? A drop in attendance might be an indication that people are anxious about something Pastors are terminated because of conflict in the congregation, genuine differences about goals, values, and methods of doing church. A significant ingredient in these conflicts is often (if not usually) what the pastor does or does not do to contribute to the difficulty.

and do not want to be involved with the pastor or the congregation. Is there an increase in the level of complaints? If a pastor notices that groups are beginning to form, and he is beginning to call them the *complainers* or *dissenters* or concerned members, it's probably an indicator that the level of anxiety is increasing within the church and conflict may be just around the corner.

These problems are handled in the following ways. The first way is found in Matthew 18:15–17. A pastor must ask: Have I gone to the people with whom I am having concerns? Have I tried to get help by talking with them about these concerns? Have I raised problem areas with trusted people in the congregation who are able to help me think through what critical issues might be developing in the congregation?

Second, when the pastor is the problem, he should seek professional help or counsel. Public and medical agencies, therapeutic groups, and Christian counselors offer a wide range of resources. Interdenominational support groups offer pastors a third option. *(See Ministry Groups sidebar, pg. 97.)* The best support groups are those where pastors meet with people who are not regularly involved in their professional or personal life. A fourth option is for pastors to go for training or continuing education. Groups like The Alban Institute, Norm Shawchuck at Shawchuck and Associates, and Ken Sande's Peacemakers Ministry are great places to go for help with anger management and to learn basic therapeutic techniques and personal growth strategies.

WHEN A PASTOR IS TERMINATED AND GOES TO ANOTHER CHURCH, WHAT TYPICALLY HAPPENS IN THE OTHER CHURCH?

LEAS: We did considerable research on this question. Pastors typically do quite well in their next assignment. In fact, about 51 percent of pastors who are terminated by their churches go to congregations that are the same size or larger. About 80 percent of terminated pastors find new positions and do well in their next pastorate.

not that we only have difficult pastors. We also have difficult congregations and difficult leaders in those congregations who act sometimes in nasty ways. Often when conflict arises, it puts people in their worst behavior.

In 38 years of doing this work, I believe most issues that

cause difficulties in churches are mutual. They are shared between the leaders of the congregation and the pastor. It's

DESCRIBE THE MINISTRY OF THE ALBAN INSTITUTE.

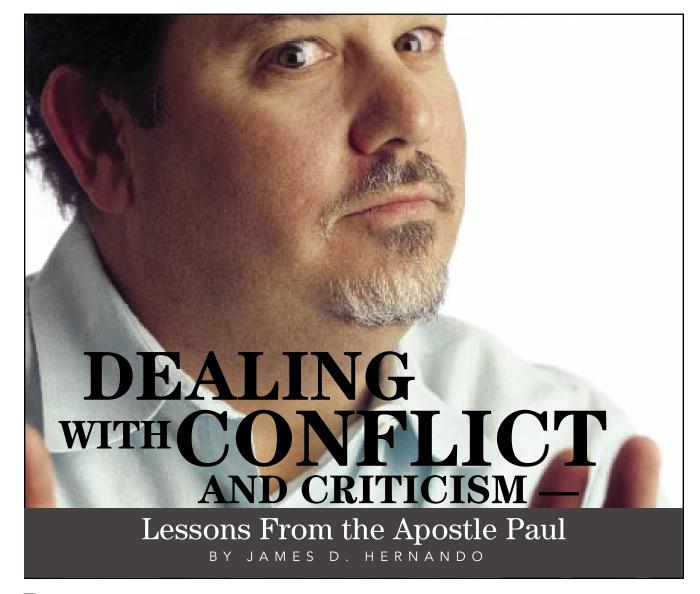
LEAS: The Alban Institute is an organization that supports congregations. It does so through consulting services, research, book publishing, and educational seminars on topics such as conflict management, dealing with difficult people, and developing long-range planning and strategies within a congregation. We believe that congregations

Some pastors do not have the type of personality to handle conflict. They hate conflict. When it rears up, they disappear.

must constantly discern ways to lead and to strengthen their fundamental ministerial and organizational skills and to nurture their spirituality. Alban consultants work on a short-term and long-term basis with individual congregations as well as regional and denominational bodies. Our consultants are equipped by experience and training to work with churches through a wide range of difficult situations and circumstances.

Our consultants host training events specifically structured to meet goals in areas such as leadership training, board development, congregational revitalization, skill development, and dealing with change and conflict. We can be contacted at: The Alban Institute, Suite 100, 2121 Cooperative Way, Herndon, VA 20171, or by calling 703-964-2700. Visit our website: http://www.alban.org.

STHEOLOGICAL ENRICHMENT



L eadership has its privileges, but it also has its liabilities. A friend remarked that ascending the ladder of leadership gives you visibility, but it also makes you an easy target. This observation is also valid for those in spiritual leadership.

The Book of Acts indicates that Paul's missionary career was marked with conflict. It is not surprising, then, that his epistles reflect those conflicts.

Paul's letters were written in response to specific situations that had developed in various churches. Among them were problems that involved individuals who were attempting to undermine Paul's teaching or were opposing his apostolic ministry. Often the opposition came in the form of false charges and unjust criticisms based on distorted facts and motives. Paul's writings are filled with references and allusions to these trials. In them he has left us a

Ascending the ladder of leadership gives you visibility, but it also makes you an easy target.

veritable legacy of practical advice — principles drawn from his own experiences that reveal how to respond to conflict and criticism — and a response that will glorify Christ and safeguard the work of the gospel. We begin our study by looking at three key passages.

WHEN FACING CONFLICT AND CRITICISM, KEEP FOCUSED ON THE BIG PICTURE (PHILIPPIANS 1:12–18)

When Paul wrote to the church at Philippi, he addressed a church that knew him well and was dear to his heart.¹ Apparently the feeling was mutual as their

loyal support of Paul from the beginning of his ministry among them indicates.² They had on several occasions sent support for Paul's missionary work (Philippians 4:16).

Paul wrote to them from a prison in Rome. Even his tragic circumstances had become an occasion for joy (Philippians 1:18). Paul could rejoice

because instead of halting the spread of the gospel, his imprisonment had advanced it (Philippians 1:12). Not only was Christ being preached among the "whole praetorian guard,"³ but also the brethren in Rome were emboldened by

Paul's example to fearlessly speak the word of God (Philippians 1:13,14). As we read on, however, we encounter evidence of a strange conflict casting a shadow on an otherwise victorious picture.

In Philippians 1:15–17, we read of a puzzling situation. Apparently, some opponents of Paul took advantage of his imprisonment to preach the gospel for less than noble reasons. In Paul's words, they were doing so "thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment." Furthermore, they preached Christ "even from envy and strife" (verse 15); "out of selfish ambition"; and from less than "pure motives" (verse 17). Incredibly, these individuals were Christians.⁴

If God could use Paul's imprisonment to spread the gospel, surely He could override the sinful motives of his opponents.

Paul's attitude in the face of this opposition was exemplary and remarkable. Paul teaches us that spiritual leaders must be able to objectively view the big picture. He was able to rejoice over the spread of the gospel even though the people being used were aligned against him. What enabled Paul to maintain this remarkable attitude? Two facts are obvious. First, Paul saw the providential handiwork of God (Philippians 1:12). If God could use his imprisonment to spread the gospel, surely He could override the sinful motives of his opponents. After all, is God not able to make even the wrath of men to praise Him? (See Psalm 76:10.)

Second, by the grace of God Paul was able to walk in the footsteps of his Lord, who was also falsely accused, but did not revile His accusers or defend himself.⁵ Christ was able to endure the trials of His passion because He kept the big picture (redemption through the cross) in focus.

DO NOT ACCEPT WORLDLY CRITERIA AS THE MEASURING STICK OF SUCCESS IN MINISTRY (1 CORINTHIANS 9:1–18; 2 CORINTHIANS 11:5–12

What determines success in ministry? How do you know if you are a good spiritual leader? The answers to these questions may embrace a host of factors, but part of the answer is determined by how well you deal with personal criticism that is aimed at casting doubt on your ministry. This is best illustrated in Paul's dealing with the Corinthians.

First Corinthians 9:1–18 and 2 Corinthians 11:5–12 provide evidence that certain leaders in Corinth had a problem with Paul not making his living from the church. First Corinthians 9:1–12 shows that Paul did not object to this practice; in fact he defended its legitimacy. He gave several arguments and presented scriptural endorsement (1 Corinthians 9:9;

Conflict and criticism are a part of spiritual leadership. Deuteronomy 25:4) for his right to be supported like any other apostle. Why, then, did he not exercise that right?

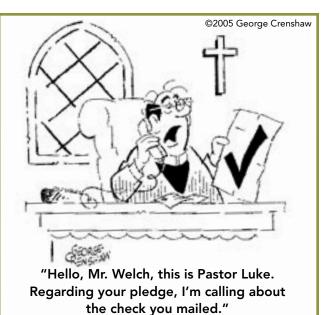
> First, he did not want to be a hindrance to the gospel⁶ (1 Corinthians 9:12). Second, he desired to preach the gospel as a stewardship from God. This was his boast and reward (1 Corinthians 1:15–18). But the passage in 1 Corinthians screams for further explanation.

In 2 Corinthians 11:5–12, Paul was

even more emphatic and defensive concerning his chosen practice of nonsupport. From verses 5,6 we see that Paul's opponents have com-

pared him to other apostles and found him wanting.⁷ In particular, they attacked his poor rhetorical skills (verse 6)⁸ and again, his practice of not taking money for preaching the gospel (verse 7).

Paul denied that he is inferior to the "most eminent apostles" (verse 5). If his



preaching was poor, it was certainly not from his lack of knowledge. But at the latter criticism, Paul was livid: "Did I commit a sin ... because I preached the gospel of God to you without charge? I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to serve you" (verse 7,8).

Ironically, what Paul's opponents saw as cause for criticism, Paul regarded as his boast and one that he would not be denied (2 Corinthians 11:10). Paul's defensiveness seemed off the charts.

Part of the answer lies in the spiritual passion Paul had for the Corinthians. He was zealous to protect them from people who would seduce them away from their purity and devotion to Christ, to whom they were betrothed (2 Corinthians 11:2). His passion was not without anxiety because the threat

of seduction and defilement was those in Corinth who would lead

them astray, as Satan under the guise of a serpent craftily deceived Eve in the Garden (verse 3).9 Paul's concern and dismay was that the Corinthians were being offered a counterfeit version of Christianity, and they were prepared to accept it.¹⁰ One significant reason the

counterfeit offered by these false teachers was attractive was that it was thoroughly in tune with the world. Paul described their worldliness as "carnal" (or "according to the flesh").¹¹ Their character can be seen in their criticisms of Paul:

1. He did not preach like an apostle, an he lacked the rhetorical eloquence and power of a true apostle.12

2. He did not carry himself like an apostle. He was weak, lacked boldness, and did not have the authoritative bearing of a true apostle (2 Corinthians 10:1,2).¹³

3. He did not act like an apostle. They objected t Paul's practice of preaching the gospel without charge (2 Corinthians 11:7-12).

There is no better antidote for unjust criticism than a clear conscience before God.

Paul's response to this last criticism was a bold declaration of his freedom to preach without charge.

He made this practice the object of his own boast.¹⁴ Clearly, he was trying to distance himself from the false apostles (2 Corinthians 11:13-15) who attempted to call Paul's apostleship into question to establish their own. Their criticisms were from a value system that was enamored with externals — and especially symbols of power, prestige, and status. Paul refused to play their game and paradoxically offered the paradigm of the Cross — God's power demonstrated

Paul teaches us that spiritual leaders real. There were must be able to objectively view the big picture.

through human weakness (2 Corinthians 11:29 through 12:10).

A spiritual leader facing criticismmustbediscerning.

Paul counseled, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men" (Romans 12:18). As his own life illustrates, however, Paul did not believe Christians should accommodate the carnal demands and expectations of critics in an effort to avoid conflict at all costs.

BE SURE OF YOUR OWN INTEGRITY BEFORE GOD (2 CORINTHIANS 1:12-18)



Conflict and criticism are a part of spiritual leadership. As one insensitive wag put it, "If you can't stand the heat, stay out of the kitchen." We do not need to live long before encountering horror stories of gross unfairness and unjust criticism. How is a spiritual leader supposed to survive such opposition? Any attempt to provide a brief answer is subject to the charge of oversimplification.

Paul left us a principle that is bedrock to survival. It comes from 2 Corinthians, which is a veritable smorgasbord of criticism leveled against him. We only need to read a few verses before encountering a classic example of unjust criticism.

In 2 Corinthians 1:8-11, Paul told the story of a near-death trial while he was in Asia.¹⁵ He shared the situation partly to encourage the Corinthians to trust God and embrace hope when they undergo trials. His main motive, however, was to silence his opponents who, because of his delay in coming and a recent change of plans (2 Corinthians 1:15 through 2:4), had accused him of vacillating and not keeping his promise.¹⁶ From the emphatic way he boasted of his integrity (2 Corinthians 1:12) it is obvious that his opponents had accused him of being less than sincere and upright in his conduct.

Second, verse 13 shows that Paul's opponents charged him with being intentionally vague and even devious in his letters. In essence, they

Paul did not believe Christians should accommodate the carnal demands and expectations of critics in an effort to avoid conflict at all costs.

contended that there was another side to Paul; his true motives and agenda lay outside what they could see, hear, and read. Paul was unshaken by these accusations because they were unfounded, and his conscience was clear. He had walked before them and "in the world" with integrity¹⁷ and transparent openness. The word "sincerity" (*eilikrineia*, verse 12) means purity in motive (compare 2 Corinthians 2:17). Furthermore, Paul's conduct was not based on worldly (or "fleshly" *sarkikos*) wisdom, but on the grace of God. His epistles have the same integrity. Paul wrote what he meant, and he meant what he wrote. There was no secret message or hidden meaning behind his words.

Spiritual leaders can take heart and instruction from Paul's example. Conflicts and criticisms will come; they are inevitable. However, there is no better antidote for unjust criticism than a clear conscience before God.



JAMES D. HERNANDO, Ph.D., is professor of New Testament at Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri.

ENDNOTES

1. Paul had not only founded the church, but had also visited them at least twice more during his second and third missionary journeys (Acts 16:12; 20:1–6).

2. Paul thanked them for their "participation" in the gospel from the first day until now

(Philippians 1:5). The Greek word *koinonia*, sometimes translated "fellowship," signifies a mutual participation or sharing in something (supplied by context). Since Paul's literary purpose was to thank them for a recent offering (Philippians 4:10), which was consistent with their continual support

(Philippians 4:15,16), the word *koinonia* in Philippians 1:5 is likely referring to their financial support of Paul's ministry. Note also that the verbs translated "share" in Philippians 4:14,15 (*sugkoinonesantes* and *ekoinonesen*) are from the same root (*koinoneo*).

3. Scripture references are from the New American Standard Bible.

4. The "some" of verse 15 can only be understood as part of the "brethren" in verse 14, which probably explains why Paul said, "most of the brethren" and not "all."

5. See Matthew 26:57–63; 27:11–14; Mark 15:1–5; Luke 23:1–9; John 18:29–38. These passages remind us of Isaiah 53:7, "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth." The apostolic church believed this silence was evidence of Christ's commitment and resignation to the will of the Father. See Philip's interpretation of Isaiah 53:7 in Acts 8:32.

6. For some time, Paul had been involved in collecting an offering for the saints of Jerusalem who had fallen on hard times due to a famine (see Acts 11:28,29). Concern for the poor was a priority for Paul, from the time his apostleship was confirmed by the pillars of Jerusalem (Galatians 2:9,10). When he wrote to the Romans (ca. A.D. 57,58), an offering was under way "for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem" (Romans 15:26). The churches of Macedonia and Achaia had already contributed. At the writing of 1 Corinthians (ca. A.D. 55) the collection was progressing and Paul told the church to follow the example of the Galatian churches in setting aside money for the collection (1 Corinthians 16:1,2). A careful reading of 2 Corinthians 8:16 through 9:5 reveals that Paul faced the danger of having his integrity maligned by accusations of impropriety. This passage shows how Paul ensured the integrity of the collection.

7. Paul's Corinthian antagonists give numerous criticisms aimed at undermining his status as an apostle. For a comprehensive survey of what they were saying about Paul and how Paul viewed them, see James D. Hernando, "2 Corinthians," in *The Full Life New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 8. This was a common criticism of Paul's Corinthian opponents. See also 1 Corinthians 1:17; 2:1,4,13.

9. They are led by an apparent ringleader (*ho* erchomenos — the "one" who "comes," and preaches "another Jesus" allon läsoun — different from the one preached by Paul). His preaching was equivalent to offering the Corinthians a "different Spirit" and a "different gospel" than the one they had received. Keep in mind, for Paul, there was only one Jesus, one Spirit, and one gospel.

10. The verb translated "to bear with" (anechomai) is used four times in this chapter (2 Corinthians 11:1,4,19,20). The last three occurrences reveal Paul's impatience with the Corinthians for their willingness to endure the error and mistreatment of his opponents.

11. Paul described his opponents as "carnal," or "worldly." This is seen in the way he distanced himself from conduct done "in the flesh" (2 Corinthians 1:17; 5:17; 10:2), condemned the prideful boasts of his opponents as fleshly (2 Corinthians 11:18), and how he sarcastically illustrated this carnality with boasts of his own

(2 Corinthians 11:18 through 12:11). 12. This explains Paul's frequent admission of this fact (2 Corinthians 10:10; 11:6; compare 1 Corinthians 1:17; 2:1,4,13), and his suggestion that personal integrity (2 Corinthians 10:11) and

knowledge of the truth (2 Corinthians 11:6) are more important than oratorical skill. 13. Paul countered this charge by affirming that

his demeanor among them is modeled after the meekness and gentleness of Christ. Rather than deny his weakness, Paul admitted it and gloried in it as the means of securing the power of God (2 Corinthians 11:30; 12:9,10; 13:3,4,9). 14. Paul's opponents were proud and arrogant and declared their self-importance. They were fond of "commending themselves" (2 Corinthians 3:1: 10:12: 12:11) and boasting about themselves. This seems clear from the numerous times Paul used the words "boast/ed" or "boasting" (26 times — Gk. kauchomai). Often, his sarcastic tone indicated he was comparing himself to his opponents and their prideful and misdirected boasts (2 Corinthians 10:8,15; 11:6,10,12,16–18,30; 12:1,5,6,9). 15. We know little or nothing of Paul's peril of death (1:8–10). It must have taken place during one of his two stays in Ephesus, in Asia (Acts 18:19-21; 19:1-20), but beyond this we are uninformed.

16. Paul wanted the Corinthians to know that nothing less than the severest of trials would have prevented him from coming as planned. The burden of the trial was so far beyond his ability to cope that he "despaired even of life" (2 Corinthians 1:8). Indeed, he felt as if a "sentence of death" had already been passed on him and he expected to die (verse 9). 17. The exact wording of the Greek text is in doubt. The UBS Greek text reads haplotëti ("sincerity" or "single-hearted devotion"), signifying the integrity of Paul's conduct. The NIV, however, reads "holiness" (preferring the alternate reading of hagiotëti, "holiness"). In either case, the point remains the same; Paul's conduct before the Corinthians has been unassailable.

POSTMODERNISM AND THE CHURCH

DOES EVIDENCE STILL DEMAND A VERDICT?

The Church's Apologetic Task and the Postmodern Turn

STANLEY J. GRENZ ΒY

n many respects I am a quintessen-L tial baby boomer. Because I grew up in the U.S. in the 1950s and 1960s, I am naturally imbued with many of the views that typified the scientific culture of the modern era. Moreover, as a Christian who was spiritually formed in an age when science reigned, I developed an understanding of the apologetic task of the church that sought to link faith with the scientific enterprise. I paid special

attention when my high school Sunday School class studied a series of lessons that explored the intellectual credibility of Christianity. As a university student I

devoured the writings of Francis Schaeffer and C.S. Lewis' Mere Christianity. And as a fledgling philosophy major in my junior year I became enamored with the apologetic value of rational arguments for the faith. I concluded that intellectually astute Christians had an array of invincible weapons in their arsenal that could confirm the credibility of the faith in the face of the challenges leveled against it and could also carry the day in their evangelistic efforts. In short I believed, as Josh McDowell has reminded us, that Christians possess "evidence that demands a verdict."

rado. I realize that some pastors minister in a church culture that continues to carry many of the values and beliefs endemic of the modern era in which it arose. Yet, in many respects, the church culture that many people are comfortable in is becoming increasingly alien to the 21st-century world in which we live. Nowhere is this more evident than in the apologetic mission of the church. The thoroughgoing shift in culture transpiring around us raises the question: Does evidence still demand a verdict?

In this second installment in our series, I want to explore the disconnect between the orientation toward evidence that demands a verdict and the contemporary, postmodern climate. To facilitate this we must examine how science came to rule

Some Christians sought to make a place for faith and religion in a realm ruled by scientific reason by capitulating to science.

the roost in modern society, and the major ways in which Christians have sought to engage apologetically with the modern perspective. Finally, we must understand in what sense the postmodern turn has

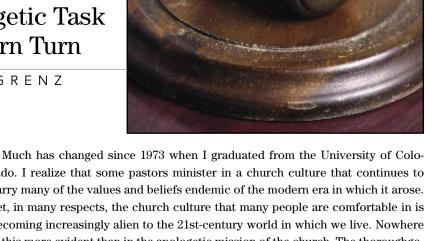
undermined the entire orientation that Christian apologists in the past have shared with the people to whom they sought to demonstrate the truth of the faith. Then, we might hear the Spirit speaking afresh to us in today's context.

HOW SCIENCE CAME TO RULE THE ROOST

The desire to put forth verdict-demanding evidence was an attempt by well-meaning, concerned Christians to engage in an era when science reigned. It was a response to the particularly modern understanding of the nature of faith and religion.

In many respects, the modern outlook toward religion began in an era known as the Enlightenment (17th and 18th centuries). In the wake of the military conflicts that ravished Europe in the early 17th century that pitted Protestants and Catholics against each other, intellectuals sought to overcome the struggles produced by religious differences. They concluded that the solution was to discover the truth that is available to humanity through reason.

The elevation of reason became the arbiter of truth. Enlightenment intellectuals



acknowledged religion only if it could be proven reasonable. The German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, a Lutheran, articulated this idea in his book, *Religion Within the Bounds of Reason Alone*. Enlightenment thinkers like Kant believed a truly reasonable religion focused on ethics rather than dogma, and on the natural rather than the supernatural. In effect, they looked to religion to provide a transcendent sanction for codes of conduct. They believed such a religion would see God in the natural laws of the universe rather than in questionable miraculous occurrences. In keeping with this perspective, Kant said two things filled him with awe: "the starry heavens above and the moral law within."

The elevation of reason eventually led some intellectuals to separate faith and reason into different realms. They concluded that the truths discovered through reason (especially scientific knowledge), and religious truth, which comes by faith, deal with

The thoroughgoing shift

question: Does evidence

still demand a verdict?

in culture transpiring

around us raises the

two different aspects of the world. Moreover, because they focus on different dimensions of life, the truths of science and the truths of Christianity cannot conflict with each other.

Some Christians took the matter a step further. They asserted that the realm of faith or religion was beyond or above the realm of reason and science. In their estimation, religion

was beyond scientific or rational scrutiny. Because faith was suprarational (not rational, and possibly even irrational), it did not need to answer to the standards of rationality. Many people with this perspective considered faith to be a leap into the realm beyond reason. Critics, however, quickly pounced on this idea. Such faith, they averred, was nothing more than a leap into the realm of make-believe.

Unconvinced that faith inhabited a realm above reason, many people traveled further down the pathway charted by the Enlightenment thinkers and installed science as the reigning monarch of modern society. The victory of reason was so complete that the scientific outlook set the standard for all claimants to truth, even Christianity. For faith to be acknowledged in a scientific culture, it needed a place within the scientific framework. Science now ruled the roost.

APOLOGETIC CHRISTIANS IN AN AGE OF SCIENCE

The full flowering of the turn toward reason that had its beginning in the Enlightenment led to the hegemony of modern science. This, in turn, became the context in which Christians engaged in the apologetic task. True to form, Christian apologists rose to the challenge. They showed that the Christian faith could do well in a scientific culture. Modern Christians followed two basic approaches.

The first approach followed either classic liberalism or an evidentialist Christian apologetic. Some Christians sought to make a place for faith and religion in a realm ruled by scientific reason by capitulating to science. Apologists, determined to show the reasonableness of faith and Christianity, were not of one mind as to how this could best be accomplished. In fact, the strategies that apologists proposed coincided with a great division forming within the church between liberals and conservatives.

Some apologists sought to incorporate faith in the realm of reason by following what became classic liberalism. Whether in biblical studies, theology, or apologetics, liberals attempted to make Christianity palatable to modern knowledge and the modern outlook. To this end, they sought to reduce the supernatural dimension of Christianity and to show that, at its core, the Christian faith embodied our highest human aspirations. This strategy is, perhaps, most blatantly evident in how liberal Bible commentaries deal with the miracles in the Gospels. The liberal explanation of miracles is encapsulated in the remarks of John A.T. Robinson on the feeding of the 5,000 in a book published in 1967, entitled, *But That I Can't Believe*. The former Anglican bishop concluded, "I believe the heart of that story is not the physical miracle of a multiplication of loaves, but the spiritual miracle that

> can be sparked off when even one young person is inspired to share. And that's what love can do. That's what Jesus could draw out of a person. Time and time again, what He was able to achieve went

beyond anything His contemporaries could account for or explain. Naturally they represented it in the terms of their day as sheer physical miracle."

Conservatives disagreed vehemently with what they saw as a blatant attack on the integrity of the Bible. Nevertheless, with the same zeal as their liberal antagonists, they also sought to incorporate faith in a realm ruled by reason. To this end, they devised what is known as evidentialist Christian apologetics. This strategy shows how scientific findings support or even confirm the truths of Christianity. Josh McDowell's The New Evidence That Demands a *Verdict*, epitomizes this strategy. The conservative evidentialist apologetic began by drawing from the traditional proofs for the existence of God to make the case for theism (and hence to combat the atheist alternative). It then marshaled all available historical and scientific evidence that confirmed assertions found in Scripture, thereby making a case for the Bible's reliability. But the crowning jewel of this strategy was the development of a proof for the historicity of Jesus' resurrection, which they believed confirmed Jesus' claim to be the Son of God.

Despite the power of this first approach, some Christians in the modern era were not convinced that it was helpful or even warranted. Instead, they proposed a second way to acknowledge faith in a context in which science ruled the roost. They offered an updated version of the idea that faith and reason occupy two different realms. They were convinced that they could circumvent science by carving out a separate sphere for faith and Christianity. But, as in the case with the first approach, these apologists could not agree on the best strategy for accomplishing this.

Some Christians preferred the strategy that had worked so well in the Enlightenment era — relegating faith and religion to the realm of ethics or morality. This strategy is evident whenever we hear someone say, "If you want to know how we got on this planet, don't ask your pastor. He knows nothing about this; instead ask a scientist. If, however, you want to know how we should conduct ourselves on this planet, don't ask a scientist. He knows nothing about this; instead, ask your pastor." This strategy is also operative when preaching focuses on offering hearers advice on how they can live better.

Other apologists, known as pietists, were certain that the sphere of faith lay elsewhere. They elevated one's personal religious experience as the realm where faith reigned supreme. To see how pervasive this idea is, consider the closing line of the great hymn "He Lives" that many of us sing nearly every Easter: "You ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my heart."

THE POSTMODERN TURN AND THE CHURCH'S APOLOGETIC MISSION

The different approaches and strategies that Christians followed in their attempts to engage science apologetically in the modern era created a culture war in the church. Among evangelicals this culture war pitted the evidentialists against the pietists.

The pietists were certain that rational proofs could never carry the day. "You cannot argue someone into the kingdom of God," they chided. The pietists had their own evidence that demanded a verdict. But it differed radically from what the evidentialists offered. For the pietists, the crucial evidence was the certainty of their heart and their personal testimony.

They are looking for a community of people among whom they can discover the goal of their search — the life-giving presence of Christ.

The evidentialists were equally dismissive of their opponents' strategy. "Try taking your personal experiences into the marketplace of ideas," they countered. Evidentialists were certain that the evidence proposed by their pietist friends would be dismissed out of court. After all, on what basis could they claim that their experience of Jesus was any more valid than the experiences had by the religious devotees of Buddha, Allah, or the Rev. Moon? What was needed was the kind of solid, objective, public evidence they were providing.

Regardless of which approach they took or which strategy they followed, modern Christian apologists had one thing in common: They were seeking the same ultimate



"Sometimes it seems the main difference between our members and the unchurched is that our members think there is a difference." goal — interfacing the gospel in a credible manner with people who were imbued with the assumptions of modernity. They were Christians seeking to acknowledge their faith in a cultural context in which science ruled the roost.

But things have changed. Many moderns are still in our world. In our encounters with these people, the older apologetic tools may still be of some assistance. Others, however, no longer offer unquestioned allegiance to modern empirical science. In their estimation, science, with its orientation toward naturalism, does not necessarily rule the roost. In fact, many people are calling the naturalism that has characterized Western society since the Enlightenment into question today. Postmoderns often decry modern scientific naturalism, claiming it is destructive of creation and that it propagates a truncated understanding of reality that has robbed the world of its mystery and our lives of soul.

Many postmoderns are now seeking to regain what they believe was lost in modernity. Many are looking to *The Reenchantment of Everyday Life*, to cite the title of Thomas Moore's insightful book. They hope that they might regain the loss of soul produced by the modern culture. Above all, postmoderns desire to rediscover the spiritual.

In this changing context, the Spirit is admonishing us to end the culture war that Christians Above all, postmoderns desire fought in their attempts to acknowledge faith in a modern, scientific culture. For many peo-

ple, the older apologetic proposals, whether liberal or conservative, evidentialist or pietist — associated with an age when science ruled the roost — are simply passé. The Spirit is now calling us to thoughtfully determine what our apologetic approach ought to be in a postmodern context.

Three broad aspects exist in the apologetic approach that befits the emerging context. First, we must move to a more invitational approach. We must invite people to join with us and together pursue a relationship with God rather than seek to win intellectual arguments.

Second, we must move to a conversational approach. We must refrain from confronting those who are destitute of truth with dogmatic declarations of the truth we possess. We must become more intentional in listening to their stories to see where our narratives intersect.

Above all, we must move from being well-equipped apologists to becoming a believing community. Increasingly, people are looking for communities who, together, embody the message that they proclaim and thereby provide credence to its truth. They are looking for a community of people among whom they can discover the goal of their search — the life-giving presence of Christ. Today, many people are converted to community before they are converted to Christ. In short, the Spirit

desires us to rediscover the truth in the old song that was popular in the 1960s

> and 1970s: "We will walk with each other. We will walk hand

in hand. And together will spread the news that God is in our land. And they'll know we are Christians by our love."

So, does evidence still demand a verdict?

Yes!

to rediscover the spiritual.

The question, however, is: What evidence?

Coming Next Quarter: "What Does it Really Mean To Be Postmodern?"



STANLEY J. GRENZ is Pioneer McDonald professor of theology at Carey Theological College, Vancouver B.C., and professor of theological studies,

Mars Hill Graduate School, Seattle, Washington.

* PREACHING THAT CONNECTS *



R ecently several of our church leaders missed the Sunday worship service, and our meeting felt dramatically different. Their faith and vocal prayers, emotion and devotion to Christ are so strong that when they miss a service we feel like a different church. We could have mentioned their names or delivered a message from them, but there is a huge difference between presence and absence.

There is also a big difference between the presence and absence of the Holy Spirit. He is always present in every square inch of the universe, but He does not always *manifest* His presence to us — that is, make His presence known to us — in the same way or to the same degree. When we not only believe He is present, but also *sense* His manifest presence, a sermon is an entirely different experience.

Think of the difference in a room when you play gentle music in the background versus no music. Consider the difference when you have family members in the house versus when you are alone. Reflect on the difference when the sun shines versus when gray clouds fill the sky. We feel these experiences physically and emotionally. In the same way, we sense the difference when a sermon is charged with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 4:33 says, "With great power the

apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all" (italics mine). Those who preach with full regard for the Holy Spirit believe His presence and power can and should be experienced.

WHAT ARE SOME SIGNS OF THE LORD'S MANIFEST PRESENCE?

We are convinced what Scripture says is true.

We do not try to believe; we believe. Humans cannot fully understand and believe any spiritual truth apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. Even with doctrine as basic as the lordship of Christ, we need the Holy Spirit to convince us of its truth.

When we not only believe He is present, but also *sense* His manifest presence, a sermon is an entirely different experience.

First Corinthians 12:3 says, "No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit." Christians are convinced of the truth of Scripture. This conviction is so universally accepted by Christians that we take it for granted or assume that we can believe the truth of Scripture without God's aid. Not so. When the Spirit of truth manifests His presence, the preacher and hearers do not have to try to believe the Scriptures; they *know* they are true.

Our spirit senses God's manifest presence

Obviously this is subjective, but subjective does not mean unreal. I cannot describe what God's presence feels like, but over time and with experience mature believers become familiar with what God's presence feels like to them.

We express our feelings

Although God's presence involves far more than emotion, it does typically stir up feelings, both in the preacher and hearers. How could it be otherwise when the infinite Creator impresses himself on His creatures in a way they can sense? Light a flame under a pan of water, and the water boils. Put an ice cube in the sun on a summer day, and it melts. Let the God of infinite joy, peace, holiness, love, and all hope manifest himself, and we will feel something. "Deep calls to deep" (Psalm 42:7).

In the Old Testament God promised to give His people a heart that would be

responsive to Him. Ezekiel 11:19 says, "I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh."

Galatians 5:22 says two characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit are feelings: joy and peace.

In Luke 10:21 notice the source of the emotion felt by Jesus: "Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit."

In God's manifest presence, we feel wonder and reverence. Hard hearts melt. Preacher and hearers may weep. Paul says, "For three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears" (Acts 20:31). Paul was not emotionally unbalanced; his intense feelings were the work of the Holy Spirit.

We preach with urgency

When the Spirit of God has convinced us of spiritual truths, caused us to sense in our spirits that He is with us, and moved our emotions, the natural result for the preacher is to feel with intense urgency the importance of the Scriptures he is proclaiming and the condition of the souls seated before him. He is, then, gripped by the importance of preaching, the certainty of Judgment Day, the precious value of the gospel, the terrors of hell, the pleasures of paradise, the glory of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Different preachers vary in how they express that urgency in their delivery urgency does not require the high-powered proclamation we commonly associate with an evangelist — but both preacher and hearers will feel it. When God is present in the preaching, a responsive person will not be looking at his watch or thinking about the ball game.

We have spontaneously inspired thoughts and speech

These may be described as prophetic. In our preaching, the Spirit of God may spontaneously bring thoughts to our minds for our hearers.

We preach with boldness

Again and again, the Book of Acts describes the apostles' preaching by using the word *boldly*. "After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly" (Acts 4:31). When the Spirit of God is manifested, our fear of how people will react to the truth drops away, sacrificial love for them takes over, and the proclamation of God's life-giving truth becomes our highest priority — even when we know we will be persecuted for the truth.

IMPLICATIONS FOR HOW WE PREACH

When we believe the Holy Spirit manifests His presence in preaching in a way that can be felt, charging a sermon with power, several guidelines for how to prepare and preach can be suggested.

In delivering the message, not just in the study, we should expect the supernatural inspiration of ideas

Luke 12:11,12 says, "When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say." It is possible to prepare our thoughts ahead of time in a way that predisposes us not to hear or follow spontaneous inspiration.

When spontaneous inspiration comes that we sense is from the Spirit, we should flow with it

We must be willing to leave our outline temporarily. This does not mean we abandon our prepared thoughts, but we expand our ideas as we are led or follow ideas that had not originally been planned.

We should pay attention to whether we sense the presence of the Lord or not

If we do not, we can pray quietly in our heart or pause the message to pray aloud that God will come in power. Perhaps something else needs to happen in the meeting. When we do sense His presence, we should follow His leading.

We should preach our way into the Lord's presence

In my experience, I often have to speak for a while before God's manifest presence is strong.

We should follow God-given emotions

Emotions can be taken to an extreme, but Paul apparently did not resist the welling up of his tears. Not all emotions are from God, and we do not seek emotion for emotion's sake; but we can, by quenching emotion within ourselves, quench the Spirit. We need discernment and maturity. When we discern that a stirring in our soul is from God, we should embrace emotion and express it in a fitting way.

The following scene does not involve preaching, but it shows Jesus feeling deep emotion and freely expressing that emotion rather than quenching it. At the tomb of Lazarus, "When Jesus saw her [Mary] weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. 'Where have you laid him?' he asked. 'Come and see, Lord,' they replied. Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, 'See how he loved him!' But some of them said, 'Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?' Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb" (John 11:33–38).

In another situation, we also see Jesus freely expressing His emotion: "Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. 'I am willing,' he said. 'Be clean' " (Mark 1:41).

We should not be satisfied with anything less than the manifest presence of God

If we do not sense the Lord's presence in our preaching, we should fast and seek God. We should ask Him to manifest His presence, and we should ask if something in our lives is causing Him to stand afar.

We should develop spiritual disciplines for the hours before preaching that bring us personally into God's presence A vital part of these disciplines is the preparation of our heart. We should thank God from our heart, not just our mind, until we feel thankful. We should worship God from our heart, not just our mind, until we feel worshipful and joyful. We should pray for our hearers from our heart, not just our mind, until we feel love for our people. We should pray in tongues. We should confess sin. We should meditate on our sermon text. We should sing before the Lord. We should set apart time for these spiritual exercises.

After preaching, we should thank God for His presence that attended the message

We should expect nothing less than His presence — but never take it for granted.

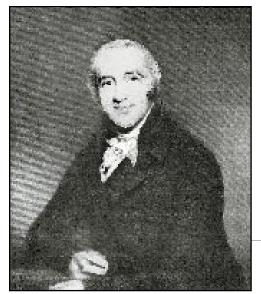
We should pray daily that God will manifest His presence in our messages

In addition, pray daily that God will take you by the hand and teach you how to preach with His presence. God is unpredictable, beyon our control, and full of wise surprises, so be ready to learn for the rest of your life.



CRAIG BRIAN LARSON is editor of Christianity Today International's preaching resources — PreachingToday.com and Preaching Today audio — as well as pastor of Lake Shore Church (Assemblies of God) in Chicago. He is coauthor of *Preaching That Connects* (Zondervan 1994).

STORY IS HIS STORY



The Faithfulness of CHARLES SIVEON

BY WILLIAM P. FARLEY

T his is the first in a series of four articles on great preachers who lived from the beginning of the American Revolution to the end of the Great

Awakening, about 1835. We will explore the lives of Charles Simeon, Asahel Nettleton, Edward Payson, and Charles Finney. The

21st-century pastor has a rich heritage in these men of God. Their selflessness and diligent service to God and to their congregations inspire us today.

Our first study is on the life of Charles Simeon. His passion for Christ, his devotional life, and the long hours he spent alone with God in his study made him a powerful preacher and dedicated servant of God.

SIMEON'S YOUTH

In 1782, the Anglican Church ordained Charles Simeon when he was 23. Like Whitefield before him, and later Spurgeon, his pulpit powers were immediately conspicuous.

A few months after Simeon's

ordination, a pastor friend named Atkinson asked him to take his pulpit while he was on an extended vacation. In England the last quarter of the 18th century was a time of spiritual darkness. Most of the great cathedrals and village chapels were empty. This was the case in Atkinson's church. Simeon's first attempt to minister changed this.

Pulpit power is a direct result of the kind of profound inward self-abasement that marked Simeon. Henry Venn noted, "In less than seventeen Sundays,

by preaching for Mr. Atkinson in a church at Cambridge, he [Simeon] filled it with hearers — a thing unknown there for near a century. ... Such was the crowd which came to hear the 'substitute' that it overflowed from pews and aisle even into the sanctum of the clerk's desk. The Vicar [Atkinson], returning from his holiday, found his clerk perturbed, but happy in the prospect of relief; 'Oh, Sir, I am so glad you are come; now we shall have some room'."

Who was this young man who could fill empty churches to overflowing at 23? Why is he important to pastors in the 21st century?

HIS CONVERSION

John Wesley had just turned 56, and Jonathan Edwards had just died when, in 1759, Simeon was born into an upper-class English family. Simeon's life spanned the American Revolution, the French Revolution, and the birth of the Industrial Revolution. He was of the same generation as John Adams and Thomas Jefferson.

Simeon grew up in an unbelieving home. When he was 18, his father sent him to Cambridge. He was converted during his first 4 months there.

Shortly after his arrival, the provost informed Simeon that he must attend Communion in a few weeks. Immediately, the Holy Spirit brought young Simeon under tremendous conviction for sin. He felt great unworthiness and guilt. Despite the absence of a Christian upbringing he feared taking the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner.

Searching for peace with God he began to read the Bible and other spiritual books. This agony of conscience continued for several weeks; he could find no relief. Finally, while reading Bishop Wilson on the Lord's Supper, he understood the reality of Christ's substitutionary atonement. He understood that his sins were placed on One who had died in his place. "From that hour," he wrote, "peace flowed in rich abundance into my soul; and at the Lord's Table in our Chapel I had the sweetest access to God through my blessed Savior."²

When [Simeon] was asked about the most important prerequisites for pastoral effectiveness, he responded without hesitation, "humility, humility, and humility."

Like Luther and Spurgeon, the agonizing experience of his conversion impressed on him the power of the Cross, and he never got over it. Because of this the Atonement was the constant theme of his teaching. One of his biographers describes it this way: "For him Christ was the centre of all subjects for sinful man; and all his hearers were for him sinful men, for whom the Gospel was the one remedy. Christ was the Gospel; and personal faith in Him, a living Person, was the Gospel secret."³

His personal struggle impressed on him the importance of the knowledge of sin in the process of conversion. That is why his preaching aimed for three effects: "To humble the sinner, to exalt the Saviour, and to promote holiness."⁴ Few contemporary pastors would make convicting sinners their first aim in preaching. Comforting sinners is our general purpose. Could we use Simeon's sense of sin today?

REJECTED MINISTRY

A few months after the preaching success recounted above, he was appointed vicar of Trinity Church, Cambridge. He was probably selected because of his father's

influence, his evident piety, and his obvious preaching gifts. Simeon's appointment at 23 was unusual. Jobs like these were usually reserved for older, more experienced men. That is how the parishioners of this old and influential church felt. They had an older man in mind. They were so disappointed in Simeon's appointment that they boycotted his services.

In those days, church members purchased their pews. Simeon's enemies used this power against him. They boycotted Simeon's ministry and made sure others did also by gating and locking their pews.

But they underestimated Simeon's persistence. He was a man of great patience, fortitude, and stubbornness. Despite the resistance of these men and many others, he endured this persecution for 12 years. During this time his listeners sat in the aisles and empty spaces. The influence of his powerful preaching eventually thawed his enemies. Slowly they returned to their pews. During these difficulties Simeon maintained an attitude of humility and forbearance, eventually winning his enemies with kindness.

At one low point Simeon sought God for a word of encouragement. He opened his Bible at random to Mark 15:21: "They compelled a passerby ... to carry His cross; it was Simon of Cyrene" (NRSV). Simeon means Simon. The message was clear. He was to bear His cross. He did so with thanksgiving. SEASONS OF SUCCESS

Slowly, opportunities to preach at larger churches began to come. The Rev. W. Carus Wilson describes Simeon's first preaching opportunity at great St. Mary's in Cambridge. "At first there seemed a disposition to disturb and annoy the preacher in a manner at that period unhappily not unusual. But scarcely had he proceeded more than

> a few sentences, when the lucid arrangement of his exor-

dium, and his serious and commanding manner, impressed the whole assembly with feelings of deep solemnity, and he was heard to the end with the most respectful and riveted attention. The vast congregation departed in a mood very different from that in which it had assembled."⁵ This was the usual effect of Simeon's ministry.

Simeon remained at Trinity Church until the age of 77, completing 54 years. He did so without bitterness or revenge and was determined to consistently witness for Christ despite the resistance. He was faithful where Christ planted him.

Charles Simeon's passion for Christ, his devotional life, and the long hours he spent alone with God in his study made him a powerful preacher and dedicated servant of God.

> Eventually he became popular and famous. He began to receive offers to speak in England and Scotland. During these years his ministry converted many people. For example, when it was rumored that he would speak on a particular campus, huge crowds turned out. Brown, in his *Recollections*, notes, "In November 1811, 'the sight of the overflowing church was almost electric;' In 1814, 'there was scarcely room to move, above or below;' in 1815, the 'audiences were immense; attention was candid

and profound.' In 1823, 'many were unable to get inside the doors'."6

In his apartment he also conducted weekly meetings for undergraduates.

of Anglican homiletics,"⁸ notes Arthur Pollard. Most of this homiletical development came through his influence on the young men that passed through Cambridge, attended his weekly meetings, and went on to pulpits throughout England and the world.

It would be hard for him to understand the modern temptation to put administrative responsibilities before substantial time alone with God.

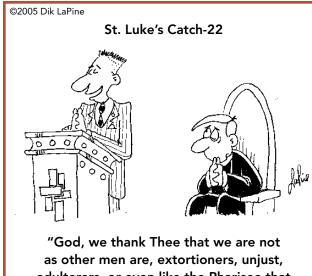
Having overcome his detractors through humble patience, he lived long enough and became prestigious enough to present his life's work - his sermon outlines in 21 volumes, the Horae Homiletica — to King William IV in 1833.

These visits influenced many young men to enter the ministry. The positive effect on the 19th-century Anglican Church was great.

When he died at age 77, Simeon had won over his opponents with love. He had earned the respect and love of the town, faculty, and student body. He was esteemed by England as one of its most prominent Christian leaders. His biographer notes, "Probably Cambridge never saw quite such a funeral as Simeon's; for not only was the attendance vast and the respect profound, but countless hearts felt that they had lost a father, and all remembered the contrasts of the former days."7

HIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS

"It would be difficult to exaggerate his personal influence on the development



adulterers, or even like the Pharisee that Pastor just preached about."

If space permitted, we could examine his other persecutions and how he overcame them with kindness, his seminal role in England's budding overseas missionary movement, his great pulpit powers, his devotion to the Bible, his persistent commitment to celibacy for the sake of the gospel, and his influence on 20th-century men like John Stott.

Let us pause to extract some lessons from the life of Charles Simeon.

LESSONS FOR TODAY'S PASTOR

First, he recognized that a man only preaches a sermon well that he has first preached to his own soul. A pastor has nothing to preach until God speaks to him, and this requires long hours alone with God. Simeon wrote, "But the whole state of your soul before God must be the first point to be considered; for if you yourself are not in a truly spiritual frame of mind, and actually living upon the truths of which you preach or

officiate to very little purpose."9

In Simeon's case, his preaching power proceeded from his piety. In

read to others, you will A pastor has nothing to preach until God speaks to him, and this requires long hours alone with God.

an era without electric lights or central heating, Simeon rose at 4 every morning

and prayed and studied the first 4 hours of each day, often by candlelight. It would be hard for him to understand the modern temptation to put administrative responsibilities before substantial time alone with God.

Second, he spent his life striving to increase in humility. As he lay dying, he said, "This I know, that I am the chief of sinners, and the greatest monument of God's mercy; and I know I cannot be wrong here."10

When he was asked about the most important prerequisites for pastoral effectiveness, he responded without hesitation, "Only three things are needed — humility, humility, and humility."11

He labored day and night to know his sin better, not to condemn himself, but to grow closer to Christ. "Simeon came to know himself and his sin very deeply," notes John Piper. "He described his maturing in the ministry as a growing downward."12

Obsessed as we are with self-esteem, some modern minds will wrestle with Simeon's spirituality. But his emphasis on

sin and humility is precisely what the church needs today. Pulpit power is a direct result of the kind of profound inward self-abasement that marked Simeon. He wrote things like, "I have never thought that the circumstance of God's having forgiven me was any reason why I should forgive myself; on the contrary, I have always judged it better to loathe myself the more, in proportion as I was assured that God was pacified towards me. ... There are but two objects that I have desired these 40 years to behold; the one is my own vileness; and the other is the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ: *and I have always thought that they should be viewed together*:"¹³

Third, we can learn much from his faith-inspired perseverance. His 54 years in one church was fueled by love for God and man. It is not wrong for a man to move to another church if it is for the right reasons. Simeon felt called to Trinity Church. He refused to move on, even when the pews were locked and opposition was formidable, and later when attractive offers began to come.

Simeon would not agree with the modern mentality that views ministry as a profession to be advanced through by successive moves to larger churches. Rather, he saw the ministry as a call to serve a congregation by laying down his life and ego.

His deep and ardent love for Christ, his disciplined, consistent devotional life, and his long hours alone face-to-face with God in his study were the sources of his pulpit power. From this foundation God empowered him to feed his flock the Bread of Life. Our people need that same food today. May the life of Charles Simeon inspire us to prepare them a spiritual banquet.



WILLIAM P. FARLEY is

senior pastor of Grace Christian Fellowship in Spokane, Washington. He is the author of For His Glory, Pinnacle Press, and Outrageous Mercy,

Baker. You can contact him at 509-

ENDNOTES

 Handley Moule, *Charles Simeon* (London: Intervarsity Fellowship, 1892, reprint 1965), 35.
 John Piper, *The Roots of Endurance* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossways, 2002), 82.

3. Ibid., 89.

4. Ibid.

- 5. Moule, 64.
- 6. Ibid., 75,76.
- 7. Ibid., 178.
- 7. IDIU., 170.

8. Pollard and Hennell, eds., *Charles Simeon* 1759–1836, (London: The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1964), 167.

- 9. Moule, 70.
- 10. lbid., 173.
- 11. Ibid., 65.
- 12. Piper, 91.

13. Ibid., 108. Piper is quoting from: Ed. W. Carus, *Memoirs of the Life of the Rev. Charles Simeon, M.A.* (Cambridge: Hatchard and Son, 1847), 303–304. Emphasis mine.

* REACHING SECULAR UNIVERSITIES *

Editor's note: Chi Alpha Campus Ministries is a vital component of Assemblies of God efforts to reach the world for Christ. Today's university students are tomorrow's leaders. Enrichment journal is pleased to introduce this new column written especially for Chi Alpha campus pastors and anyone interested in reaching secular universities. We asked Rusty Wright, an international lecturer, author, journalist, and university ministry veteran, to share insights on "scratching where non-Christians itch," that is, finding their areas of interest and building bridges for the gospel. This issue's column tells the intriguing story of a campus atheist who enjoyed mocking believers and how his Christian friends influenced him. Wright's future columns will use colorful stories of encounters involving faculty, a wild secular fraternity. discussing sex with secular students, and more, to illustrate practical principles to help campus pastors and others connect with the hearts and minds of contemporary students and professors and help nudge them toward Jesus.

Even as a freshman, Steve had earned a reputation as a Duke University campus atheist. He enjoyed arguing with Christians and mocking their faith.

When believers advertised a Christian film in his dormitory, Steve defaced the publicity with vulgarities. In another prank, Steve, brandishing a lighted torch made from a broomstick and flaming underwear, chased a Jewish student named Jace through his dorm. When Jace locked himself in a room, Steve pounded on the door shouting, "Jace, you'd better receive Christ. You'd better receive Christ."

When Steve's roommate, Jerry, trusted Christ as Savior, Steve wondered if this faith stuff was getting too

A Campus A Campus Finds What He Wants



close. But Jerry, Gordon, and other believers befriended Steve, demonstrating Christian love and including him in their activities.

PICKLE JUICE AND FLICKERING LIGHTS

Steve liked to study lying on his bed with a book propped on his chest. For refreshment, he would drink pickle juice from a jar. Have you ever tried to drink while lying on your back? Sometimes part of the liquid dribbled down his cheek. Steve never changed his sheets. By December Gordon and Jerry remade the bed with clean sheets.

Steve liked attending Christian meetings and became familiar with evangelistic literature. Once, a traveling music group distributed a widely used gospel booklet at their concert and asked those familiar with it to show it to their friends in the crowd. Steve turned to Jerry and began to present the message of Christ to his roommate — the atheist sharing his faith with the believer.

After a moment, Steve said, "Hey, this booklet is different." He had received a revised version and noticed slight differences in wording and Bible versions. The atheist was so familiar with the presentation that he could detect minor edits.

At the end of another outreach meeting Steve publicly fell to his knees, raised his hands, and cried out — loudly and in mockery — "O, Lord Jesus, come into my life."

In April Josh McDowell, the popular campus speaker, addressed a packed house. A persistent lighting problem — flickering overhead fluorescent lights — plagued the event. Leaders tried many solutions, but to no avail. The emcee introduced McDowell. About two sentences into his presentation, Josh looked up at the lights and shouted, "Aw, c'mon."

The lights stopped flickering.

McDowell had an attentive audience. Later, he told the leaders privately that he had trusted God to bind the real enemy, Satan.

As the emcee closed the meeting, the lights began flickering again. As the crowd dispersed, Steve asked his friends, "Did you see those lights?" A short while later, McDowell spoke with Steve personally about the eternal consequences of rejecting Christ.

MATH, JOHN'S GOSPEL, AND THE ORDER OF THE CHAIR

The next 4 weeks brought some interesting developments. Week one: Steve told Jerry he believed there was a God and that God loved him. Week two: Steve said he believed he was sinful and needed a Savior. Week three: Steve explained that he was not sure that Jesus was the way for everyone, but he believed Jesus was the only way for him. Week four: Steve was in his dorm room one afternoon trying to study math, but he kept being distracted by a desire to read the Gospel of John.

About 1 a.m., Gordon and Jerry awakened their discipleship group leader saying, "Steve received Christ! Steve received Christ!"

Steve's cynicism and bitterness was replaced with kindness, peace, and deep joy. His smile and words reflected Jesus' love. He communicated his new faith.

On the last day of classes that spring, the Order of the Chair held its annual rally on the steps of the Duke chapel in the center of campus. Late each spring a toilet would appear on the chapel steps, signaling the noontime rally. OOC members would arrive drunk with a garbage can filled with green grits. They would induct members by detailing — over a public address system — the inductees' sexual activities. Each initiate then sat on the commode (fully clothed) and was plastered with green grits.

That year Christians made placards and printed evangelistic literature, taking

care to keep content positive and pro-Jesus rather than directly condemning the OOC. As the mostly male — and mostly lusty — crowd moved toward the OOC venue, Christians distributed their handouts. Placards bobbed as believers filtered throughout the crowd. Local television crews filmed the event.

As the inebriated emcee began the ceremony, he paused momentarily when one brave soul pointedly, but politely, walked across the front displaying his sign. The emcee read it aloud: "Jesus is real, man.

"Hey, that's all right," he editorialized with a cheerful tone.

Steve was carrying that sign. Even as a young believer, the former campus athiest helped to spread the message of Christ.

PRINCIPLES GOD USES

What factors did God use to nudge Steve to faith in Christ? Earl Creps, professor at Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, says that central to the missionary task is "personal involvement in relationships with postmodern pagans." He asks, "Is it possible that we could find the meaning of our ministries in the aspirations of the lost? I wonder if we have the humility to listen to them."

The principles believers used to reach Steve may influence your own outreach to secular students:

Befriend unbelievers

Jerry, Gordon, and others became Steve's close friends, learned how he felt, and discovered what was important to him. They had good-natured banter and fun. He enjoyed hanging out with them. Many students today are thirsty for genuine friendship.

Develop Christian community

As Steve hung with the believers, he saw how they lived and related to one another, how they handled student concerns like academics, dating, and finances. The Christians, though imperfect, loved each other and loved him. A loving, authentic group of believers can model an answer to one of Jesus' prayers: "My prayer for all of them is that they will be one, just as you and I are one, Father — that just as you are in me and I am in you, so they will be in us, and the world will believe you sent me" (John 17:21, NLT).



"The casting for our play, *Jonah and the Whale*, is complete, except for the part of the whale."

Treat unbelievers not as enemies, but as those needing God's grace

In today's culture wars, it can be tempting for Christians to consider their philosophical and political adversaries as enemies to be conquered rather than the lost to be won. Steve's friends prayed for him and considered how to best communicate God's grace and truth.

Present the truth in love

Unbelievers need to understand God's provision in Christ's death and resurrection. Steve's friends helped him understand the good news so well he could explain it to others.

Speak their psychological and emotional languages

We all use intellectual language. We also have psychological and emotional languages, words, and concepts that influence us in ways that transcend intellect. Pascal wrote, "The heart has its reasons, which reason does not know."

Josh McDowell is adept at intellectually defending the faith. He is equally skilled at telling stories — notably his own faith journey involving hatred of his alcoholic father — to connect emotionally.

Psychologist Daniel Goleman's bestseller, *Emotional Intelligence*, is an excellent secular resource on understanding emotions in communication.

Trust the Holy Spirit and God's power

Flickering lights were not in the human script for that campus meeting. God used an observable demonstration of His power to get Steve's attention. He may act similarly through your ministry.

Work hard to communicate effectively with secular students and professors

Do not allow sloth or ego to hamper excellence. Do Christians applaud wildly when you address them? Do not be fooled into thinking you will automatically connect with non-Christians.

Be willing to break Christian communication stereotypes. Perhaps as He did for Jabez, God will "enlarge (your) territory" (1 Chronicles 4:10). I pray He does.

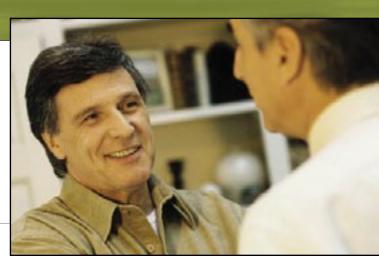


RUSTY WRIGHT is an award-winning author, syndicated columnist, and university lecturer with Probe.org. He has spoken to secular audiences on six continents.

SOUNSELORS CORNER S

Counseling TIPS Every Pastor Should Know

BY RUTH HETZENDORFER



O ounseling is both rewarding and emotionally depleting. How a pastor balances the demands and needs of a congregation and keeps himself from legal hassles is of utmost importance.

PROTECT YOUR TIME

1. Learn the wisdom of referral. Know when the situation (for example: any kind of abuse) is beyond you, it entails too many sessions, or is too involved. Keep a list of Christian counselors and psychiatrists for referrals. (For a list of Christian counselors in your area, contact the Ministerial Enrichment Office, 1-417-862-2781, ext. 3014.)

2. Limit your sessions to three. Your time is valuable. If a client needs more than three sessions, he should be referred.

3. Assign homework. If you are giving your time and energy to a counselee, expect him to do homework before each session. Homework sorts out those who are serious from those who do not want to change. Tell each counselee that when he finishes the assigned work, you will schedule the next session. If the counselee doesn't follow through on his assignment, don't see him again. Examples of assignments are: *Self-esteem*

Assign *Telling Yourself the Truth* by William Backus and Marie Chapian, or *Boundaries* by Henry McCloud. Give certain Scriptures to read. Have counselees write down their negative self-talk each day and then refute it. Require them to keep a journal of their devotional life. *Rejection*

Assign *The Root of Rejection* by Joyce Meyer or *The Art of Forgiveness* by Lewis Smedes. Ask counselees to write out the behaviors they want to change, and have them work on one of the behavior changes each day.

Sexual addiction

Refer them to a men's group (at another church if you do not have one). Have counselees read *Every Man's Battle* by Stephen Arterburn or *Pure Desire* by Ted Roberts.

Divorce

Read *Growing Through Divorce* by Jim Smoke. Have counselees answer the questions in the book.

4. Learn to validate. Validation is acknowledging verbally what you understand your counselee is saying and feeling. You acknowledge his pain. You can often simplify your life when you learn to validate a person's spoken pain. Validation can be a healer. For example: I can see you have been through some difficult situations. I can see you are experiencing great pain. I cannot imagine how difficult it might be to go through that.

PROTECT YOURSELF FROM LEGAL AND ETHICAL DILEMMAS

1. Keep a list of phone numbers for:

- Suicide cases Different states have different guidelines.
- Abuse cases (for children and elderly) find out the time limit to call.
- Domestic violence cases (know where to call for shelters).
- AIDS prevention cases.

In some states, if your client is going to harm someone, you are obligated to inform the police and the person who might be harmed. In other states, you only inform the police. Know your state's policies. Keep a written plan for each of these situations. Keep telephone numbers and plans accessible to each person who takes church messages.

2. Always document each part of your plan as you carry it out. Write down the dates, times, places, people you called, what was said, and then your next step.

3. Keep records on file for each person you see. It is good to keep simple records that state the person's name, why he came, and briefly what was said. For example: A person is considering divorce. You can give the pros and cons of divorce and show Scripture, but you must not make the decision for him. It does not matter what the situation is — a person is being battered, her husband is a homosexual

— do not suggest they get a divorce. Keep what you said well-documented for your own protection. Keep all records in a locked and confidential place.

4. A pastor who is not a licensed counselor should not call himself a professional therapist or counselor. Simply say that you will minister to their needs.

5. Do not give advice outside of God's Word. Counseling is not advice. It is showing alternatives and giving coping skills to help counselees make decisions.

6. Do not counsel anyone under 18 unless you have written permission from his parents.

7. If you are in a dilemma about what to do, call a counselor, doctor, or psychiatrist, and document your call. For example: If a person tells you he has AIDS but refuses to tell his spouse, what should you do? In most states, it is unlawful for you to disclose to anyone that the person has AIDS. You can recommend he tell his spouse. You can tell him you are uncomfortable with the fact he won't tell his spouse, but you cannot tell anyone. It would be wise to call an AIDS hotline or a medical doctor and without using any names, ask their procedures, then, document the call.

8. Do not counsel the opposite sex unless your office has a window in the door and someone is outside your office during the session.

9. Keep all information confidential (even from your spouse), unless the counselee could harm himself or others, abuse is involved, or you have been subpoenaed to testify in court. Have each person sign a waiver form stating he knows the exceptions to confidentiality.

10. Should you develop an emotional attraction to a counselee, stop the

counseling sessions immediately. If you are seeing counselees only three times, this should not be difficult. Take your spouse with you on the last session if you need to see this person again. A survey of four major denominations showed 90 percent of pastors admitted to being sexually attracted to at least one client. Approximately 83 percent of adulterous relationships begin in counseling sessions. Guard your heart. James Dobson says the biggest downfall of pastors is thinking it will never happen to them.

Most important, pray and let the Lord give you His wisdom. "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him" (James 1:5).



RUTH HETZENDORFER,

Ed.D., LPC, is counseling/psychology program director at Life Pacific College, Rancho Cucamonga, California.

Schercher Scher Sc

Child for Believers — When Does it Ever Stop?

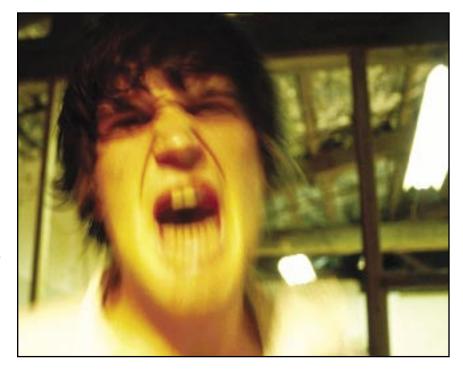
BY ROGER C. PALMS

He was screaming and his face was livid. He wanted a toy simply because another child had it first. I was witnessing child rage. By his actions, the child was saying, "I want what you have."

Parents and baby-sitters can usually sort out this kind of behavior and carefully teach, "Take turns; share with each other." But an hour later that lesson may need to be repeated.

We respond to this kind of behavior by saying, "They are just children; they do grow up." Later, while driving down the highway, I see a huge SUV right on my back bumper. The driver's face is livid and he is screaming. I move into the other lane as he takes the place I had in traffic. He did not gain anything except my space, but he wants it because I had it first. He has bigger toys, but the same attitude; it's the same child only 20 years later. When will that child grow up?

Some children never grow up. They get bigger and the toys they squabble over are more sophisticated, but their unwillingness to share remains. When I read in the news that a teen was shot over a pair of sneakers, I shudder. The child in the nursery has grown up and now has a gun. When I read of power struggles among leaders in government, I see it again. Only these children now have titles and offices. Unfortunately, that adult acting like a child also shows up in church.



ADULTEROUS CHILDREN

When misplaced love, desire, and affection happen in a marriage, it is labeled adultery. It is also misplaced desire and affection that causes adultery in a relationship with God when adult Christians do not grow up.

Once I needed to interview a Christian leader. I was told he was too busy to talk with me. Each time I tried his staff gave the same answer. So I interviewed his assistant, then I called one more time. When I heard the same reply, I told the secretary, "That's okay, I interviewed his assistant. I'll go with that quote." I hung up the phone and stood by it for about 15 seconds. Sure enough the phone rang. I knew it would.

"Hello," came the voice at the other end, "I understand you have been trying to reach me." He did not want to give me an interview. He just could not stand the thought of someone else taking his place and getting the press he now suddenly wanted.

Was James seeing this kind of behavior when he wrote: "You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight." Then he summarizes, "You adulterous people" (James 4:2–4).

When does this adultery start? Very early, apparently. It begins in the nursery with grabbing, screaming, and lusting after a toy that belongs to someone else. But when does it end? At what point does a person with a new nature in Christ Jesus exhibit new behavior?

As God, Jesus did not grasp what He had, but made himself of no value, reputation, or worth (See Philippians 2). This is the nature that is given to the believer, the new creation in Christ. But not all believers (even some in roles of Christian leadership) take on that new nature. Many believers who are born again do grow up, but others never do. For whatever reason, some continue being children. As little children lusting after what someone else has, they hurt themselves, the church, and the Kingdom.

WHEN BABIES ACT LIKE BABIES

One evening a reception was held for a well-known Christian leader. His humility was evident; he made others feel as though they were the most important persons in the room. Then a well-known television clergyman entered, surrounded by his aides. One person gave him a glass of punch; another took his briefcase. As his admirers gathered around him, he never acknowledged the person being honored. Instead, he held court. He wanted the place of honor. I came away shaking my head. *Well, he got what he wanted*, I thought, *just like that baby in the nursery*.

GROWING UP IS HARD

The first step in any journey is to know where we are and where we need to go. If the journey is maturity in Christ — which is the confessed desire of most believers — then the problem is not so much with the journey toward that goal, but with accurately assessing where we are when we start.

Am I truly in Christ? What does that mean? How will that change the way I think? How will knowing who I am in Christ influence how I behave? Surrender and yielding are involved in this process. We must be willing to confess, "I do not want to be a child any longer." We must have a readiness to say, "What God offers in Christ is far greater than what I am trying to cling to or grab for myself." God offers maturity, but I need to give up being a child.

Jesus was a child, but He did not stay that way. "And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52). That is the desire we have for each other. Gently, but firmly, we help the adult child the same way we help the child in the nursery. We show, teach, and reinforce, and must be prepared to do it repeatedly. We cannot assume we have taught because we have said the right words. We never stop teaching those for whom we are responsible. People need continued reinforcement.

We praise and appreciate those who behave in a mature manner. We watch our

own behavior too. Am I taking or demanding my own way? We return to God's Word repeatedly to see what Jesus taught and how He lived. We do not assume our own steady growth, but keep coming back to God's teachings for a checkup.

We are works in progress. I do not want to be an adult child spiritually; I want to be like Jesus. I want to surround myself with mature believers who can help me see clearly what walking with Jesus is about. And if I ever start to doubt that being like Jesus makes a difference in how a believer lives, I'm going to spend a few minutes with the babies in the church nursery.



ROGER C. PALMS, former editor of DECISION magazine, is a teacher at writer's conferences in colleges and theological seminaries. He lives in Anoka, Minnesota.

State of the second sec

Worship and the Brain: Physical Dimensions of the Worship Wars

BY JOSEPH L. CASTLEBERRY

C onflicts over the style and content of church music are usually explained as a generation gap — differences in taste between young adults and older church members. In truth, this appraisal is not an explanation of worship wars, but rather, a description. Another explanation and a possible solution, however, can be found in recent advances in brain research and in adult learning theory.

BRAIN PHYSIOLOGY

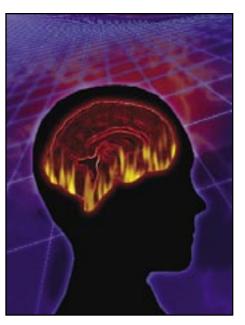
Religious experience or the feeling of God's presence — like all human experience — is processed

in the brain. Recent experiments conducted by Andrew Newberg, M.D., at the University of Pennsylvania have shown that during meditation or prayer several areas of the brain work together to produce spiritual experiences.¹ Newberg has concluded, "Our brains may, in fact, be naturally calibrated to spirituality."

These different areas of the brain work together because synapses or

neural pathways that connect them allow weak electrical activity to pass between the nerve cells of the brain. These neural pathways are sometimes referred to as the wir-

ing of the brain. Learning experiences activate these pathways. When we have a spiritual experience it physically changes the wiring of our brain, and future religious feelings will normally be processed through that wiring.



In worship, a particular song may be connected to a person's experiencing the presence of God. Through this experience neural pathways were activated. Thus, the repetition of that song in the future re-activates the brain wiring and produces a similar feeling. That explains why we want to sing certain old songs — they remind us of, and even renew powerful experiences of God's presence.

The neural pathways for spiritual experience are usually established early in life. The brains of newborn babies have only a small percentage of the neural pathways they will later have. During the first few months of life, babies begin to produce far more brain connections than they can use.² One reason young children can easily learn languages is

that they have so many pathways for processing new information.

Unfortunately, the brain eliminates excess synapses during later childhood. By the time we are teenagers, we have eliminated a large percentage of the neural pathways we had when we were small children. Thus, learning new things becomes more difficult.

Based on this information, it may be inferred that it is easier for small children to experience the presence of God than it is for adults. This idea is based on brain research. It is also supported by social research. According to George Barna's recent research, "a person's lifelong behaviors and views are generally developed when they are young — particularly before they reach the teenage years."³ Barna's

If we segregate young children and never expose them to the music adults prefer, we guarantee they will attach no religious significance to that music when they are older.

research also found that (1) moral foundations are generally formed by age 9; (2) the majority of people who accept Christ will do so by age 12; and (3) the religious beliefs people form before age 13 usually persist for a lifetime.

If we combine these conclusions from social research with what we have inferred from brain physiology experiments, we can hypothesize that the style of music people associate with their initial experiences of the presence of God as children will continue to be their favorite style of church music for the rest of their lives. Worship wars present circumstantial evidence that this hypothesis is accurate. These conflicts occur because people of different ages associate different music with their religious experiences. People are essentially arguing about which age group gets to experience God's presence during worship.

ADULT LEARNING THEORY

Based on this research, what can churches do to prevent worship wars or to settle existing wars? A helpful suggestion comes from adult education theory. We know that adults can learn, even if they do not have as many neural pathways as children. New neural pathways are established in adult brains by experiences. Adult educators seek to attach new learning to new experiences, making on-the-job training an effective means of teaching adults.⁴ The more experiential approach a church takes

The only way we can establish a common context for worship is to experience the presence of God together.

in helping its members experience God, the more likely its ministry to adults make new neural pathways that will allow them to experience God.

A church with highly experiential Pentecostal ministries where God is made manifest will have no problem connecting both adults and young people with the presence of God through worship. In this environment, both young and old no longer depend exclusively on established neural pathways to experience God. Rather, they are actively forming new pathways. The only way churches that are trying to subsist on historical memories of an old experience with God can avoid worship wars is to prevent their young people from encountering God in association with new music. This approach can be summed up by paraphrasing a saying from the Vietnam era: "We had to destroy the church to save it."

Another element for avoiding worship wars is to provide sufficient opportunities for the whole church — especially the oldest and youngest members — to worship together. While Barna's research provides a strong argument for paying special

attention to children in our churches, it is an over-reaction to assume children should always have their own services apart from adults. If we segregate young children and never expose them to the music adults prefer, we guarantee they will attach no religious significance to that music when they are older.

This may sound simple, but the only way we can establish a common context for worship is to experience the presence of God together. One reason older Pentecostals connected to the worship music of their parents is that they spent so much time together with them in church.

The degree to which younger Christians attach spiritual experience to older songs is the degree to which those songs will survive into the future.

Church history is marked by monuments in song that have been left behind in the church's march toward the second coming of Christ. These musical monuments record the spiritual experiences of our forebears, and a visit to an old song can be like a pilgrimage. Like the Children of Israel, our children may ask, "What do these stones mean?" It is beneficial to take our children on these pilgrimages, but it is not healthy for them or for us to spend all our spiritual effort on pilgrimages into the past.

We need to allow the Holy Spirit freedom to be active in our services, so new spiritual experiences frequently occur for both children and adults. Since musical styles change with time, new spiritual experiences need to be attached to contemporary music as well as music from the past. If we meet this goal, we will have little energy left for worship wars.



JOSEPH L. CASTLEBERRY, Ed.D., is academic dean of Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri.

ENDNOTES

1. For more information, see Andrew Newberg, M.D., and Eugene G. d'Aquili, M.D., Why God Won't Go Away (New York: Random House/ Ballantine Books, 2001), and Andrew Newberg, M.D., and Eugene G. d'Aquili, M.D., The Mystical Mind: Probing the Biology of Belief (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999).

2. John D. Bransford, Ann L. Brown, and Rodney R. Cocking, eds., *How People Learn: Brain, Mind Experience and School* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 2000).

3. For a summary of Barna's research on the importance of reaching children, see Barna Research Online at: http://www.barna.org/ FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpd ateID=153.

4. See Stephen D. Brookfield, Understanding and Facilitating Adult Learning (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1986).



"When I said I came for the worship, I meant to watch and ridicule, not to participate in."

* FINANCIAL CONCEPTS *

Seven Steps To Retiring Comfortably

BY JIM LAVALLEE

S ince 1900 the life expectancy of Americans has nearly doubled. Despite this increased longevity, Americans today are saving less than their grandparents. As a result, 25 percent of Americans will now work into their retirement years. Assuming normal retirement age, a person will need to fund 20-plus years of retirement.

Social Security payments will cover about 20 to 30 percent of average retirement income needs. The remaining 70 to 80 percent will need to be provided through a retirement savings plan. Consider these seven steps to help you provide for an adequate retirement:

START SAVING EARLY

Saving systematically does not need to hurt. The earlier you begin to save for retirement, the more compound interest can work for you. For example, at age 30 you can save as little as 2 percent of your annual gross pay and retire comfortably. If you begin to save at age 50, you will need to set aside a substantial portion of your income to make up for the late start. At your full retirement age (as defined by the Social Security Administration), you will need a net worth of about seven times your final working year's income to live comfortably.

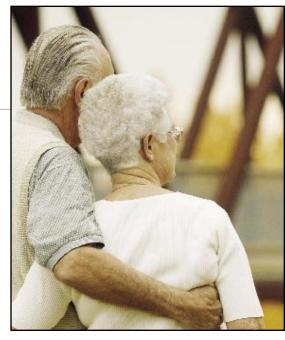
MAKE SACRIFICES

You may need to make some sacrifices to save. Analyze your monthly expenditures and create a budget. You may be surprised where your money is going and decide to make changes that will result in an adequate retirement income.

INCREASE CONTRIBUTIONS WITH AGE

If you cannot afford to save much

now, there is no need to become overwhelmed. You may find it easier to increase your percentage contributions with age. If you start saving at age 40 with 4 percent and increase the amount each decade (5 percent in your 50s, 6 percent in your 60s), you can adequately fund your retirement. Procrastination is costly, but by increasing your percentage of contributions as you get older, you can catch up.



TAKE ADVANTAGE OF TAX CONCESSIONS

The federal government has made tax concessions that effectively subsidize your retirement contributions. For example, salary deferrals are contributed on a pretax basis. If your combined marginal income tax and Social Security tax rate is 33 percent, it will only cost you 67 cents of every \$1 invested, since you would have paid the other 33 cents to the government in taxes.

Another important tax consideration is to leave your retirement account alone until age 59 1/2. If you withdraw funds early, you will pay a tax and a penalty.

One of the more obscure tax benefits is the Saver's Tax Credit. This helps lower income Americans save by providing a tax credit. Many ministers will find that they qualify for this tremendous tax benefit. Here is an example:

Sam is a 26-year-old youth pastor at First Assembly. His adjusted gross income is \$22,000 per year. This qualifies him for a 50 percent tax credit. Initially, Sam thinks he cannot afford to save for retirement. If Sam contributes \$450, it would only cost him \$123. He receives a \$225 tax credit, \$62.50 in income tax savings, and \$34.43 in Social Security tax savings. Sam simply cannot afford not to save. When combined, tax savings pay for 73 percent of his contribution.

HAVE YOUR CHURCH CONTRIBUTE TO YOUR RETIREMENT PLAN

Do not overlook the importance of your church making contributions to your retirement plan. Today, 77 percent of employers in the U.S. make matching contributions for employees.

Ministers Benefit Association has educational material to help church boards understand their responsibility to contribute to the retirement of their ministers and employees. Churches should be as careful and committed to provide for the retirement needs of those who minister, as secular employees are for their employees.

INVEST IN EQUITIES

If you are at least 5 years from retirement, consider investing some of your retirement assets in equities (stocks). From January 1974 to December 2003, \$1 invested in U.S.

stocks grew to \$31.28. While this is no indication of future earnings, the same dollar invested in U.S. Bonds yielded \$15.10. MBA has the Frank Russell LifePoints Risk Quiz to help you assess what level of risk is right for you.

POSTPONE RETIREMENT

If you choose to work beyond your full retirement age and draw your Social Security retirement benefits, take advantage of the Senior Citizens' Freedom to Work Act of 2000, by living on your Social Security checks first and saving that same amount as salary deferrals into your retirement account. You will be amazed at how much you will save in taxes, and your retirement account will grow. This strategy is especially beneficial for those who began saving for retirement late in life.



JIM LAVALLEE is vice president, Ministers Benefit Association Operations, A/G Financial, Springfield, Missouri

MINISTERS BENEFIT ASSOCIATION FACTS AND FIGURES

- Ministers Benefit Association has served the Assemblies of God since 1944.
- At its incorporation in 1956, MBA had 1,000 members and \$300,000 in assets.
- Today, MBA serves 25,000 members with assets in excess of \$910 million.
- MBA is the only retirement plan endorsed by the General Council and is authorized by IRS Ruling 75–22 to administer housing benefits for retired ministers.
- Fifty percent of Assemblies of God ministers are MBA members. (When you consider that many part-time ministers participate in a separate retirement plan, the percentage of full-time ministers who participate at one level or another in MBA is extremely high.)
- Thirty-eight percent of MBA members continue to work beyond age 70.
- Thirty Assemblies of God districts have programs that allocate a portion of their ministers' tithe to MBA.
- MBA's fixed income fund invests funds primarily in church mortgages
 70 percent. The remaining 30 percent is divided between equities and fixed income options. This provides diversification and liquidity.
- Ethel Campbell served as executive director of MBA for 21 years.
- Randy Barton has served as president of MBA for the past 6 years, and Jim LaVallee has provided daily oversight of all MBA operations since 2000.

JAMES K. BRIDGES is general treasurer of the Assemblies of God, Springfield, Missouri

SERMON SEEDS 🛠

HOPE FOR A CHANGE TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

INTRODUCTION

When children make a mistake in a game they are playing, they immediately shout, "do over," and have a chance to change their mistake. Wouldn't it be nice if we had a chance to make the wrongs right, and a chance to change negatives to positives? There are ways to change certain areas of our lives. Some try to change their lives by changing their appearances. Others try to change their lives by changing jobs. Many try to change their lives by changing locations. These changes will affect a few aspects of one's life, but these are only surface changes. God has provided a way to change what we were, who we are, and where we are going. There is hope for a change in your life.

MESSAGE

- 1. An immediate change.
 - a. All of us have something in our pasts that is not pleasing to God.
 - (1) Words we have spoken.
 - (2) Crimes we have committed.
 - (3) Bad attitudes we have displayed.
 - (4) Lust, pride, greed, and selfishness.
 - (5) The Bible says that everyone has sinned and fallen short of God's plan for their lives (Romans 3:23).
 - b. Jesus does not criticize us for these mistakes; He offers a chance for these mistakes to be made right.
 - Through faith in Christ we have an opportunity to begin life over again.
 - (2) Some of you may wonder why Christians are called "born again." This means that God has given us an opportunity to begin life over again with a completely fresh start.
 - c. What change does God make in a person's life?
 - (1) He immediately forgives us of

every mistake we have made.

- (2) He immediately forgets all the sins we have committed.
- (3) This forgiveness removes guilt and takes away the heavy load of sin and shame.
- d. You do not have to leave here like you came. You can trade:
 - (1) pain for peace.
 - (2) disappointment for dancing.
 - (3) loneliness for love.
 - (4) sin for salvation.
 - (5) eternal death for everlasting life.
- e. God gives hope for a change.

2. A continuing change.

- a. God keeps working on us after our initial change.
 - Becoming a new person in Christ is not an ending; it is a beginning.
 - (2) Whether we have been saved 3 days, 3 months, or 30 years, God is still working on us.
- b. There are many sinful issues in our lives the Holy Spirit works to change.
 - (1) The Christian life is a life of continual change.
 - (2) I may not yet be everything God wants me to be, but thank God I am not everything I used to be.
- c. Christians make mistakes and sin.
 - (1) At that moment we can run to God in prayer.
 - (2) The devil is at the throne of God to accuse us of our sin (Revelation 12:10).
 - (3) Jesus is at the throne of God and argues our case for us (1 John 2:1).
 - (4) God looks at our lives, sees that we trust in Jesus, and says in a loud voice, "All things are become new."

3. A changed future.

a. A person who refuses God's offer of a new life in Christ faces eternal judgment.

- (1) The Bible says the place of judgment is filled with constant sorrow (Matthew 8:12) and complete darkness (Matthew 25:30).
- (2) The Antichrist and the false prophet will be there (Revelation 19:20).
- (3) Satan will be there (Revelation 20:10).
- (4) Murderers, rapists, and other evil men will be there (Revelation 21:8).
- (5) All those who do not accept God's generous offer of a new life will be there (Revelation 20:15).
- (6) It is a place of intense heat and unimaginable torture (Luke 16:24).
- b. All who accept God's offer of a new life don't need to worry about eternal judgment.
- c. Christians receive the benefit of a great trade. Instead of:
 - (1) judgment, there is the glory of heaven.
 - (2) burning sulfur, there are beams of Son-light.
 - (3) sobs of pain, there are songs of praise.
 - (4) Satan to contend with, there are saints to live with.
 - (5) screams of horror, there a shouts of hallelujah.
 - (6) eternal punishment, there is everlasting paradise.
- d. Receive God's offer of a new life in Christ, and your future will be changed.

CONCLUSION

- a. There is hope for a change.
- b. God changes the past, present, and future.
- c. Will you let God change you today?
- d. Will you let God give you a new life?

Jerry L. Orf, Jr. Eminence, Missouri

SERMON SEEDS

CHRIST THE LAMB TEXT: ISAIAH 53:7

INTRODUCTION

Isaiah 53:7 is the gospel in miniature — the springboard and fountainhead of the grace of God. Philip began with Isaiah 53:7 when he preached Jesus to the Ethiopian (Acts 8:35). This was also the theme of John the Baptist, who declared, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

Many lambs have been slain through the centuries by devout Jews who were seeking to approach God. Christ was different from all these lambs in three essential respects.

MESSAGE

1. Christ is the divine Lamb.

- a. Men furnished those lambs.(1) Abel's lamb (Genesis 4:4).
 - (2) Israel's many lambs (Exodus 12:3).

- (3) Solomon's thousands of sacri-
- ficial lambs (2 Chronicles 7:5). b. God furnished this Lamb.
 - (1) Prophesied by Abraham (Genesis 22:8; John 8:56).
 - (2) Acclaimed by God (Matthew 3:17).

2. Christ is the atoning Lamb.

a. The lambs and other sacrifices offered under the Levitical code were only shadows. They could not take away sin (Hebrews 10:1,4).

- b. This Lamb made full atonement for all our sins (Romans 5:11).
- c. This Lamb bore all our griefs and carried all our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions (Isaiah 53:4–6).
- **3. Christ is the universal Lamb.** a. The paschal lamb freed only Israel

from the death angel (Exodus 12:13).

b. This Lamb is offered to save the whole world from perishing (John 3:16).

4. Christ is the eternal Lamb.

- a. Israel's priests offered lambs continually, year by year (Hebrews 10:1).
- b. This Lamb, by one sacrifice, atoned for sins forever (Hebrews 10:12,14).

CONCLUSION

Behold the Lamb of God. Having beheld Him, go further and accept Him as your personal Savior. There's life for a look at the crucified One, if you trust fully in Him.

> Jesse K. Moon Waxahachie, Texas

WITH SIGNS FOLLOWING TEXT: Mark 16:10-20

INTRODUCTION

The Bible does not promise that believers would follow signs, but that signs would follow those who believe.

MESSAGE

- "Go ye into all the world" (verse 15). "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Mark 10:17, emphasis
 - added). a. The Church has a preaching task. We have a duty to tell the good news to those who have never heard.
 - b. The Church has a healing task. Jesus' burning desire was to bring health to the body and soul of everyone.
 - c. The Church has a source of power. It was God's plan that believers should face the extraordinary in the name of the Lord and triumph over it.

- 2. "He that believeth" and "he that believeth not" (verse 16).
 - a. The first unbelievers. It is shocking to realize who they were.
 - "Them that had been with Him" (verses 10,11). Those closest to Him in life believed not.
 - (2) "The residue" (verses 12,13). Those next closest to Him believed not.
 - b. Upbraided them about their unbelief (verse 14).
 - (1) Unbelief about the testimony from fellow believers.
 - (2) Unbelief in the teaching and promises of the Lord. Do we really believe His promises?
 - c. The clearest choices. We must choose.
 - (1) "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."
 - (2) "He that believeth not shall be damned."

- 3. "These signs shall follow" (verse 17). According to the use of "shall" in this verse, there is no doubt. Is there any doubt in your mind?
 - a. "In my name" signs shall follow.(1) "They shall cast out devils (verse 17).
 - (2) "They shall speak with new tongues" (verse 17).
 - (3) "They shall take up serpents" (verse 18).
 - (4) "If they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them" (verse 18).
 - (5) "They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (verse 18).
 - b. "In my name" signs did follow (verse 20).
 - c. "In my name" signs are following today.

Warren McPherson Springfield, Missouri

SERMON SEEDS

THE INITIAL PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

INTRODUCTION

Through the centuries God continued to deal with humanity by sending His Holy Spirit on specific occasions to do special things and bring about special works.

Then, God began to promise through His prophets that He would pour out His Holy Spirit on all humanity (Joel 2:28–32).

John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus, prophesied the infilling of the Holy Spirit for all (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33).

Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49; John 7:37–39; 16:7; Acts 1:5–8).

Peter identified what happened on the Day of Pentecost as fulfilling Joel's prophecy (Acts 2:17–21). Peter further declared that the infilling of the Holy Spirit is for all, including us today (Acts 2:38,39).

We do not teach that glossolalia, speaking in tongues, is the only evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The best proof that one is baptized in the Holy Spirit should be:

- a life of intimacy with God.
- a walk of power in the Holy Spirit.
- an indication of the fruit of the Spirit in one's life.

However, we believe God has given an immediate sign of the infilling of the Holy Spirit: speaking with other tongues as the Holy Spirit gives utterance.

MESSAGE

1. The Day of Pentecost

(Acts 2:1–21).

- a. Supernatural phenomena included:
 - (1) the "sound of a rushing, mighty wind" (verse 2, KJV).
 - (2) "cloven tongues, as of fire" (verse 3, KJV).
- b. The human response: speaking in other tongues (verse 4) — some thing new; a reversal of Babel.

2. The outpouring at Samaria

(Acts 8:5–24).

- a. Philip's ministry included: (Acts 8:5–13).
 - (1) Healings.
 - (2) Casting out demons.
 - (3) People being saved.
 - (4) People baptized in water.
- b. Peter and John (Acts 8:14-24).
 - (1) Prayed for them.
 - (2) Laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.
 - (3) The passage does not specify the sign.
 - (4) The response was spectacular enough, however, that Simon the sorcerer wanted to buy it.
- 3. The Gentiles receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:24–11:18).
 - a. Peter preached (Acts 10:34-43).
 - b. The people received
 - (Acts 10:44–48).
 - (1) While Peter spoke, they began

speaking in tongues (Acts 10:44–46).

- (2) Peter was convinced they had received because they spoke in tongues (verse 47).
- c. The Gentiles defended and accepted.
 - (1) In Jerusalem (Acts 11:11–18).
 - (2) The leaders in Jerusalem were convinced because the Gentiles received the Holy Spirit just as the 120 on the Day of Pentecost (verse 18).

4. The outpouring at Ephesus

(Acts 19:1-6).

- a. This outpouring came after they were saved and baptized in water.
- b. They received when Paul laid hands on them and prayed for them.
 - (1) They spoke in tongues.
- (2) They prophesied.

5. Paul's experience.

- a. Paul wrote on the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
- b. Paul spoke in tongues "more than" all of them (1 Corinthians 14:18).

CONCLUSION

Speaking in tongues is the first physical sign that a believer has received the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

> Warren McPherson Springfield, Missouri

CHRIST'S GLORIOUS RESURRECTION TEXT: MARK 16:6-20

MESSAGE

- 1. He is alive (Mark 16:6).
 - a. A triumphant cry: He has risen.
 - b. A hopeful cry: He is not here.
 - c. An evidential cry: See the place where they laid Him.

2. He appeared (Mark 16:9,12,14).

a. To Mary Magdalene. b. To two disciples. c. To 11 disciples.

3. He ascended (Mark 16:19).

- a. To intercede for us (Hebrews 7:25).
- b. To appear in the presence of God for us (Hebrews 9:23,24).

4. He is still in action (Mark 16:20).

a. The manifest life of Christ. ("The

disciples went forth ... the Lord worked with them.")b. "Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today and forever"

(Hebrews 13:8).

D.C. Rees-Thomas Kailua Kona, Hawaii

SERMON SEEDS

VOTE FOR INTEGRITY TEXT: JOSHUA 24:14,15

INTRODUCTION

Once the decision to serve the Lord is made, other decisions that grow out of that service are not difficult to make.

The world has grown accustomed to the word crisis. We are familiar with the energy *crisis* and the economic crisis. But one of the most pressing problems today is the integrity crisis. We see its effects everywhere: in business, politics, family life, and tragically sometimes in the church. Our service to God will be marred and ineffective if we do not make a deliberate daily choice to follow the path of integrity.

The word *integrity* means completeness and wholeness. The Hebrew word for integrity used in the Old Testament has the same meaning. The dictionary's definition of integrity provides a summation to today's understanding of the word. "The quality or state of being of sound moral principle; uprightness, honesty, and sincerity." One cannot be a complete or whole person if his life lacks any of these qualities. Serving the Lord requires integrity in:

MESSAGE

1. Our relationship with God.

- a. Integrity starts here (Mark 12:28–30).
 - Jesus said the first and greatest commandment concerns our relationship to God. This relationship involves our whole being: emotions, intellect, and even physical strength.
 - (2) If we are not totally honest and sincere in our relationship with God, our integrity will break down in other areas.
- b. Negative and positive illustrations (Acts 5:1–10; 23:1).
 - (1) Ananias and Sapphira illustrate the negative side of integrity in

their relationship to God. The real basis of their attempted deception lay in their lack of honesty toward Him.

- (2) Paul illustrates the other side. At this time of personal crisis, the important thing to him was that he had been totally honest in his relationship with God.
- 2. Our relationship with fellow believers.

a. Honest dealings (Acts 6:3).

- The men chosen to oversee food distribution in the Early Church had a reputation for honest dealings with other church members. It was important that those entrusted with this responsibility had an "honest report." Since we are members of one Body, honesty is vitally important.
- (2) Such integrity should characterize all Christians, not just those in leadership.
- b. Eliminating envy (Romans 12:10).
 - Our integrity will protect us from envy when we see the successes of other believers. We will resist the temptation to cast reflections on those successes.
 - (2) There will be no competition for first place or the head table among Christians concerned with integrity.
- c. Good deeds (Galatians 6:10).
 - Our good deeds are not confined to the church, but the household of faith should have a special place in our considerations.
 - (2) We have a unique responsibility to fellow Christians. We must not let familiarity breed contempt because we have such close associations with one another.

- 3. Our daily walk before the world.
 - a. Influence on unbelievers (1 Thessalonians 4:11,12).
 - Whether we like it or not, we are under daily scrutiny by those outside the church.
 - (2) Sinners may not read the Bible, but they read our lives.
 - b. Rejecting the world's patterns (Romans 12:17–21).
 - (1) Some of the greatest tests of integrity come when Christians are mistreated by the unsaved. In such instances, we must not resort to the tactics they use. We can retain our integrity even in trying circumstances by following the path shown to us in the Bible.
 - (2) Let's react to mistreatment in such a way that we will surprise those who are mistreating us.
 - c. Sacrificing our rights

(1 Corinthians 10:31–33).

- (1) Christians can never say, "It's nobody's business what I do."
- (2) If we must inconvenience ourselves to maintain our testimony, we should not hesitate to do it.

CONCLUSION

If the world does not see integrity in God's people, where will they see it? They will not see integrity in the business world, the political world, or the world of social climbers.

Maintaining our integrity means resisting the spirit of the age, the pull of the world, or moral anarchy and rebellion. The integrity of God's people is what makes them a light in a dark world and the salt of the earth in a society devastated by corruption and moral decay.

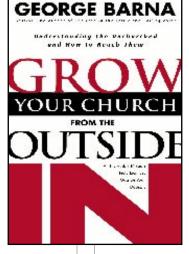
Kenneth D. Barney

SOOK REVIEWS

GROW YOUR CHURCH FROM THE OUTSIDE George Barna

(Regal Books, 176 pp., hardcover)

George Barna scores high with this helpful volume that addresses the critical issues of reaching contemporary Americans with the gospel. Acknowledging America's clear religious propensities — four of five Ameri-



several thousand unchurched individuals, Barna provides convincing conclusions about the attitudes, beliefs, motivations, and expectations of the church's target audience difference target audience - the unchurched. The book concludes with basic strategies to assist

successfully reaching the lost.

Barna wisely correlates our personal commitment to Christ with our ability to successfully lead others into a full and meaningful relationship with Him. Our offer of abundant life to the unchurched must come from a radiant Christian life that is easily perceived.

Reviewed by Howard Young, pastor, Evangel Assembly of God, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

TWELVE DYNAMIC SHIFTS FOR TRANSFORMING YOUR CHURCH E. Stanley Ott

(Eerdmans, 113 pp., paperback)



Twelve Dynamic Shifts explains that God has an exciting future planned for every church. This future is not a repeat of the past, but a fresh, vibrant ministry. Ott does not present a programbased model for church growth, but an inspiring resource to assess and understand our thinking and practices. The 12 shifts are in four areas: vision and expectation, ministry to people, congregational program, and the practice of leadership.

Ott argues that today's churches have little excitement for the future because they are oriented to the past. When we fail to seek God for a fresh vision, yesterday's ministry becomes the vision for tomorrow. We must try to move the church from a friendliness that says, "Hi, how are you?" to a hospitality that says, "Come into my life." Ministry must intentionally build disciples and speak to those on the outside as well as those on the inside. Ott does not recommend that we launch the new and forsake the past; he presents "blessing what is and adding what isn't." Each shift includes scriptural support and discussion and reflection questions to help pastors and church leaders process the information effectively.

Ott provides profound insight in this simple, easy-to-read book. He inspires the reader to seek God for fresh vision, wisdom, guidance, and courage. *Twelve Shifts* is biblical, field tested, and will assist church leaders to implement vision without causing division.

Reviewed by Daniel Zitterkopf, pastor, Bayard Assembly of God, Bayard, Nebraska.

MINISTRY NUTS AND BOLTS: WHAT THEY DON'T TEACH PASTORS IN SEMINARY Aubrey Malphurs (Kregel, 192 pp., paperback)

This book will be a valuable resource for many years. According to Lyle

Christians — Barna contends that the relativism, tolerance, and syncretism in popular Christianity has robbed true Christianity of much of its meaning. The Barna Research Group identifies a large segment of America — 95 to 100 million — as unchurched (not having attended a Christian church service in the past six months).

cans describe themselves as

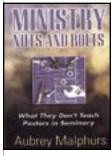
The book summarizes the important factors in reaching our communities for Christ and then proceeds to dissect and analyze the trends and attitudes prevalent in America. Barna's information and cultural insight empower the contemporary church to develop multiple and coherent strategies to reach the unchurched.

This work is predictably pragmatic and statistically oriented. Using extensive research conducted among

✤ BOOK REVIEWS

Schaller, two-thirds to three-fourths of congregations founded before 1960 are either on a plateau in size or shrinking in number.

Malphurs takes the purpose-driven



model of church leadership and combines it with other good models. He then offers an in-depth explanation of these styles of leadership.

The book has four parts: The Values of Your Ministry, The Mission of Your Ministry, The Vision of Your Ministry, and The Strategy for Your Ministry. Each part has two chapters — one defines the idea and one develops the idea.

The book's appendixes are an asset. He includes a personal core values audit and a corporate core values audit. I used these materials with the leadership in our church.

If your church or organization is going through a mission or vision planning stage, I strongly encourage you to invest in this book. This book was written from a pastor's viewpoint with the layperson in mind. I highly recommend *Ministry Nuts* and Bolts.

Reviewed by Mike Hilger, pastor, Assembly of God, Le Roy, Kansas.

THE YOUNG EVAN-GELIST HANDBOOK Mike Smalley

(Worldreach Press, 135 pp., paperback)

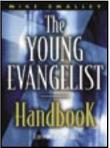
In his foreword to Smalley's *The Young Evangelist Handbook*, evangelist Steve Hill says, "Mike has written a timely book for all those who sense the urgency of the hour."

This handbook is a practical, hands-on manual for evangelists and those in itinerant ministry. It will help them navigate through early ministry. As a seasoned evangelist I have found the book pertinent to all ages.

Smalley reminds us that there are landmines in evangelism, and the enemy's goal is to destroy ministry effectiveness. The book is a compass for 21st-century evangelism.

The table of contents includes: The Evangelist and His Mentor, Tools of the Trade, Habits of Successful Evangelists, The Evangelist and His Family, Finances, and Rewards for the Faithful. The book has 14 chapters.

Smalley has written one chapter offering encouragement where he



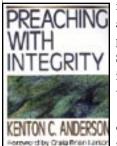
relates the following principles: everyone experiences rejection, rejection is temporary, put things behind you, learn to celebrate small

victories, document each new ministry with journaling, and write down your goals.

Smalley reminds us to lift up our eyes to the fields, fix our eyes on Jesus, and make our ministry sure. *Reviewed by Douglas Raymond Rose, evangelist, Houston, Texas.*

PREACHING WITH INTEGRITY *Kenton C. Anderson* (Kregel, 144 pp., paperback)

Someone said, "Preachers don't come from some exalted place of knowledge. They come from the pew. But the message they preach cannot come from the pew. It must come from God." *Preaching With Integrity* is an eye-opening book that explores both sides of the preaching experience. The word *integrity* comes from the word *integer*. It's a mathematic word that means "whole, complete"



in distinction to a fraction or a partial number. So your preaching must have wholeness to it. The Bible is complete, but no preacher or

congregation is complete. The author states, "In many ways the divine, unchanging side of preaching is easier to understand that the human side. How does God work through the humanity of preachers? How do we preach in a way that takes into full account the humanity of our hearers?"

I've read hundreds of books on preaching, but this volume by Kenton Anderson is unique. When you pick up a book on preaching, you expect to read about homiletic history, communication theory, biblical styles, dos and don'ts, etc. This book is written in a narrative flow, telling the story of a pastor and his friends, family, and flock. Principles for good preaching are drawn out and applied from the issues he faces in life.

The strengths of this book are many. The two charts on pages 31 and 33 are simple but effective. The latter one will aid every preacher in delivering a more gripping message. The call to capture one big idea in a sermon and develop it is basic to preaching (page 48). The experienced minister will benefit by refreshing his mind, and the young preacher will receive clear direction for the years of ministry ahead.

Preaching With Integrity is not an extended how-to book on sermon delivery, but it is a thought-provoking book written in an engaging style. If standard books on preaching are too

SOOK REVIEWS

stuffy for you, get this one and enjoy it. It is refreshing and challenging. *Reviewed by Thomas Lindberg, D.Min, pastor, First Assembly of God, Cordova, Tennessee.*

MUSINGS OF A MAR-ASCHINO CHERRY REFLECTIONS ON THE ROLE OF A MINISTER'S WIFE Peggy Musgrove (ACW Press, 128 pp., paperback)

What is the proper role for a minister's wife? This question lurks in the mind of every minister's wife at one time or another. The answers are as varied as the people who ask



the question — whether they frequent the pulpit or the pew.

In Musings of a Maraschino Cherry, Musgrove offers

women the opportunity to learn from her varied experiences. She provides an honest look at her life in ministry from the early "green tree days" through the fruitful, mature "maraschino cherry days."

Women in ministry will identify with the challenges posed by selfdefining questions that accompany every change in life. The reader will gain insight as Musgrove shares her understanding of her ever-changing role in ministry. This book offers a range of practical insights from when we feel the ministry is the pits, to the challenging biblical principles we need as we grow and mature in the ripening years. Musgrove encourages women to allow God's Word and the unique gifts He has given them to define them.

Reading this book is a walk through an orchard full of mature

fruit. The author's life in ministry provides a model for women who seek to let God shape and use them. The thought-provoking questions at the end of each chapter provide opportunities for "cherry picking." These questions could be used in individual study, a group, or with a mentor. *Musings of a Maraschino Cherry* will inspire and provide practical help for any woman in ministry. *Reviewed by Kerry Clarensau*, *women's pastor and senior pastor's wife, Maranatha Worship Center*, *Wichita, Kansas*.

BEGGARS CAN BE CHOSEN: AN INSPIRA-TIONAL JOURNEY THROUGH THE INVITATIONS OF JESUS Chris Maxwell

(Xulon Press, 228 pp., paperback)

"This is what evangelism is all about — not scoring points or following a script, but participating in Jesus' grand scheme to recover people who have lost their way in a dark world. And when Jesus directs our evangelism, it becomes an adventure that will leave you breathless." So writes J. Lee Grady, editor of *Charisma* magazine, about Maxwell's book.



Maxwell has taken the invitations of Christ — some familiar, some not so well-known — and crafted a masterful call for us to come

to Jesus, to learn how He called people, and to follow His example.

This is not an exegetical commentary on the Gospels or the life of Christ. Rather, Maxwell takes the invitations Jesus gave every day to the people He met to follow Him and brings these invitations into today's chaotic world. Maxwell shows how everyday Christians can make a difference in their world, how they can show people the way to Christ, and how they can invite people to know God.

Beggars Can Be Chosen reflects the heart of its author, Chris Maxwell, pastor of Evangel Assembly of God, Orlando, Florida. Maxwell's passion is for people to know Jesus Christ personally. He wants others to catch that same passion. Here is an excellent book pastors can recommend to members of their congregation.

Reviewed by Paul W. Smith, assistant director, Gospel Publishing House Editorial Services, Springfield, Missouri.

THE NEW GUIDE TO CRISIS AND TRAUMA COUNSELING H. Norman Wright (Regal Books 460 pp, hardcover)

(Regal Books, 460 pp., hardcover)

Effective Christian counseling calls for Christlike character, competence, and compassion. This updated and expanded edition deals with real-life situations from a biblical perspective and gives helpful instruction in crisis, loss, and trauma counseling. Each chapter contains new resources and references.

Wright deals with post 9/11 cases and examples. Post-traumatic stress disorder is covered in two new chapters.

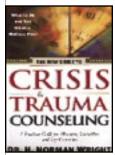
The seven steps of Critical Incident Stress Debriefing are helpful. Recovery from trauma is possible. Most survivors benefit by a positive change of values, increased gratitude for life, deeper appreciation of relationships, and greater spiritual growth and strength.

Help for persons who have experienced the death of a parent,

✤ BOOK REVIEWS

child, sibling, friend, or pet is given in another new chapter. Pastors and counselors are encouraged to reflect on the deaths of their relatives and friends. One's own grief can either add to or hinder his ministry to others.

Children need ministering to in times of crisis, abuse, divorce,



trauma, loss, or death. Wright covers these matters and also deals with understanding and counseling adolescents. Wright offers

practical tips and principles for ministering to suicidal people and their families. Sensitivity to the leading of the Holy Spirit, appropriate use of Scripture, meaningful prayer, and making needed referrals are emphasized.

This book is an invaluable counseling resource for ministers and counselors who deal with people experiencing crises, losses, and traumas. *Reviewed by John C. Katter, associate pastor, Central United Methodist Church, Milbank, South Dakota.*

EXPLORING THE HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION: PRINCIPLES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY Michael J. Anthony, Warren S. Benson (Kregel, 429 pp., paperback)

Church leaders can benefit from an understanding of the past. We can then respond to current trends and challenges. This book was written to demonstrate links between theory and practice, and to reflect on how varied philosophies of education have emerged from historical contexts.

The book's major themes include: Greek education and philosophy, Roman education and philosophy, the Early Church, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Reformation, European origins, origins of the Sunday School movement, Colonial America, and the 19th- and 20thcentury models of education. Each chapter concludes with a section titled, "So What?" to provide ministry principles taken from the historical and philosophical information. This is a nontechnical, readable book.

Summaries of important persons, groups, movements, terms, and philosophies are presented in capsulized form. For example, the chapter on Sunday School summarizes its foundations in England, development in North America, the six periods of its history, and contemporary applications such as the Sidewalk Sunday School model.



The book addresses several topics neglected or treated lightly in other similar writings. These include: Gnosticism in

the Early Church; the lay reform movements such as the Waldensians, Albigensians, and Mennonites; and the Chautauqua movement.

A section at the end of the book provides practical suggestions on how pastors and ministry leaders can develop their own philosophy of ministry through the three components of biblical theology, philosophical aspects, and practical matters. *Reviewed by Victor Ostrom, MRE, Ed.D., former professor of Christian education, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri.*

PRESSING ON! WHY LEADERS DERAIL AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT Benjamin M. Kaufman (Pleasant Word, 170 ppg.,

paperback) More than at any other time, pastors today are leaving the ministry at an alarming rate. What can be done to prevent this



massive departure?

By examining the lives of biblical characters and presenting examples from pastors' lives, Kaufman provides ample illustration of various ways pastors have brought about their own failures and why many have left the ministry. Sometimes a pastor's derailment comes from character flaws the pastor fails to address. At other times the pastor's inability to change, adapt, or develop in his personal and professional life bring about detrailment. Bitterness and self-doubt can also destroy the confidence that one needs for effective ministry. These and many other things bring on the stress that we often call burnout.

Not only does *Pressing On!* describe the issues that cause pastoral derailment, the author also provides practical advice in preventing or recovering from derailment. These include building an accountability team, overcoming bitterness, how to deal with self-doubt, and building personal integrity and character.

Pastors who read this book and reflect on and heed Kaufman's advice will discover the hope they need to keep from derailing. The chapter on restoration provides encouragement for those who want to be restored to ministry. *Reviewed by Richard L. Schoonover, associate editor,* Enrichment *journal, Springfield, Missouri.*

* NEWS & RESOURCES *

A/G FINANCIAL AND CROWN FINANCIAL MINISTRIES SMALL-GROUP TRAINING

A/G Financial and Crown Financial Ministries have partnered to provide small-group studies for training people about



God's desires for their money. A/G Financial staff trains and certifies individuals to

lead and teach this course in their local church. Attendees learn what Scripture teaches about managing their possessions including: spending, saving, investing, budgeting, giving, earning money, and training children about money.

Stewardship Will Leader Training covers how to make wills available to the people of your church at no cost when they designate a gift to a ministry or ministries of their choice. Those who complete the class become certified stewardship representatives.

Below is a list of upcoming training dates and locations. For more information on training sessions, please contact A/G Financial by phone at 866-621-1786, or by e-mail at sbancroft@agfsg.org.

February 9, 2005

Sheraton World Resort, Orlando, Fla. Stewardship Will Leader Training and CSR Certification

February 10, 2005

Sheraton World Resort, Orlando, Fla. CROWN Small Group Leader Training and Certification

February 18, 2005

Honolulu, Hawaii Stewardship Will Leader Training and CSR Certification

February 19, 2005

Honolulu, Hawaii CROWN Small Group Leader Training and Certification

February 25, 2005

Honolulu, Hawaii Stewardship Will Leader Training and CSR Certification

February 26, 2005

Honolulu, Hawaii CROWN Small Group Leader Training and Certification

March 11, 2005 Columbia, S.C. Stewardship Will Leader Training and CSR Certification

March 12, 2005 Columbia, S.C. CROWN Small Group Leader Training and Certification

April 15, 2005 Monroeville, Pa. Stewardship Will Leader Training and CSR Certification April 16, 2005 Monroeville, Pa. CROWN Small Group Leader Training and Certification

GENERAL COUNCIL SENIOR MINISTERS LUNCHEON

The General Council Senior Ministers Luncheon will be held Thursday, Aug. 4, 2005, at noon. The banquet is free for ministers 65 and older and their spouses (\$19 for those under 65).

Preregistration is required. Sign up for this event on the General Council housing and registration form included in this issue of *Enrichment* journal, or call the Benevolences Department, 1-417-862-2781, ext. 2182.

Churches and districts are encouraged to sponsor this event. Send your designated offering to: Benevolences Department, 1445 N. Boonville Ave., Springfield, Mo. 65802-1894.

KIDSQUEST USA

Churches are discovering a powerful tool for reaching children. With its energetic and entertaining approach, KidsQuest USA is a dynamic means of pre-



senting the gospel. More than 45,000 people have attended a KidsQuest event, and over 15,000 lives have been committed to the Lord.

Many leaders describe KidsQuest USA as a breath of fresh air for their children's ministries. Others are astounded by the number of families added to their church because of a Kids-Quest USA event. After a KidsQuest USA event, one children's pastor began a kids club to disciple the children who had been reached. He said, "Essentially, we have planted a church using KidsQuest."

For more information about KidsQuest USA, visit www.kidsquestusa.ag.org, or call 417-862-2781, ext. 4089.

PROJECT GO!

Across America, teams of fourth, fifth, and sixth graders are preparing for stateside missions trips using the KidsQuest USA program.

Project Go!, designed by the national KidsQuest USA office, helps churches plan, implement, and prepare kids to take stateside missions trips. Not only will these teams help churches reach children and families in their communities through the KidsQuest USA program, but team members will also be blessed by the experience.

In conjunction with KidsQuest USA, districts are

SNEWS & RESOURCES

preparing special weeklong ministry camps to train children for ministry.

Project Go! kits have the information and forms to plan, budget, and build teams for stateside missions trips. The kits also contain information on the resources available from the national office for Project Go!

For more information, visit www.kidsquestusa.ag.org, or call 417-862-2781, ext. 4089.

2005 LFTL CONVENTION — THE NEXT GENERATION

Light for the Lost, the Assemblies of God ministry for evangelism literature distribution, will hold The Next Generation Conference on April 29,30, 2005, at the University Plaza Holiday Inn, Springfield, Mo.

Focusing on church planting, Friday's keynote speaker will be All-India General Superintendent David Mohan. Three decades ago Mohan started New Life Assembly of God in Madras, India. His first service had seven people in attendance, although Mohan had visited 125 homes. New Life currently has 30,000 attendees organized into 1,500 care cells. The church has planted 200 congregations in Madras (now called Chennai), a city with a population of 10 million. In February 2004, Mohan's congregation broke ground on a new facility that will seat 55,000 people, making it the largest Assemblies of God church facility in the world.

"This two-day event is certain to be a powerful time of ministry, fellowship, and fun," says LFTL Director Benny Ferguson. The Circle of Wagons is Thursday, April 28, 2005. Registration for the convention is \$125 per person and includes meals.

For more information about the Light for the Lost — The Next Generation Conference, call 1-800-988-0292 or visit http://lftl. ag.org/ and click on the "Annual Conference" link.



NATIONAL MISSIONETTES MINISTRIES CELEBRATES 50TH BIRTHDAY



The national Missionettes Ministries department is celebrating the 50th birthday of Missionettes. Missionettes was formally approved at the Oklahoma City General Council in 1955, and Missionettes clubs were

first chartered in 1956. A yearlong celebration will begin at the August 2005, Denver General Council with a Missionettes luncheon. Women who were formerly Missionettes and girls who are currently Missionettes are invited to attend this event that will focus on honoring the past. Tickets are available through the General Council housing and reg-

istration form included in this issue of *Enrichment*.

The year of celebration will culminate with the National Missionettes Ministries Conference, August 2006, in Springfield, Missouri. The event will feature a multitude of workshops and will focus on imagining the future. This training conference will also be a time of celebration. Anyone who is involved in ministry through the Missionettes program - district leadership, local coordinators, sponsors, and helpers - is invited to participate. Registration information will be available at the 2005 General Council Missionettes Ministries booth. For more information and periodic updates on celebration events visit www.missionettes.ag.org.

2004 NATIONAL YOUTH SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM WINNERS ANNOUNCED

The Assemblies of God national Youth and Christian Higher Education departments have selected the recipients for the 2004 J. Robert Ashcroft National Youth Scholarship Program. Applicants were judged in several categories including academics, extra-curricular involvement, Christian service, Christian life, financial need, essay, and references.

First place, a scholarship for \$3,000, was awarded to Jared Allen Massey of Hamilton, Ill. Son of Terry and Lisa Massey, Jared graduated fourth in a class of 40 students at Hamilton High School. Jared is attending North Central University, Minneapolis, Minn.

The second-place scholarship for \$2,000 went to Steven D. Hill of Louisville, Ohio. Steven, son of Larry and Elizabeth Hill, graduated first out of 215 students at Louisville High School. He is attending Southeastern College, Lakeland, Fla.

Third place, a \$1,000 scholarship, was awarded to Heather Ashleigh West, daughter of Bruce and Barbara West. Heather was home schooled. She is attending Evangel University, Springfield, Mo. The Christian Higher Education and Youth departments sponsor the J. Robert Ashcroft National Youth Scholarship Program annually. Scholarships are awarded to high school seniors who attend Assemblies of God churches (or are dependents of Assemblies of God missionaries) and who plan to attend an Assemblies of God endorsed college after graduation. Applications are available from district youth directors in December and are accepted from January 1 to March 31 each year at the district youth directors offices.

2005 NATIONAL YOUTH SCHOLAR-SHIP APPLICATIONS AVAILABLE

Each year the Christian Higher Education and Youth Departments of the General Council of the Assemblies of God sponsor the J. Robert Ashcroft National Youth Scholarship Program, which gives financial assistance to outstanding high school seniors attending Assemblies of God churches.

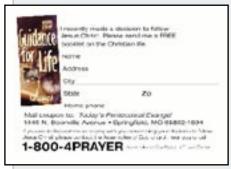
Up to three district-level winners can be nominated by each district for the National Youth Scholarship. The NYSP Committee then picks three national winners based on four criteria: academic achievement, extracurricular activities, Christian service, and Christian character.

NEWS & RESOURCES

The scholarship, which is granted for the first year of college, is given to winners who will be attending one of the 19 endorsed Assemblies of God colleges during the fall immediately following their high school graduation.

Applications for the 2005 J. Robert Ashcroft National Youth Scholarship Program are available from district youth directors in December and are accepted from January 1 to March 31 each year at the district youth directors offices.

SALVATION RESPONSES CLIMB



Salvation responses are flowing into the *Today's Pentecostal Evangel* office at a record pace. The *Evangel* has published a salvation appeal with a coupon on a weekly basis since 1997.

Readers using the response forms to indicate their decisions for Christ are sent a free booklet on the Christian life and their names are forwarded to local churches for followup. Through the first 10 months of 2004, the *Evangel* was on track to surpass the previous high of 1,775.

"At the beginning of the year, the *Evangel* staff set a goal to pray for 1,800 salvation responses in 2004," says Managing Editor Ken Horn. "The *Evangel's* most important kind of success is not the number of magazines we print, but spiritual results. And the most important kind of spiritual result is seeing people saved."

More than half of the salvation testimonies are submitted by inmates, demonstrating the importance of the Key Bearers outreach.

"I think this says that Key Bearers is absolutely one of the most effective forms of ministry," Horn says. "Men and women in prison need answers. The salvation responses show that the *Evangel* is helping to point them to the most important answer of all ... Jesus."

At least 13,000 copies of the weekly *Today's Pentecostal Evangel* and approximately 7,400 copies of the quarterly Spanish-language *Evangelio Pentecostal Hoy* are provided to more than 500 U.S. correctional institutions through the Key Bearers outreach. As the ministry completed its ninth year in December, donations had supplied in excess of 4.6 million *Evangels* to the incarcerated.

The demand for additional copies is obvious since there are more than 2 million incarcerated men and women in this country. "Anyone can become a Key Bearer," adds Horn. "When you realize that every dollar provides at least four copies of the magazine, and that we have had reports of 100 inmates reading one copy, the potential is amazing."

To get involved with the Key Bearers outreach, please call Light for the Lost at 1-800-988-0292, or visit the *Today's Pentecostal Evangel* secured website: www.pe.ag.org. More information on Key Bearers can be obtained by sending an e-mail to: lftl@ag.org.

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD U.S. MISSIONS SPRING CANDIDATE ORIENTATION

Assemblies of God U.S. Missions equips dedicated men and women to plant churches, evangelize university campuses, minister on military bases and in occupational settings, reach diverse cultures, and free those with life-controlling problems.

The spring U.S. Missions candidate orientation will be held March 13–18, 2005, in Springfield, Mo. Orientation sessions consist of interviews and training and evaluation. Spring orientation will ensure that candidates are emotionally and spiritually ready for the rigors of missions.

Anyone interested in learning more about becoming a nationally appointed U.S. missionary should contact Assemblies of God U.S. Missions, 417-862-2781, ext. 3252, or visit www. USMissions.ag.org.

AGED MINISTERS ASSISTANCE DAY

A retired pastor and his wife recently wrote to AMA: "Thank you for our 53rd anniversary card. I usually get a birthday card from my district, but no other card. My wife and I appreciate AMA so much." This couple was in the ministry for more than 50 years, but was nearly forgotten once they left the pulpit.



Aged Ministers Assistance remembers 500 retired and disabled Assemblies of God ministers and their spouses by providing them with monthly financial assistance and help with medical and prescription costs. AMA even remembers them on their birthdays, anniversaries, and at Christmas.

Memorial Sunday, May 29, 2005, is AMA Day. Nearly \$1 million will be needed this year to help meet the financial needs of these precious saints. Send your AMA offering to: Benevolences Department, 1445 N. Boonville Ave., Springfield, Mo. 65802-1894, or go to www.ag.org, click on "Contributions" and enter "Aged Ministers Assistance." Visit the AMA website at www.ama.ag.org.



John G. Alford Goodrich, Texas

Halbert E. Allen Winnsboro, Texas

Kerry W. Andrews York, Nebraska

Rex M. Anspaugh Yulee, Florida

Donna M. Balikowski Lakeland, Florida

John Bedzyk Elmira, New York

Dwayne D. Bobbitt Seminole, Oklahoma

Fernando Bonafoux Trujillo Alto, Puerto Rico

Dwight Bowser Camp Verde, Arizona

Stanley Braswell Pelham, Alabama

F. Maurice Burgund Brighton, Illinois

Kamaill R. Campbell Creola, Alabama

William E. Campbell Bucyrus, Missouri

Francisco Carrillo Holtville, California

James R. Cissna Pauls Valley, Oklahoma

Thelma W. Comardelle Biloxi, Mississippi

Wesley S. Crowe Roselle, New Jersey

T.C. Darsey Dudley, Georgia

John W. Davis Stamping Ground, Kentucky

Noveline De Vault Jacksonville, Florida

Marshall E. Delashmit Holly Springs, Mississippi **Charles F. Dillard** Saint Peters, Missouri

James T. Donaghe Tulare, California

Ernest R. Driver Pegram, Tennessee

J. Robert Duncan Campbell, California

Christelle Evans Abilene, Texas

David J. Falvo Canonsburg, Pennsylvania

Bill H. Ferrell Richardson, Texas

Francisca Figueroa Grand Island, Nebraska

Hilbert L. Fingers Wright City, Missouri

Myrle R. Fox Ardmore, Oklahoma

Manuel S. German Glendale, Arizona

Alberto Gonzalez Florida, Puerto Rico

Luz M. Gonzalez Carolina, Puerto Rico

William F. Hageman El Paso, Texas

Betty S. Haney Apple Valley, California

David W. Hansche Texarkana, Arkansas

Francis M. Hatch Yates Center, Kansas

Wayne H. Hemphill Owensboro, Kentucky

Michael J. Hines La Ceiba, Honduras

Elsie Hunt Fresno, California

Oscar W. Hunt Springfield, Missouri

Janice F. Isherwood Mesa, Arizona

Alice Kennedy Casper, Wyoming

Dorothy M. Kenney Port Angeles, Washington

Ung S. Kim Glenview, Illinois

Thomas A. Koons Grants, New Mexico Donald R. Kramer, Jr. Lake City, Florida

Charles Leathers Salem, Missouri

Marjorie L. Loomis Amazonia, Missouri

Raymond V. Martinez Alpine, Texas

Charles J. McCause Smithville, Oklahoma

Ralph Medina, Jr. Hillsboro, Oregon

William T. Miller Parkersburg, West Virginia

Roderick R. Neal Buffalo, New York

Leonard E. Page Birmingham, Alabama

Henry P. Park San Angelo, Texas

Brunette H. Parker Riverside, California

Cecil R. Pearcy Hydro, Oklahoma

Ramona H. Perry Fairbanks, Alaska

Walter A. Radawski Lakeside, California

Jerry E. Rausin Springfield, Missouri

Odell Roberts Harker Heights, Texas

Delfin Rodriguez Cleveland, Ohio

Alfred H. Roever Fort Worth, Texas

Jennie Roman Tangerine, Florida

Rosalina Rosado Vega Alta, Puerto Rico

Maria Salazar Weehawken, New Jersey

Arthur V. Schneider Coupeville, Washington

Ruth E. Schott Hot Springs, South Dakota

Laura H. Schultz Hattiesburg, Mississippi

Leamon D. Sellers Palestine, Texas

J. Paul Sharpe Woodward, Oklahoma Marguerite Shaw Show Low, Arizona

Mary J. Shehane Newville, Alabama

Arthur L. Shell, Jr. Cape Coral, Florida

James W. Shipman Leakey, Texas

Dewel H. Smith Heber Springs, Arkansas

Otoniel Solares Dallas, Texas

Milton J. Sondeno Walnut Creek, California

Betty L. Sovern Mira Loma, California

Harold D. Speed Duncan, Oklahoma

Paula L. Stanislaus Springfield, Missouri

Charles H. Staton Medical Lake, Washington

David L. Stevens Tucson, Arizona

Lester P. Summers Duncanville, Texas

Frank Tatum Hughson, California

Fernando S. Teran Chino Hills, California

Ernest Thoeng Elk Grove, California

Philomena M. Trocine Washington Crossing, Pennsylvania

Charles R. Turner Phoenix, Arizona

Clarence W. Van Dolsen Springfield, Missouri

DeVore H. Walterman Grand Prairie, Texas

Joey M. Walters Frisco City, Alabama

Lloyd A. Westover Sumner, Washington

Adeline E. Wichman Springfield, Missouri

V. Berneice Wilson Springfield, Missouri

G. Edmund Yeo Glendale, Arizona

Sector Advertising index Sector Secto

Acrylic Podiums141
Africa's Hope
AG Financial 40, 41, 136
AGTS 67
AG U.S. Missions
Asia Pacific Media Ministries 110
Benevolences 115, 139, 140
Bible Alliance 2
Brooklyn Tabernacle Pastors & Leaders Conference 36
Carpenter Bus Sales 143
Chaplaincy 127
Christian Higher Education Department 118, 139, 141
ConnectionPower 19
Church Mutual Insurance 11
Credentialed Women's Luncheon 141
Districts Insurance & Risk Management inside back cover
Dream ³
Enrichment journal 141
General Council 2005 inside front cover, 136, 141
Gospel Publishing House 15

Global University	55
International Bible Society	107
Latin America ChildCare	13
Life Publishers	59
Light For The Lost	123, 138
MEGA Sports Camp	15
Ministerial Enrichment Office	141
National Church & Clergy Tax & Accounting Servic	es 138
National Prayer Center	141
National Youth Leaders Conference	17
North Central University	49
Office of Public Relations	73
Pentecost Sunday	69
Pinnacle Consulting	111
Robison Gamble Creative	5
Southwestern Assemblies of God University	29
Sunday School	79
Today's Pentecostal Evangel	119, 140
U.S. MAPS	121
World AG Congress	137

✤ IN CLOSING



Keeping Peace in the Church

BY CHARLES F. HACKETT

the fruit of the Spirit.

y now you have probably read most of this issue of Enrichment. I trust the articles have helped you understand the nature of conflict and provided the practical help you need in resolving conflict. Let me add some final thoughts concerning this important subject.

Conflict is poison; harmony and forgiveness is the antidote.

Conflict is not an accident; it is caused.

Conflict destroys; harmony builds.

Conflict is not inevitable; peace is our mandate.

We cannot always avoid conflict. But if every person in the church would follow the simple formula to love God,

love people, and don't do dumb stuff, most occur. Any conflict that did occur would be resolved quickly.

Most conflict has its root in carnal behavior, not in the fruit of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the author of unity and peace. He has never led anyone to create strife and division in the church, the family, or the workplace.

People who bring strife and division into the body of Christ are not filled with the Holy Spirit, even though they may speak in tongues. Garbled speech from a carnal Christian should never be equated with the sweet language of the Spirit. The latter brings spiritual blessings, while the former destroys.

Most church conflict leaves a trail of destruction. We might think that after a few disasters, most people would say,

"Enough of that. We won't do that anymore." Instead, some people go from one war to another without seeming to learn anything from the past. These individuals must be dealt with firmly and fairly.

Who is hurt the most by church conflict? It is probably the children and youth. Adults teach young people biblical principles; but when young people see adults not living by what they teach, they become cynical. Sometimes young people never overcome that cynicism. They become negative and bitter against a church that disappointed them.

Most people do not want conflict and will welcome anyone who is a peacemaker. Unfortunately, there are those who are allergic to peace and have a gift for creating friction and conflict wherever they go. Even though changes are made to accommodate their preferences, it is never enough. I pity the pastor who has a board member who is always causing strife. I pity the unfortunate church that elects a pastor who creates conflict rather than promotes peace.

Church conflict will not resolve itself, nor will it go away when people ignore it. Conflict will not be resolved until two steps are taken. First, someone must bring a solution and closure. Reconciliation begins when someone steps forward, assumes

responsibility, apologizes, and makes an effort Most conflict has its root to resolve the conflict. In many cases, the main conflicts would not in carnal behavior, not in instigator will seldom do this, so it often falls on the shoulders of someone else to begin the process of reconciliation and put the scriptural

> principles of love and forgiveness into practice. A peacemaker is not interested in winning the war; he is content to see peace and harmony restored regardless of who is blamed or who gets the credit.

> Second, the resolution of the conflict must be accepted by the congregation as fair and in the best interest of those concerned. Some cases will not necessarily need a church vote, but a general consensus is needed that indicates the conflict resolution was handled wisely. Taking action too quickly or without all the facts only adds to the problem.

> It is the pastor's responsibility to keep peace in the church. No set formula exists that will resolve every problem, but a do-nothing attitude during times of conflict can be fatal. Unfortunately, this is the approach many pastors take.

> The pastor's relationship with his congregation plays a major role in his ability to resolve conflict. A strong, fair leader who has respect and influence in the church will have fewer conflicts in his church. And the ones he does have, he and his people will readily resolve.

CHARLES E. HACKETT is executive director, Assemblies of God U.S. Missions, Springfield, Missouri; and an executive presbyter.