

enrichment

A JOURNAL FOR PENTECOSTAL MINISTRY

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Managing Church Conflict, Part 2





Conflict Management as a Lifestyle

BY GARY R. ALLEN

Peace, peace, wonderful peace, coming down from the Father above!" We may, at times, have sung this song with the hope that heavenly peace would resolve our current conflict. That is not an errant hope, but reality is probably found in combining God's divine intervention with our intentional efforts.

The Spring 2005 issue of *Enrichment* focused on the nature and scope of church conflict. In this issue we concentrate on breaking the cycle of conflict, learning and using conflict-management styles, and growing personally through conflict.

When dealing with church conflict, it is important to remember that:

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IS ABOUT PEOPLE

Building relationships is crucial to conflict management. Loving people and supporting that love with mutual trust, respect, confidence, and emotional security are necessary to minimize conflict. The challenge is in loving difficult people. You may even discover *you* are the difficult person. Pastors can be difficult at times. They can get on others' nerves without even intending to or without realizing they have done so. I have learned that the number of people who aggravate me is in direct proportion to the number of people I aggravate.

Some people aggravate one another any time they are together. It is important to understand why people act the way they do. A basic understanding of personality types and how they interact is a tremendous tool when helping people through times of conflict.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IS AN ONGOING PROCESS

In the pain and anger of conflict, pastors often want to resolve the situation immediately. This is understandable. But in reality, conflict management is a leadership lifestyle. A pastor minimizes and manages conflict by using ongoing leadership skills and abilities. Conflict cannot be completely *prevented*, but pastors must be as *preventative* as possible in intentionally leading and training people.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IS INTENTIONAL

Ministers must anticipate some level of conflict at any given time. Therefore, they need to be intentional in addressing conflict. Waiting until the conflict rises above a dull roar may cause them to be too reactionary. When pastors are reactionary, they tend to say and do things that may intensify the conflict.

THE SPIRIT WILL HELP YOU

Pastors are not alone. The Holy Spirit is present to help pastors and those they lead. Don't be surprised to see supernatural results in interpersonal relationships.

Pastors can also depend on the Holy Spirit's discernment to help them know what to do and when to do it. Much of conflict management is timing. If pastors will do their part in learning the abilities and skills they need, God will help them know when to apply them. Remember, God is in the transforming business. He will continue to transform His servants into the leaders they need to be, and He can transform even the most difficult people into who He wants them to be.

THE LEADER MUST LEARN, TEACH, AND MODEL

Conflict management can be learned, taught, and practiced by everyone in the church. It is essential that pastors and church leaders be trained in interpersonal relationship, team building, and conflict-management skills. These skills work best in an environment where people are united by their passion for Jesus and are obedient to His mission.

THERE ARE PARTNERS IN THE PEW

During the past couple of decades, the workplace has spent millions of dollars training employees in interpersonal relationships, team building, and conflict-management skills. Many of these trained people are sitting in your pews. They have great skills, but have not been empowered and released to function in the church.

We hope the spring and summer 2005 issues on conflict management will enable you to be more effective in managing conflict. Also, visit <http://www.enrichmentjournal.ag.org> and browse the many resources available to help you better train your congregation.

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

ENDNOTE

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

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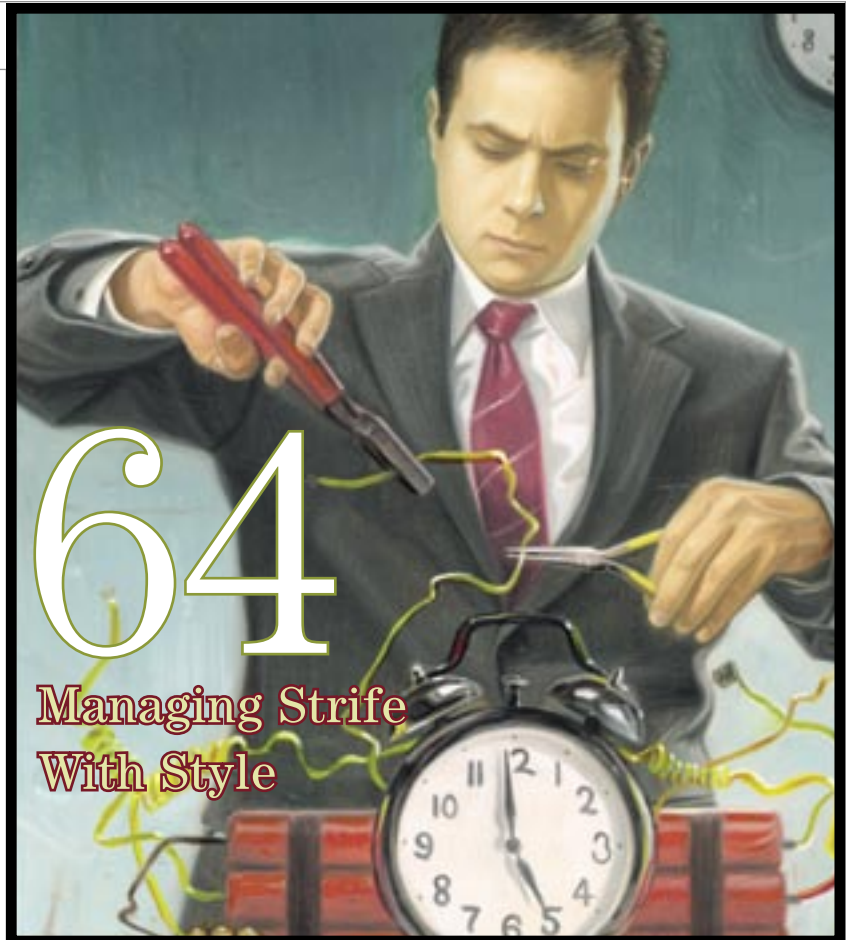
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NEXT TIME IN ENRICHMENT

The Power and Peril of Pornography and Sexual Addictions

Accessibility, anonymity, and affordability have made Internet pornography an attractive and seemingly less dangerous outlet for sexual experimentation. An ever-increasing number of church leaders and laity are succumbing to Internet porn and other forms of sexually addictive behavior. The debilitating effects of porn's addictive trap to our lives, families, church members, and Kingdom ministries are immeasurable.

With a wide-angle lens, this hard-hitting issue of Enrichment journal explores many of the difficult subjects surrounding sexually addictive behavior. Read compelling essays by Doug Boudinot, Patrick Carnes, Shannon Etheridge, Alan Chambers, Marnie Ferree, Steve and Kathy Gallagher, Jerry Kirk, Mark Laaser, Harry Schaumburg, Fred and Brenda Stoeker, and many others.

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

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- Use of the masculine pronoun for pastor is used throughout this issue and refers to both genders.

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LEADERLIFE

A 40-YEAR CAREER OR A 4-YEAR CAREER 10 TIMES?



By 1992, I had served as a church staff member and was pastoring my second church. Did I really need to further my education?

I decided to enroll in seminary because I enjoy learning. Ten years and much personal growth later, I graduated with a doctor of ministry degree and became the program director because of the change it made in my life and ministry.

I now see why education needs to be a lifelong journey rather than a 4-year program that culminates in graduation. Here are four reasons:

- The classroom can be a mirror on life. When I take a class on team-based ministry knowing that I have team training scheduled the following week, that course has my full attention.

Learning venues provide the arena for this kind of reflection on ministry.

- Lifelong learning is the oxygen of effectiveness. While the truth of God's Word does not change, the culture we need to reach and the dynamics of ministry leadership are both morphing by the minute. Effective leaders must now be lifelong learners.

- We must be trained to be bigger than our task. Leaders who are prepared only for the task at hand can have difficulty expanding their influence. Education stretches leaders beyond the boundaries of their daily work, allowing them to do more.

- The power of example is enormous. Ministers desire to lead people who are anxious to learn from them. How can we ask others to learn from us if we are not involved in learning ourselves? Learners produce learners.

My recommendation: Start the learning journey. While seminary is not right for everyone, pastors owe it to those they lead to be continually learning. Start where you are and do what you can. As Paul wrote to Timothy, "Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress" (1 Timothy 4:15). This kind of progress makes it possible to have a 40-year career rather than repeating a 4-year career 10 times.

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

MINISTRY BUSINESS

FIVE THINGS TO DO THIS MONTH



Computers have become strategic ministry tools. Here are five things you can do this month that will help your computer system(s) serve your ministry well.

1. Talk with your website host and ask what it would take to make your website automatically resize itself for visitors using very small screens, like PDAs. Although they may not yet be able to do this, notifying them of your interest will help them move in the right direction and get you there faster than otherwise.



HISTORY AT A GLANCE

PRAYING PAYSON OF PORTLAND, MAINE

175 YEARS AGO — 1830

Edward Payson (1783–1827) pastored the Second Congregational Church of Portland, Maine, during the Second Great Awakening. During his 20 years of ministry, the church recorded more than 700 converts. He was nicknamed "Praying Payson" because the wooden floor beside his bed where he often knelt in prayer was worn by his knees. Most of the biographical information known about Payson comes from *A Memoir of the Rev. Edward Payson* published in 1830 by Asa Cummings. (See article on Payson, page 116.)

100 YEARS AGO — 1905

Charles Parham delivered the first full-gospel message preached in Texas at Henry Aylor's house in Houston, on Easter. For years, the anniversary of this occasion was celebrated with an annual convention at Easter that was first held

2. Review your software licenses and make certain you have enough to cover your usage. Buy additional licenses as needed to stay in compliance with copyright law. A vendor who specializes in ministry pricing is Consistent Computer Bargains (1-800-342-4222).

3. Review your list of all your ministry's computers and connected devices (printers, scanners, PDAs, etc). Update it by adding new systems purchased and removing those systems that have been retired.

4. Test your backup system to ensure it is creating the system security you'll depend on if the systems need to be rebuilt because of a disaster, theft, or system crash. Do this by restoring a complete folder structure from the backup media and checking the folders' contents for accuracy. Ideally, this should be done monthly.

5. Contact your Internet Service Provider and ask if your current Internet connection plan should be updated. Prices may have fallen, and connection speeds may have increased. If you use a DSL connection, check with your local television cable company and do a price/speed comparison. Many cable companies, most of whom did not initially want business accounts, have changed their position on this and now offer competitive plans that may surprise you.

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LIFE POINTS

ABORTION: AMERICA'S STAGGERING HIDDEN LOSS

On the 32nd anniversary of the *Roe v. Wade* decision that imposed abortion in the United States, we should pause and reflect on the consequences. From 1972 to 2000, abortion in the United States eliminated over 40 million babies — the equivalent of the combined population of nine countries: Sweden (8.9 million), Bulgaria (8.2 million), Denmark (5.4 million), Finland (5.2 million), Norway (4.4 million), Lithuania (3.6 million), Latvia (2.3 million) and Bahrain (0.6 million). Another way of looking at it: The total number is the equivalent of the entire population of Spain (40.2 million).

In the wake of the terrible tsunami that struck Southeast Asia, killing over 150,000, authorities note that at least one-third of the dead are children. We should all weep with those who weep for the victims' too-short lives. And should we not also then note with deep sorrow the death toll of over 1 million children lost to abortion every year — in our country alone?

There is some hopeful news: The total number of abortions is declining, a decrease that is particularly dramatic among teenagers. However, the number of women having repeat abortions is increasing, as well as the number of women choosing abortion who already have living children.

Figure 1. – Cumulative Number of Abortions: 1972–2000



SOURCE: The Alan Guttmacher Institute, *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, "Abortion Incidence and Services in the United States in 2000," Vol. 35, No. 1, Jan.-Feb. 2003 and earlier reports.

Abridged from Data Digest, January-February 2005. A Publication of The Beverly LaHate Institute: A Center for Studies in Women's Issues. Used by permission.

in Orchard, Texas, and later held in other parts of the state. Later that year, Parham started a Bible school in Houston that was to be a catalyst for the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles.

75 YEARS AGO — 1930

On November 2, Ras Tafari Makonnen was crowned king of Ethiopia and took the title "Emperor Haile Selassie I" (Power of the holy Trinity). This was the beginning of Ras-tafarianism, a religious cult that promotes world peace and harmony and teaches the eventual redemption of blacks.

50 YEARS AGO — 1955

The Assemblies of God launched Missionettes, a girls'

auxiliary program to teach missions to young women and to prepare them for future involvement in Women's Ministries. The purpose of Missionettes is to win girls to Jesus Christ and teach them to live victoriously.

25 YEARS AGO — 1980

John and Anne Gimenez organized the first Washington for Jesus rally. Rally attendance was 500,000 to 700,000 and included charismatics, evangelicals, and the unchurched.

GLENN GOHR, assistant archivist, Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center

UTHTRAX MENTOR ME



One teenager's father never misses his son's games. He attends church every Sunday and Wednesday and leads his family in devotions every night. Another teenager holds up a picture she printed from the Internet. It is the mug shot of a prisoner from the state penitentiary. She has not seen the man since she was 2. The man in the photo is her dad.

Which teen needs a mentor? They both do.

Pairing teens with older church members has many benefits. It connects teens with the larger church body when they may only be participating in youth church. This relationship reaps benefits when the teen matures and is no longer involved primarily in youth activities.

Mentoring teaches teens to serve. Like job shadowing,

teens are trained by working with older adults to visit the sick, take food to the bereaved, or fix a car for someone struggling financially.

In an October 2004 Barna study, 8 percent of adults said American children are not prepared to deal with life. Seventy-one percent said children get inadequate spiritual training. Mentoring is an opportunity to remedy those statistics.

In our home church, a teacher meets with 20 boys ages 12 to 18 every Sunday morning. The teens come from various backgrounds and are at various levels of spiritual maturity.

Every week an older man from the church shares his story of faith. The boys have heard a story of courage from a Vietnam veteran. They sat spellbound as a man once addicted to pornography told of God's deliverance. They learned what it means to forgive a great injustice from a man whose child was severely abused by a babysitter. Each week the boys not only connect with these men, but they also are encouraged and enlightened in a spiritual life lesson.

Which teens need mentors? Every teen can benefit from a biblically grounded adult who genuinely cares about the next generation.

T. SUZANNE ELLER, Muskogee, Oklahoma

RESOURCES

- <http://MentorYouth.com> offers mentoring tips and opportunities.
- <http://www.christianmentoring.org> offers training for safe and effective mentor programs.
- <http://www.mentoring.org> is the website for MENTOR: The national mentoring partnership.
- Visit Real Teens, Real Faith! at <http://realteenfaith.com>.

BOOMERS TO ZOOMERS THE FAMILY OF GOD

After a presentation on resolving generational strife in the church, a retired minister gave me a new perspective on the issue. He pointed out that churches wrestle with the same stresses and strains experienced by a growing family. New children tax the energy of parents and require older siblings to make adjustments. The drop in attention received by older children as parents care for newborns creates tension that families need to work through.

I was struck by the wisdom and practicality of this word picture. No wonder conflict is so common in the New Testament. "Consequently," Paul writes, "you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household" (Ephesians 2:19). The phrase "God's household" is repeated in

1 Timothy 3:15. Peter refers to the "family of God" (1 Peter 4:17), and Paul also speaks of the "family of believers" (Galatians 6:10).

My friend's insight and these simple New Testament phrases have challenged me. If we are a family, then seniors (born before 1946) could understand boomers (born 1946–64), boomers could understand generation X (born 1965–83), and everyone could understand millennials (born after 1983).

Perhaps we have let our studying and strategizing about the generations become so complex the church has lost sight of how simple it could be. What if we thought of ourselves as a family and did the things healthy families do to keep the generations together? After all, most parents do not abandon their children because they are of another generation. And most grandchildren do not refuse to associate with their grandparents because they are too old or not cool.

If we decide to define the church as a family and work toward building relationships using the same methods healthy families use, much of the tension between generations that we define as normal and inevitable would disappear as people became acquainted with each other. In the end, if we cannot succeed at being the family of God we have little hope of succeeding at anything else.

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



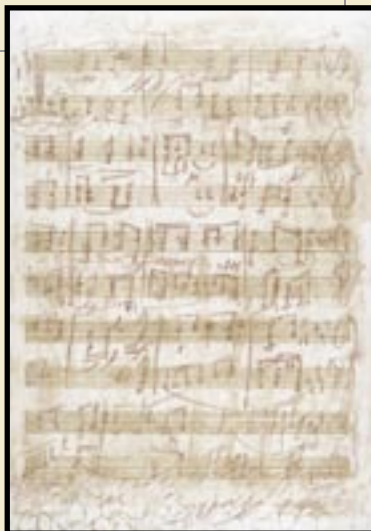
THE HIM BEHIND THE HYMN A SIMPLE LEGACY

James Edwin Orr had a remarkable life and ministry. Orr was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, in 1912, but spent most of his 75 years living in the United States. Before he moved to America he received his undergraduate degree, worked as a clerk in a bakery, and held evangelistic rallies in Belfast at age 18. Despite resistance from family and friends, Orr responded to God's call to itinerant evangelism. Using London as his headquarters, he conducted crusades throughout Europe in 1935 and throughout Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa in 1936.

Orr eventually settled in the United States where he studied at Northwestern University, Harvard University, and Northern Baptist Seminary. During World War II, he enlisted in the United States Air Force and earned seven battle stars and the rank of major. He wrote voluminously and was a faculty member at Fuller Seminary's School of World Mission for many years.

Despite his many accomplishments, he is best remembered for the hymn "Cleanse Me" that is sung in churches around the world.

Orr wrote "Cleanse Me" following a remarkable move of the Holy Spirit during



the 1936 Easter revivals in Ngaruawahia, New Zealand. This revival was characterized by prayer meetings, spontaneous outbursts of song, confession, repentance, and reconciliation of estranged relationships. The tent meeting on Easter was so crowded that a midnight service had to be scheduled, and many unconverted students professed faith in Christ.

As Orr was leaving New Zealand, four girls approached him and sang "Po Atarau," the beautiful Maori Song of Farewell. He was so taken with the beauty of this Polynesian melody that he wrote new verses to the tune based on Psalm 139:23,24 on an envelope while he was in the post office at Ngaruawahia.

Search me, O God, and know my heart today;

Try me, O Savior, Know my thoughts, I pray.

GREG ASIMAKOPOULOS.
Naperville, Illinois

FIELD TRIP MANAGING CONFLICT IN CHURCH-PLANTING TEAMS

Planting churches with church planting in their DNA, winning people to Christ, and fulfilling the Great Commission is as easy as one, two, three. Right? Wrong. This equation does not include the human component, and this cannot be overlooked. Effective church-planting teams are composed of strong people whose diverse gifts and personalities create a unique dynamic. The Holy Spirit melds these qualities for a maximum effectiveness that can only be derailed by internal combustion ... aka conflict.

Lily Soh, associate pastor at Victory Family Center in Singapore and former academic dean of the church's Bible school, understands the vulnerability of a team torn by internal strife. Prior to setting out on her current assignment of planting a church in Angola, Africa, Soh determined to create a conflict-management training program that would target the most common problems



experienced by church-planting teams.

In her doctoral research and in interviews with over 30 missionaries, she discovered that more than 90 percent had cited serious conflict experiences. The root causes were personality clashes, different perspectives, poor communication skills, and failure to treat one another biblically. Furthermore, the nonconfrontational nature of the

Asian culture taught suppression of frustration, a conflict-management technique that fostered broken relationships, handicapped ministries, and further conflict.

Soh created a 16-hour training seminar for church-planting teams that covered extensive relationship-building issues, communication skills, personality types, and conflict management. The content was focused on ministry scenarios encountered in the church-planting context. Evaluations showed significant improvement in understanding these pertinent subjects. Furthermore, the intentional improvement of the church-planting preparation process led to valuable suggestions for positive change. The difference is likely to be seen in the multiplication of a church that has planted more than 80 churches in the last two decades.

Lily Soh's D.Min. project is available for review in Assemblies of God Theological Seminary library.

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

PULPIT & PEW GREATEST THREATS TO FAMILIES



Protestant clergy believe divorce, negative media influences, and materialism are the three greatest threats to families in their communities, according to a recent study conducted by

Ellison Research, a marketing research company based in Phoenix, Arizona. The research surveyed Lutheran, Baptist, Methodist, and Pentecostal ministers.

Pentecostals agreed with other denominations in naming divorce (50 percent) and negative influences in the media (36 percent) as the top two problems faced when listing the three strongest threats to family. However, materialism, picked as the third biggest problem by other pastors, was listed with cohabitation as seventh by Pentecostals. The third most serious threat according to Pentecostal preachers is absentee fathers, at 32 percent.

Clergy in the Pentecostal ranks listed morality not being taught in school as the fourth top trouble at 24 percent, higher than any other denomination. Other perceived threats included no stay-at-home parent or latchkey kids with 23 percent, pornography at 21 percent, and drug abuse among teenagers along with teen sexual involvement both at 13 percent. In addition, 8 percent of Pentecostal leaders named teen pregnancy as a top problem in their communities; an issue listed no higher than 3 percent by other groups.

Besides materialism, Pentecostals found parental alcohol abuse (6 percent) and poor quality education (1 percent) to be less of an issue than pastors of other denominations.

JOHN KENNEDY, *Today's Pentecostal Evangel*

FAITH COMMUNITIES TODAY AG CONFLICT SURVEY

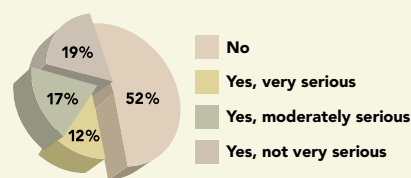
During the last 5 years has your congregation experienced any disagreements or conflicts in the following areas?

Yes, and it was:

AREA OF CONFLICT	NO	VERY SERIOUS	MODERATELY SERIOUS	NOT VERY SERIOUS
A. Theology	83.0	3.2	5.3	8.5
B. Money/Finances/Budget	70.2	7.6	7.9	14.2
C. How worship is conducted	60.0	5.9	10.9	23.2
D. Program/mission priorities or emphasis	80.3	2.8	5.2	11.7
E. Who should make a decision	68.9	8.3	9.3	13.5
F. Pastor's leadership style	64.7	10.3	9.8	15.1
G. Pastor's personal behavior	83.5	6.8	3.3	6.3
H. Member/participant's personal behavior	51.8	12.5	16.7	19.1
I. Other	78.2	13.3	5.3	3.2

Note: the sum of percentages may not total 100 percent due to rounding.

H. Member/participant's personal behavior



From a survey of more than 600 congregations, entitled "Faith Communities Today," a 2000 survey of Assemblies of God churches.

SHERRI L. DOTY, statistician. From the office of the General Secretary.

CROSSING CULTURES SO YOU WANT TO REACH ETHNIC MINORITIES IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

There is no one-size-fits-all method for evangelizing ethnic minorities. Ethnic minorities differ widely from each other in their worldviews and other ingrained cultural values.

Asians tend to want to avoid conflict and appear to most Americans as cautious and overly polite. Latinos tend to be emotional and expressive. Eastern European immigrants, having endured years of communist imposition into their private lives, tend to be reserved and suspicious of almost everyone. These attitudes are carried over into their theology and worship.

Some basic needs are common to all immigrants as they adjust to living in a new and different environment: knowing how to shop, where to find jobs, and how to meet the basic necessities of living and raising a family. A few ways churches can assist immigrants include:

- Accompany them to grocery stores, registering children for school, and other appointments.
- Locate responsible lawyers who can help with residency legalization.
- Know the location of clothing and food banks.
- Know where English as a Second Language classes are taught.
- Know the location of rental housing where new immigrants are welcomed (or accepted) by management.

Nancy Kruger of Ethnic Harvest sums it up best: "The importance of taking the time to keep up with what is going on and knowing what assistance is available for ethnic people is vital to the early stages of their resettlement, and a focus for ministry."

DAVID MOORE, Convoy of Hope



CROSSROADS

WALT'S EMPTY MESSAGE

Mark Pinsky's recent publication of *The Gospel According To Disney: Faith, Trust, and Pixie Dust* (July 2004) has poignantly evaluated the long-term impact of Disney's film efforts. Pinsky researched the 70-year history of Disney film and has concluded that Disney's approach to religion and values is essentially a Judeo-Christian morality without God or Jesus. *Time* magazine called Walt Disney the "poet of the new American humanism." Mark Pinsky suggests a better term might be the poet of "secular toonism" as a variation on secular humanism.

In reality, Walt Disney was ahead of his time when he began the grand tradition of an inclusive approach to faith in a predominantly Christian nation. "The things we have in common," Disney said, "far outnumber those things that divide us." The Disney entertainment empire reflects this view. No theme park has a church on Main Street. The Disney Cruise Line has no chapels on its ships.

Disney knew early on that movies would need some agent of supernatural intervention to be marketable, but wished to accomplish this without religious figures. Disney chose magic. Magic is a universal theme that is understood in most cultures. The gospel according to Disney is good, is always rewarded, and evil is always punished. People who are optimistic and work hard will succeed. Faith is essential, faith in you and faith in something greater than yourself.

Disney has used the powerful medium of film to offer to a nation from cradle to grave what some might call American's civil religions — it does not matter what you believe in, as long as you believe. Disney is not a grinch, but his legacy may have stolen Christ from Christmas.

BYRON D. KLAUS, D.Min., is president of Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri.

SHELF TALK

WHAT MAKES A BOOK WORTH READING?



To make a book worth reading, it must be relevant to most people, in most cultures, throughout time. These books make up what some have called *The Western Canon* of literature. Harold Bloom's book, *The Western Canon*, discusses the Canon, 26 prominent authors, and lists books of enduring excellence that Bloom feels are worthy of reading.

One notable attempt to define the Western Canon was made by the University of Chicago. In 1952, the faculty of the university published a 55-volume set of books titled the Great Books of the Western World. Recently, it has been updated to 60 volumes containing 517 works by 130 authors, written over 30 centuries.

This reference work defines the ideas that shaped ancient and modern civilizations much like a grammar defines the building blocks of a language. Pastors will benefit from a general knowledge of these classical works as many reference the Bible, Bible-related topics, or contributions to modern theological thought.

Two of the 60 volumes are called the *Syntopicon*, or "a collection of topics." There are nearly 3,000 topics covered under 102 Great Ideas. The *Syntopicon* has a chapter for each idea that includes an essay and references the opinions and viewpoints of every author who contributes to that Idea. The possibilities for sermon illustrations and quotations are endless.

To learn more about the Great Books visit <http://www.store.britannica.com>. Used sets sell for \$300 and up, but individual volumes can be borrowed from public and university libraries.

KEVIN WILSON, assistant editor, *Enrichment* journal

WHAT IN THE WORLD

A GIFT IN DISGUISE

The world was recently introduced to a girl whose last name provides a clue to her unique perspective on life. To an observer, Ashlyn Blocker appears to be a normal kindergartner. But this 5-year-old from Patterson, Georgia, is anything but normal. Due to the rare genetic disorder CIPA (Congenital Insensitivity to Pain with Anhidrosis), Ashlyn is incapable of sensing extreme temperatures. Her body does not register the need to cool itself or to compensate for heat loss.

Ashlyn has serious physiological deficiencies that could have life-threatening consequences. Due to this untreatable disease, she is incapable of feeling pain. When she falls off a swing and bloodies her knee, she does not cry. A traditional spanking is not a deterrent to disobedient behavior. As her last name unintentionally implies, her body blocks pain.

"Some people would say that's a good thing. But no, it's not," says Tara Blocker, Ashlyn's mother. "Pain's there for a reason. It lets your body know something's wrong and it needs to be fixed. I'd give anything for her to feel pain."

Ashlyn's mother is right. God allows pain for a purpose. Without it, we would not react to dangerous situations. In a similar way, guilt can also be a gift. It is an alarm that signals a need to alleviate a problem. David wrote, "For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Selah. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord' — and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah" (Psalm 32:4,5).

GREG ASIMAKOUPoulos, Naperville, Illinois



PHOTO: JOHN AND TARA BLOCKER

CHURCHBIZ HOW TECHNOLOGY IS USED IN PROTESTANT CHURCHES

Study results show a huge gap between large and small churches in the use of technology. Research results, released for the first time in the January/February edition of *Facts and Trends* magazine, show 9 out of 10 Protestant clergy have Internet access they can use for church business, but only about half of Protestant churches maintain a website.

The study, conducted by Ellison Research among a representative sample of 700 Protestant church ministers nationwide, queried pastors about their current use of technology, as well as how technology fits into the near-term future of their church's ministry. The study shows some large gaps in technology reliance according to church size.

Ron Sellers, president of Ellison Research, noted that small churches often struggle with inadequate budgets and few volunteers. "As the American public becomes more and more reliant on technology in everyday life, they will logically expect churches to have things such as websites, streaming audio or video on the site, or study materials on video or computer software," Sellers said. "Small churches often don't have the budget to pay for technology, or the staff or volunteers to implement it. The increased use of technology in churches has a real potential to widen the gap even further between small churches and medium or large congregations."

CURRENT AND FUTURE USE OF TECHNOLOGY (BY CHURCH SIZE)

USES OF TECHNOLOGY	ALL CHURCHES	SMALL (< 100)	MEDIUM (100-199)	LARGE (200+)
Pastor currently has Internet access	91%	86%	94%	97%
Church has a content filter (among those on the Web)	32	27	36	37
Church maintains a website	52	28	60	88

RATE EACH OF THE FOLLOWING AS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT IN THE NEXT 5 YEARS:

Building or maintaining a church website	27	16	28	49
Sermons available on the church website	9	4	8	18
Communicating to the congregation with e-mail	25	13	30	42
PowerPoint or other graphic presentations in website	27	16	36	36
Being able to show DVDs or videos	26	16	34	39
Advertising in the media	19	15	22	23
Using technology to connect with missionaries	20	18	20	26
Bible study software	28	26	24	36
Doing research on the Internet	34	26	38	42

CURRENT USE OF TECHNOLOGY (BY DENOMINATION)

TECHNOLOGY USED	ALL PASTORS	SOUTHERN BAPTIST	OTHER BAPTIST	METHODIST	LUTHERAN	PENTECOSTAL	ALL
Have Internet access	91%	90%	89%	96%	91%	89%	92%
Have a content filter (among those with Internet access)	32	39	41	19	27	39	28
Maintain a church website	52	44	49	52	68	54	52

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TIMESWISE FOCUS IS FOREMOST

The inability to focus on what needs to be done can alter your plans and keep you from the joy of a fruitful day.

The challenge of staying focused is illustrated by a well-known story.

One morning Farmer Brown announced to his wife that he was going to plow. He got off to an early start since he had to oil the tractor. However, since he didn't have enough oil, he made a trip to the hardware store to buy more.

On the way to the store he noticed the pigs hadn't been fed, so he went to the corncrib where he found some sacks of feed. The sacks reminded him that the potatoes were sprouting. On his way to the potato shed he passed the woodpile and remembered that his wife had asked him to bring wood up to the house.

By the time the sun went down, the frustrated farmer hadn't even oiled the tractor, much less plowed the field.¹

Some suggestions to help keep you on track and ensure more productive days ahead are:

- List your priorities and the steps involved to accomplish these tasks.
- Resist the urge to stay up late and sleep in. A tired mind and body will not have the strength needed to focus.
- Keep a flexible schedule for divine appointments or real emergencies.
- Learn to distinguish divine appointments and real emergencies from everyday distractions and procrastination.

FAITH HAMILTON, office coordinator, *Enrichment* journal

ENDNOTE

1. Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations* (Dallas, Texas: Bible Communications, Inc., 1998), 3267.



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

PART 2

Many pastors have not been trained in conflict management. They may not even seek help in a problematic situation because they believe conflict reveals a character flaw. In this second of a two-part interview with *Enrichment* journal, General Superintendent Thomas E. Trask provides practical advice on how pastors can better manage conflict.

MANY PASTORS AND CHURCHES ARE IMMOBILIZED BY CONFLICT. WHAT CAN THEY DO?

TRASK: People are often not willing to address conflict, but Matthew 5:23,24, says if “thy brother hath ought against thee ... go ... be reconciled to thy brother.”¹ If we follow the biblical pattern, God will help us resolve conflict and restore relationships. When we do not follow the biblical pattern, we cannot expect the Lord’s help.

Second, many ministers have no conflict-management training. Conflict-management skills can be learned. That is why Bible college training is valuable. Students learn from godly instructors who have experience. Students can benefit from others and avoid ministry pitfalls.

Some people do not understand the need for conflict-management training. They believe if Christians would pray more, they would have less conflict.

Prayer does aid conflict resolution. We need to pray for the people with whom we struggle. Also, when we pray, God gives insight and solutions to conflict. James 1:5 says, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God.” I have been in many situations where I needed an answer and prayed for God’s wisdom and help. With His help I have avoided some mistakes.

We need to depend on the Lord, but He also expects us to use common sense. Proverbs 11:14 states: “In the multitude of counselors there is safety.” Pastors can ask for advice from experienced ministers and gain from their wisdom and insight.

The new ministry group structure that is being launched in our Fellowship promotes mentoring among ministers. Many pastors have testified how this has encouraged and strengthened them.

God has also filled our churches with wise, godly people who love the ministry and their pastors. They have learned conflict-management principles in their businesses that are applicable to the church. Pastors can learn from them. These learning opportunities can serve a pastor well.

WHAT ABOUT PASTORS WHO HAVE A REPUTATION OF HURTING CHURCHES?

TRASK: When a pastor tries to change a church by imposing his will on the congregation, it creates an unfortunate tragedy. Havoc results and the sheep are scattered.

Churches have suffered because their pastors should have known and done better. That is why pulpit committees need to investigate pastoral candidates. A pulpit committee member shared with me the counsel he received when he asked a leader about the candidate selection process: Find out what the candidate has done in the past. If he has not changed, he will do the same for you.

We need to depend on the Lord, but He also expects us to use common sense.

A new geographical location does not create a magical change in a pastor's ethics or conduct. If a candidate has caused havoc in the past, he is likely to do so at your church. It is important to investigate before you consider him.

A person of integrity will act with integrity. In Matthew 23:25 Jesus called the Pharisees hypocrites. He was dealing with their lack of integrity. What we are in the pulpit on Sunday should be what we are the other six days of the week. If we are merely performing behind the pulpit, our lack of integrity will eventually come to light.

HOW CAN WE HELP PASTORS WHO ARE GOING INTO CHURCHES THAT HAVE A HISTORY OF CONFLICT?

TRASK: These churches are tough situations that usually involve power blocs. Power blocs are rare in large churches because the size of the congregation does not create the dynamics to make this possible. But in smaller churches, one large family can control the church. As a district superintendent, I saw that repeatedly. These families do not want growth because growth threatens their power. They are often carnal people. What can a pastor do?

First, a pastor needs to know without a doubt that God has put him there. If he knows that, he can face any difficulty. God will give him favor, grace, insight, and ability.

Second, do not attack the people who are controlling the church. God has ways of removing people. Occasionally people slip out and no one knows what happened to them. One Sunday they are there, then, suddenly, they are gone. If the pastor tries to deal with them, he will destroy the church because they have longevity, respect, and a stranglehold on the church.

Third, a pastor needs to concentrate on reaching the lost. He can lead new believers through water and Spirit baptism, disciple them, and then let them become church members. Then, when elections for church offices are held, there are more candidates from which to choose. The power bloc is broken because new people have acquired respect and influence.

When new people come in but are not given membership

or church offices, the power bloc remains. If a power struggle occurs, the new people do not have a voice. This is a mistake some pastors make.

A previous pastor's problem may not be the new pastor's problem. An outgoing pastor should not poison the new pastor against a family with whom he struggled. He may create a prejudice in the new pastor's mind, which is not fair to the family or to the new pastor. What might have been a personality conflict for the former pastor may not be a problem for the next pastor. A new pastor must love the people equally and unconditionally. He must not show partiality to certain people or groups.

HOW CAN MINISTERS AND THEIR SPOUSES DEAL WITH THE PAIN AND ANGER CAUSED BY CONFLICT?

TRASK: The answer to the pain and anger conflict causes is the grace of God. Paul wrote, "My grace is sufficient for thee" (2 Corinthians 12:9). The grace of God is sufficient — regardless of the situation — if we draw on it. If a pastor ignores God's grace and tries to handle his pain and anger in his own strength, it can overwhelm him, and he will become bitter. When he becomes bitter, he has nothing more to offer the kingdom of God.

Most of us have been hurt. The question is: How will we allow hurt to affect us? We can be strengthened, victorious, and better for it, or we can allow it to destroy us. If we allow it to destroy us, it has become the victor. First Corinthians 10:13 says, "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." I do not know my breaking point, but God does. He will not allow me to be tested beyond my breaking point. We must depend on Him.

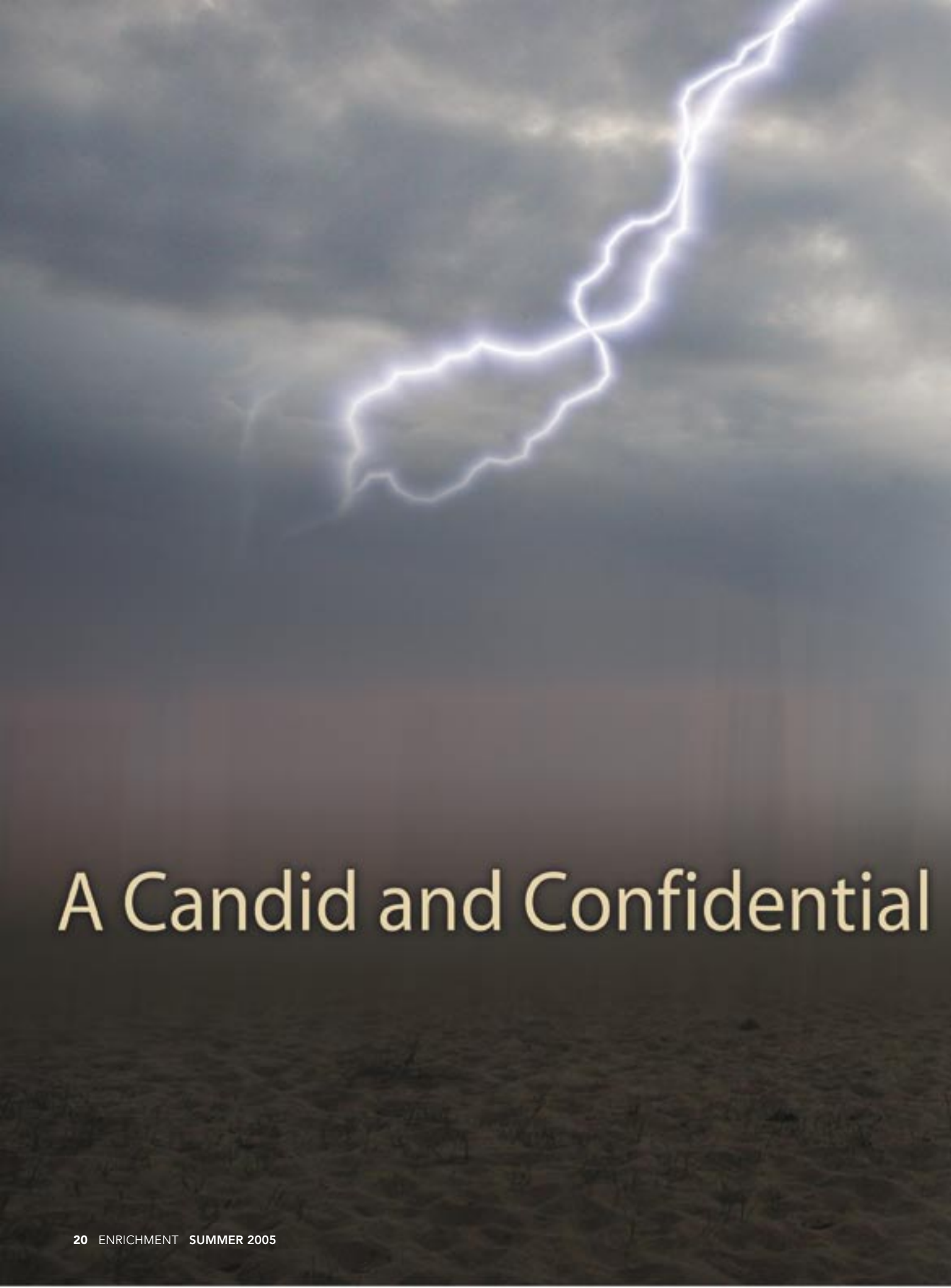
Most of us have been hurt. The question is: How will we allow hurt to affect us?

When I have been in painful situations, prayer helped me. I prayed, "Lord, help me. Keep my heart tender. Help me do right. Help me stay strong. Help me conduct myself in a manner pleasing to You." There is nothing better than asking God for His help in prayer.

We are more susceptible to pain and anger when we are discouraged. It is wise for a pastor to step aside from conflict for several days. It is amazing what rest will do. Jesus rested. A vacation can give a pastor an objective view of the situation. Suddenly, it is not as big as you thought. Has the issue changed? Probably not. But your view of it has because you have rested and the Lord has ministered to you. ■

ENDNOTE

1. Scriptures are from the KJV.




A Candid and Confidential



WEATHERING THE STORMS OF CONFLICT

Conversation With Three
Ministry Couples

BY SCOTT HARRUP



**We kept wondering
how this could happen,
because everything
was going so well.—Sarah Taylor**

Call them Pastor and Mrs. A, B, and C. Or, in the interest of more personal pseudonyms, think of Pastor and Mrs. Smith, Jones, and Taylor. Better yet, picture in your mind flesh-and-blood husbands and wives — Bill and Kara Smith, John and Leslie Jones, and George and Sarah Taylor.*

They agreed to talk to *Enrichment* journal about church conflict, one of the most difficult circumstances families in ministry face, and how it affects the entire family.

No one in ministry leadership realistically expects a lifetime of smooth sailing. Differences of opinion arise in every congregation. But when those differences grow until the pastor's authority is challenged, a church arrives at a critical crossroads. Is pastoral authority being challenged because of errors in leadership or errors among those who should be following?

Such a distinction does not eliminate the possibility of minor missteps by either party. Each of these couples reflected on things they might have done differently. But these examples were chosen because, at some point, solid pastoral leadership was opposed for less-than-solid reasons. To varying degrees, the conflict brought disruption to both those in ministry and those in the pew.

DIFFERENT PROBLEMS, COMMON LESSONS

A congregation, a staff, and a church board — pastors interact with all three, and these couples experienced specific problems connected to each of these groups.

For Bill and Kara, conflict arose from staff members. The Smiths discovered a difference of vision between themselves and a ministry partner and his wife. In time, that couple's refusal to follow the Smiths' leadership forced Bill to take steps with his board to remove them from staff. He is grateful his board prayerfully stood with him, clearly recognizing the problem, and agreed with him concerning the necessary solution. But there was still fallout in the congregation.

George Taylor wishes his board had been as loyal. He found his leadership questioned and discovered that board members whom he thought he could reason with had influenced key members of the church. He and Sarah were voted out of office, had to relocate their family, and spent years rebuilding their lives in another ministry environment.

John and Leslie Jones came to a congregation that had been established as the result of a church split. The schism created a negative testimony for the congregation in the small community where the Joneses ministered. John believed that making peace with the other congregation was the only way his church could become all that God desired them to be. As he sought to address past conflict, he thought he had the support of his church. But when he began the reconciliation process, he discovered that his church did not want reconciliation. The Joneses, unable to redirect their church's priorities, made the decision to seek another pastoral position.

Three churches, three couples, conflicts arising from three sources — but when differing factors are pushed aside, underlying common denominators come into focus. These couples agree that, regardless of the conflict source, their resulting emotions were raw. In each case, their families felt attacked where they once felt loved, and they looked for ways to defend themselves and preserve their homes. Accustomed

to offering strength to others, they saw their own strength drained and had to find renewal. But their most powerful common denominator has a Romans 8:28 theme. In the end, surviving their conflict gave them a renewed perspective of what God could accomplish in their ministry. They share their perspective to help others who are facing similar pain.

CONFRONTING EMOTIONAL FALLOUT

Since the Smiths' conflict was more tightly focused on a staff member, some of their painful emotions were as well.

"You think, *I'm going to help this guy*," Bill says, "and he rejects that help. He doesn't see that you're really out for his good. I kept wondering why he couldn't see that I was his biggest fan and that I wouldn't ask him to do any of this if I didn't think it was for his own future and what God wants to do in his life."

Because the Smiths' board stood with them, Bill and Kara did not feel in danger of losing their own position. But discouragement still lurked. And when the staff member began to confide in church families, the Smiths struggled with the doubts and accusations these families began to express toward them.

"Did I ever think of throwing in the towel?" Bill says. "Sure, I did. But it was just as clear from the Lord this was never the time."

"The Lord brought to my remembrance how He had asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac," Kara says. "The Lord had started this church, and we had gone forward. God asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, he was willing to do it, and God stopped him. There was a point where I had to be willing to step away if that would be the right thing."

George and Sarah did not have the option of holding on to their church. The Taylors felt shock and disbelief when someone on their board convinced the congregation to vote them out.

"We kept wondering how this could happen, because everything was going so well," Sarah says.

The Sunday after the Taylors lost their vote, they went to a local Assemblies of God church and sat through the service in a daze. When they returned home, George lay across their bed in defeat.

"I remember standing over him," Sarah says, "and I told him, 'You know, we have a choice here. We can either be bitter or we can be better, and we need to determine that we're going to come through this thing better than we were before.' And so we determined we weren't going to let it destroy us, because it definitely could."

The Taylors made a foundational commitment to embrace recovery. But personal determination can be complicated by others' perceptions and reactions.

"In a conflict," John Jones says, "it gets very confusing, especially when there are personal attacks. You wonder if

there is validity to what people are saying. You begin to evaluate yourself and evaluate each other. And if you're not careful, you can turn on each other and begin to believe some of the criticisms."

"I would be depressed for days and days," Leslie remembers. "I would pray and ask God to help me to get out of it because I didn't know how to respond. I would go into myself and Satan would really play games with my head. He would say, 'Maybe this is true. Maybe this is all you.' There were many nights when I stayed up all night and just prayed and cried."

John cautions that in the initial deep despair, pastors are vulnerable to false comforts offered by sinful habits.

"We have to be very careful that we don't turn to the world," he says. "You can't turn to alcohol or pornography, or turn to the things of the world during that time. We have to heal the hurt with the medicine of God."

John and Leslie discovered they needed to be less introspective and look more carefully at the people in their congregation who opposed them.

**You have to die to self
and to some of your concern over what
people think.—Bill Smith**

"So often the hurt and pain will cause you to go inward," John says. "And all you're doing is focusing on yourself and how you feel and what they're saying about you. But there are times in the conflict when you must take a look at why this person is doing what he is doing."

As the Joneses looked more closely at key families, they discovered people who carried pain that was deep, long established, and unresolved. When they discovered this, their own sense of self-respect began to revive. As they put themselves in the place of their accusers, they began to develop empathy for them.

"The call of God is about loving people and loving God," John says. "That's the essence of being a servant in the ministry."

But church conflict impacts more than congregational relationships. It can also make interaction with ministry peers challenging.

"At district council," George Taylor remembers, "we couldn't even get people to have conversations with us unless we approached them. People were just uncomfortable with us. They didn't know how to talk to us. When they saw us it just brought up all kinds of insecurities. It was painful for us, but we understood what they were going through. I encourage pastors and their wives to step over their own insecurities and embrace those who are going through conflict and help them and encourage them and speak hope into

their lives. That's what ministry is supposed to be about — edifying and encouraging one another."

Painful emotions take time to dissipate, even when pastors have entered a new ministry.

Months after the Smiths saw God bring resolution to their conflict, they were still flinching at the unexpected ripples in their church.

"You'd be just about ready to put something behind you," Kara says, "and then it was like those old sci-fi movies where at the end the monster kind of wakes up or moves or something. Every so often, just when we were thinking it was dying out, something would happen that would make us think, *Oh no, here we go again.*"

Sarah Taylor struggled with memories of the blessings she and George had enjoyed before they were voted out. She found herself reluctant to transition into their next pastorate.

"When we first came here, I was in a Bible study, and I just broke down and started crying," she says. "I admitted to the ladies I was with that I didn't want to be there. They just loved me through that, and that was a real turning point for me."

The women's expressions of love helped Sarah rediscover the deep and healing emotions that can be found when members of the body of Christ are in healthy relationship. After a family has left the scene of a conflict behind, such rediscovery is vital. Pastors and their wives must avoid the tendency to constantly watch their backs and make assumptions about others.

"Any pastor who goes through a similar experience feels like he wears a scarlet letter," George says. "Everywhere they go they feel like people are looking at them, thinking about them, talking about them — and of course, it's actually not true."

PRESERVING FAMILY FOUNDATIONS

Despite their pledge to pursue personal growth through their crisis, the Taylors found that losing their church and relocating their family put enormous stress on their marriage. Every element of change in their situation seemed to

contribute to the strain. A smaller church meant a significantly reduced salary for George. A smaller community meant fewer job opportunities for Sarah, whose income had been supplemental at their previous church and was now vital to their budgetary survival.

Their first step after their move was to participate in a marriage retreat.

"We spent a week with a marriage counselor and 15 other couples," George says. "We just concentrated on marriage maintenance. We knew we needed outside help to keep this thing together."

But there would be no quick fix.

"It took me a couple of years after being here to realize how angry I was with George," Sarah admits. "I blamed him for the devastation that happened to the family. Something inside of me said, *You should have prevented this. No family should have to go through this, and you should have done something so this wouldn't happen.*"

When Sarah did find a job, it required a daily commute. Their family's new location meant long, lonely drives, particularly in the winter. "I'm driving 35 miles to work," she recalls, "crying the whole way there, the whole way back, 'God, why do I have to do this? I don't want to work full time. I don't want to have to drive on icy roads to get to work.'"

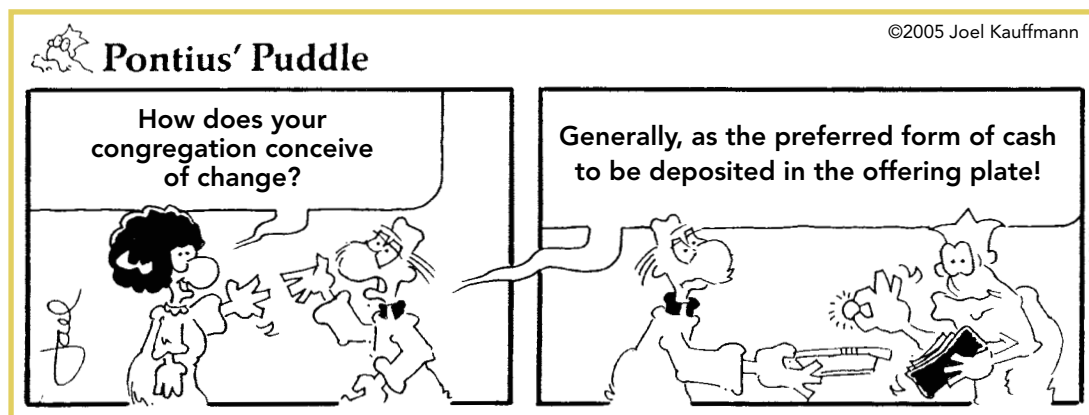
With his own challenges in a new ministry post, George seemed oblivious to Sarah's turmoil. "He was not seeing the whole lifestyle change for me that had happened in this thing," she says.

Yet, the Taylors agree that the experience drew them closer together. Despite their conflicts, or even because of them, all three couples found themselves relying on each other in new ways, seeking opportunities to spend time as a family, and even discovering areas of neglect in their relationships that had cropped up in the midst of active ministry.

"What came out of this was we just spent a lot of family time together," Leslie Jones says. "We got really close as a family and tried to stay united, because the church wasn't united. I was determined as a mom that it was not going to separate

our family — that we were going to stay together. People were going to try to tear us apart, but as a family we were going to stay unified and stay together and live for the Lord."

"We spent a lot of time together," George Taylor says.



The call of God is about loving God. That's the essence of being a servant in the ministry.—John Jones

“The outside pressure and dynamics really cemented us. It was something painful that we were walking through together, so we did a lot of talking. There was a lot of dinner table discussion about how we were doing and what was going on, and we were honest with the kids about the dynamics of what was happening. We needed them to be a part of it.”

George and Sarah's decision to bring their children into the discussion was due to the unavoidable impact the move to a new community had on their family. Pastors have to weigh the extent to which they can include their children in discussing conflict. In many cases, the choice is determined by factors outside the home.

Bill Smith remembers the effect their staff conflict had on their son and daughter. “I think our son did well because he never really got pulled into it,” he says. “Our daughter was in junior high, and I think she would have done well, but the parents of a friend of hers were very involved in this. She came home one day after a long discussion with some of the girls in church. So we didn't have any choice at that point but to talk to her about the conflict. It hurt. But for our daughter, the last couple of years have been a wonderful opportunity for her to learn to die to herself, to let go of these things. I think this has actually turned out to be a growing experience.”

The Joneses' three daughters reacted in different ways to the tension in their church.

“One of the unfortunate things was our girls were hearing the other kids in the congregation talking about us and about the conflict even though they weren't hearing it in our home,” John says. “They were hearing it through the other kids because their parents were talking about it. That was an abusive time for our children, especially for our two older girls. Our youngest was really too young to be affected.”

John and Leslie tried to protect their children as much as

they could as the conflict escalated. There were times when Leslie would leave church before the end of the service.

“She would take the girls out at that time,” John says. “It was self-preservation at that point.”

Leslie remembers their oldest daughter asking why families in the church were attacking her and John: “‘Do they love Jesus?’ she would ask. And I would tell her, ‘Honey, they don't understand. They're trying to do what they think is right. You just have to pray for them and love them.’ It's hard to explain that to a younger child — that you've got to love people when they're doing something that's wrong.”

In the end, the impact on their daughters proved to be a deciding factor in the Joneses' resignation and relocation to another church.

“The Spirit of God spoke to me clearly that if I did not get out of that church that my daughters would not serve Him,” John says. “He told me He had a call on my oldest daughter's life. She is now in her senior year at college preparing for ministry.”

STRENGTHENING THE SPIRIT

Conflict not only interrupts the flow of ministry to a congregation, it can rob ministry couples of the strength and spiritual reserves they once enjoyed. Suddenly, they find themselves in emotional and spiritual need. Those who survive this inner wasteland do so by clinging to basic spiritual disciplines.

“You have to be prayed up all the time,” Leslie Jones says. “You have to be prayed up morning, noon, and night.”

“During this period, Kara and I had more intense prayer times together than in our whole ministry life and married life,” Bill Smith says. “We had intense times of prayer in our living room at different times of the day, really seeking the Lord for help.”

“Our whole approach,” Kara remembers, “was to discover what the Lord was trying to do. It didn't matter what people

were trying to say about us. What mattered was what the Lord was trying to teach us, because He was allowing it.”

The Smiths’ commitment to prayer overflowed to their congregation. As the staff conflict painfully worked its way toward resolution, the church scheduled a weekend of fasting and prayer. Those weekends are now held four times a year.

Personal devotions are vital to continued spiritual growth throughout life, but they can also lay a foundation for recovery in the midst of crisis.

What mattered was what the Lord was trying to teach us, because He was allowing it.—Kara Smith

George Taylor had begun reading a book called *The Calvary Road* on the subject of brokenness about a year and a half prior to their church’s struggle.

“When this began happening, I already had a theological foundation laid in my heart,” he says. “I knew this was going to be a very painful thing, but it was not the end for me as a pastor and as a husband and as a father. I already had hope that this was going to pass and God was going to do some good things out of this.”

John Jones also discovered a devotional book helped him and Leslie to weather their conflict.

“What really helped us through that time was R.T. Kendall’s *God Meant It for Good*,” John says. “In it, the story of Joseph came so alive. Living the Word right in front of those people was so important. I could not get on the level that they were on and fight the way they were fighting and be blessed by God. It just would have been wrong. That book really opened my eyes to how to deal with justifying yourself. You don’t want to become self-righteousness. Joseph let God vindicate him. So, I had to live the life of Joseph.”

George and Sarah are quick to say they would never want to go through a similar trauma again. But they are just as quick to say they are glad for what they went through.

“God has made us different people, and we are better because of it,” George says. “Our marriage is better; our ministry is better; our character is different. God used this to break us and change us.”

For the Joneses, part of that inner reshaping came about through pursuing other ministry opportunities even during their conflict.

“When you’re in a situation like this, you need outside ministry,” John says. “I would recommend that pastors and their wives try to find some other ministry that reminds them that God is still using them. There are lots of practical ministries you can do. One of the things you have to realize is that at

times you have to preach and minister when you are hurt. How you deal with that is so important.”

“Who knows if I might have just stayed to myself if I had a nice big church that was just growing all the time,” Leslie says. “I never would have met many of the people in my community. There were a lot of elderly people that lived around us, and they needed help at times. And we would just go out and pick up stuff out of their yard and offer to mow grass or help them or anything like that. You have to step outside the

church so you can take the focus off the negative and look at the positive things in the world too.”

George Taylor emphasizes the need for humility if a pastor is to come through a conflict spiritually strengthened: “If a pastor is proud

and not teachable, it’s going to be real tough for him to learn from his experience and bring help to his family and to go on in ministry. But the pastor who is humble and willing to be broken, who accepts the purposes and plans of God, will come through a conflict — and so will his family. That’s a vital dynamic.”

REGROUPING AND SHARING

The Smiths, Joneses, and Taylors look back on their respective church conflicts from the vantage point of new or renewed ministries. While a desire to forget the hardships they endured may seem natural, they each describe lessons learned that continue to energize their ministries.

Bill Smith quickly identifies three principles he now lives by that emerged from his staff conflict. “First, you have to die to self and to some of your concern over what people think,” he says. “Second, you really begin to understand that you have to trust biblical principles over your feelings.”

“Every time we were feeling something,” Kara says of that second point, “we would go back and realize that was just our feelings, so we couldn’t trust them in the middle of that turmoil. We were hurt, we were broken, we were confused, and we were tired. So we had to identify the biblical principle, the right thing to do right then in the midst of those feelings.”

“Third, and at the base of everything else,” Bill says, “you have to trust God in those situations instead of yourself.”

Besides the personal lessons they learned, the Smiths’ church conflict strengthened their congregation.

“We saw a unifying of our church’s Kingdom purpose,” Bill says. “If you’re building more than one kingdom within a church, you’re struggling with unity. Our church now enjoys incredible unity in doing what God wants us to do. The people who weathered the storm — we saw their character.”

Bill identifies six key points a pastor can personally benefit from in conflict:

1. Keep in mind the conflict is not a flesh-and-blood battle. "It's powers and principalities," Bill says. "So it's pretty clear from Paul how you fight that. You fight it spiritually." To that end, he says, it is vital to fight the conflict with prayer.

2. Don't get involved in the fray. "Don't defend yourself," Bill advises. "Don't talk. Because whatever you say will be misquoted, then used against you. Just be quiet; let the Lord be your defender. And at the same time, let the Lord deal with you on things He needs to deal with you on."

3. Determine to forgive. "There are two commands that you can't deny in Scripture," Bill says. "You have to forgive everybody, and you have to love and be kind to everybody. You don't, however, have to trust everyone nor do you have to go back into a deep relationship with someone. Renewing trust takes time."

4. Don't pick up other people's offenses. In the Smiths' case, congregation members who were unaware of the problems created within the staff by the uncooperative staff member took offense when that staff member faced discipline. "It's one thing to deal with your personal offense toward somebody," Bill says, "but when you are dealing with somebody who has picked up another person's offenses, it is almost impossible to help that person through it."

5. Keep leading through the conflict. "Do you want to look through the rearview mirror or the windshield?" Bill asks rhetorically. "I encourage pastors, once you get past the initial hurt, as best you can let it go and lead."

6. Rely on mentors. "One of the great things that helped me through this," Bill says, "was the sympathy and guidance from older, wiser ministers. Anyone who is in leadership has walked through what Kara and I walked through.

They wouldn't be leading if they hadn't walked through these hurts."

George Taylor says that final point is particularly valuable. "After Sarah and I were voted out," he remembers, "there was a period of time where we were to continue ministering to that church until our scheduled departure. A dear friend who had retired from district leadership approached me with some advice. 'George,' he said, 'how you walk through these next couple of months is going to determine the success level of the rest of your ministry.' I took that to heart."

George determined that when he was in the pulpit, even though he and Sarah were soon to leave, he would build the congregation up, encourage them, and help them focus on their future.

"All my messages were focused in that direction," he says.

For the Taylors, the forced transition from one church to another made them refocus on God's calling rather than any church's endorsement as their ministry foundation.

"If you know that God has called you, don't give up on your calling," George says. "We get this feeling of 'I must not be called to ministry if these kinds of things happen.' But stick it out."

A renewed vision of God's calling is a freeing sensation.

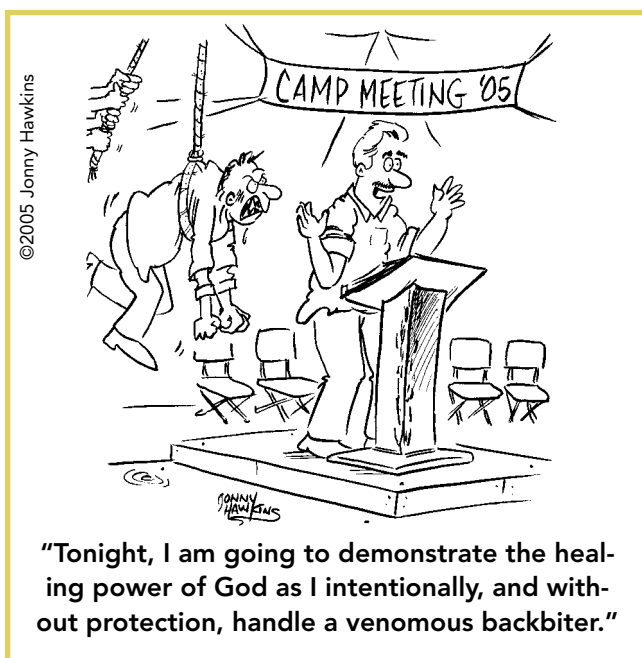
"After we came here," Sarah says of their current pastorate, "George said to me, 'Now we are dangerous.' What he meant was we had faced what a lot of people think is the worst thing that can happen in ministry. We were voted out and we had survived. Now we are willing to take risks."

The Joneses also sense new opportunities in their new church.

"There was a conflict at the church that I'm pastoring now years before I became the pastor," John says. "This church had also split. I have had the opportunity to go back and tell the pastor who went through that conflict that God used him during that time here. He didn't even realize it. He actually wept. I think he felt that he totally failed."

"That's often what Satan wants us to feel when we leave a conflict that hasn't been resolved. But if we have ministered God's Word, if we have loved those people, if we have prayed for them, if we have done everything we can to make peace — we haven't failed," John says. "We can walk away victorious. We can walk away as overcomers. We can continue to choose to love the people who hurt us and use the experience to help other hurting people."

"People have conflict. God doesn't have conflict. He can still anoint us and empower us to witness." ■



Scott Harrup is associate editor of *Today's Pentecostal Evangel*, Springfield, Missouri.

* Names used in this article are pseudonyms.



Manage *conflict* or it will manage



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you.

Preemptive Strategies to Reduce **CHURCH CONFLICT**

A STUDY IN
ORGANIZATIONAL AND
MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

You will have a riot in the hen house if you leave the door open and the fox gets in. You will scatter the sheep if you lower the gate and welcome in the hireling. You will never get cows to produce milk if the barn is cold and the stalls are crowded. And you will never have church unity if the climate is incorrigible and the organizational structure is flawed.

BY RICHARD L. DRESSELHAUS

This article is not about patching up differences between church members, figuring out ways quarrels can be quelled, or describing the relational dynamics of life together in the body of Christ. Rather, this article focuses on the organizational climate, intentionally created by leadership to direct inevitable church conflict to a positive and constructive conclusion.

I was stopped once for drunk driving — more accurately, for suspected drunk driving. I was on my way home from a church business meeting. It was so long ago and I do not recall why I was invited to attend the business meeting at a neighboring church. But the battle lines had been drawn, and there

Kraybill goes on to define an interesting, yet liberating paradox: “If you want to experience less conflict in your congregation, try to have more.” In other words, exposed and expressed conflict loses its mystery and magnetism, and the way is cleared for resolution and acceptance. Typically, keeping things quiet only exacerbates emotions and obstructs the process toward a positive solution. Conflicts left unattended only intensify.

What are the preemptive strategies that can turn the inevitability of conflict into a positive force in the local church? Or, to rephrase the question, what can leadership do to create

Spiritual leadership must act preemptively to prepare the people of God to see inevitable conflict as an opportunity for spiritual growth and personal development.



was war in the place. I sat quietly by (anything else would have been dangerous) as both sides sparred for position. The foray ended with little resolution. It was a night at church I will never forget.

The flashing red lights warned me that my trip home might become an adventure as well. Never will I forget the officer's words: “Sir, have you been drinking?”

I replied: “No, sir, I am on my way home from a church business meeting, and the events of the evening were a bit shocking. My mind was still on the meeting rather than on the road.” He seemed satisfied, but puzzled. I received a verbal warning for erratic driving. I was fortunate.

I have attended other church meetings that were similar. In fact, you would have to look far and wide for a church that has not had its existence threatened by a major conflict. In other words, we are dealing with the inevitable — churches will face conflict. It was true in Corinth. It was true in San Diego. It is true in your city as well.

Conciliatory consultant, Ronald S. Kraybill, in the fall 1986 issue of *Leadership*, admits this inevitability, but sees its potential for good. “My experience has taught me: Manage conflict, or it will manage you. Whenever churches have faced conflict openly, the congregations have grown stronger in the process. But whenever they have hidden from conflict, it has emerged when the congregations are weakest and least prepared. The longer the congregation hides, the more ‘political’ and power oriented the struggle becomes, and the more destructive its impact.”

an environment where conflict can be channeled in ways to advance congregational vitality and spark relational renewal among church members?

KNOWING WHO WE ARE

The church has been inundated with instruction from Romans 12:6–8 — the so-called *motivational gifts*. If I may be so bold, I must insist that it is on this well-traveled ground that we should discuss the essential principles for healthy congregational life. When leadership promotes an understanding and practice of these gifts, they launch a powerful preemptive strike that provides the bedrock for a positive resolution of congregational conflict.

Let me illustrate. My wife Elnora is gifted with a God-given ability to manage and administrate. She views the world through a management lens. She thinks and feels administratively. In contrast, my personality is characterized by mercy. Try as I might, my assessment of nearly every event in congregational life is marked by a merciful response.

An awareness of each other's giftedness will produce a much deeper understanding of how we function — both in our thought patterns and our emotional responses. Elnora tends to clarify function while I tend to emphasize perception. We generally make a great team.

Our challenge is to discipline the ways we express our respective giftedness. For example, I must guard against passivity (not confronting a problem), and she must guard against over-reaction (not responding with appropriate sensitivity).

We misuse the gifts God has given us when they become our excuse for irresponsible behavior. It is God's intention to equip us well for service.

In the mid 1970s, San Diego First Assembly of God developed a new campus. During the first phase of construction, the dominant giftedness of the church board centered on serving. After the completion of the first phase, the composition of the board changed due to term limits. The weight of the new board shifted to those gifted with the ability to teach. As might be anticipated, conflict developed. In retrospect, an awareness of spiritual giftedness helped me understand the dynamics inherent in this conflict.

Wise leadership will model, instruct, and affirm an understanding and respect for spiritual giftedness. This is an essential organizational strategy to preserve unity and foster constructive resolution of the inevitable conflicts that characterize congregational life.

Since spiritual giftedness is vital as a preemptive strategy, it may be helpful to list the principles that are essential in a biblical understanding of spiritual giftedness.

Gifts are to be expressed in a complementary way

Most believers possess one of the seven spiritual gifts in predominance (giving, administration, helps, mercy, teaching, prophecy, or encouraging). All of the other gifts, however, are to be expressed in a complementary way — prophets are to serve, teachers are to give, and servers are to teach.

Each gift is equal — there is no place for upmanship

Each gift is equal in value and importance. There is no place for upmanship in the body of Christ. All serve with equal status.

The playing field is level

Authentic spirituality is measured by one's obedience and faithfulness. A person given to prophecy is no more spiritual than a person given to serving. The playing field is incredibly level. A misunderstanding here has sometimes led to a preferential regard for those who minister prophetically and a thoughtless dismissal of those called to serve.

This is a biblical description of spiritual giftedness and who we are in this area. A comprehension of this God-given provision will preemptively set the stage for a positive and fruitful resolution of the congregational conflicts that will most assuredly arise.

It might be helpful to define the word *conflict*. A *problem* is a challenge faced by a group of people. A *conflict* is when someone in this group feels his self-esteem has been threatened. For example, a decrease in church income is simply a problem that needs a solution. But, if the pastor is

told that his weak preaching is the reason for the decrease, the problem has turned into a conflict — at least as far as the pastor is concerned. Conflict results from an affront to a person's self-esteem. This, too, is part of understanding who we are and the forces that influence our responses.

It is sheer folly to leave the flock of God unprepared to work through the challenges of conflict resolution.

Leadership that guides a congregation in a careful assessment of who we are as the gifted members of Christ's body will be preemptively prepared for the inevitable crosscurrents in congregational life that spark conflict. Conflict will then become problem solving, and God's people will move together in a spirit of unity.

KNOWING HOW WE WORK

I have worked with approximately 30 associate ministers over a 40-year span of pastoral ministry. Each of them exhibited a different style of leadership. The challenge for me was to understand and work with each particular leadership style.

While studying at Fuller Theological Seminary, I found a definition of leadership that described four different leadership styles. I present here a paraphrase that describes each style:

Supporting/Giving

"I find it easy and enjoyable to affirm people in their

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**"Hi, Pastor. Are you planning on tip-toeing
around another major issue today?"**



It is hard to find a church that is driven by a Spirit-given vision that is also struggling with issues of unity.

ministries. My eyes are always open to observe someone who has accomplished a task well so I can compliment him for a job well done.”

Controlling/Taking

“I am a strong leader. My ideas are usually sensible and workable. Most people are attracted to the vision I project. I enjoy a good challenge, and I have success in meeting its demands.”

Conserving/Holding

“I am a strategist at heart. There is nothing I would rather do than collect data, arrange it, and then demonstrate how that information will solve a problem.”

Adapting/Dealing

“I am a master when it comes to arbitration, bargaining, and conciliation. The dynamics of give and take intrigue me. I take great delight in helping people resolve differences in a logical and forthright way.”

Years ago, I brought a young man on staff who had a controlling/taking style of leadership (this combined, as is often the case, with the motivational gift of prophecy). I needed an understanding of his leadership style to work harmoniously with him. He was a dreamer, highly motivated, strong, and creative. I was challenged to ensure his incredible potential was fully released for the glory of God. Without knowledge of various leadership styles, I would have been needlessly threatened and intimidated. In this situation, the ministry of this young associate developed in a positive way. I worked with him to develop his leadership style, and it served us in a way that advanced the kingdom of God.

Most leaders have a predominant style and a secondary style. For example, I lead by affirmation — a supporting/giving style. Adapting/dealing, however, has been a close second.

Here are some practical principles that also need to be explored:

A link exists between leadership styles and spiritual giftedness

An obvious link exists between spiritual giftedness (Romans 12) and leadership styles. The gift of mercy complements a supporting/giving style of leadership, while

DEVELOPING A MODEL FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Here are the steps to follow for successful resolution of church conflicts:

Describe the predicament: What is the story that has been pieced together about the conflict? What are the strands and patterns of events that have converged to create the crisis?

Define the plight: Who are the persons in conflict? That is, whose self-esteem has been significantly threatened to move him from stress to distress?

Identify the coulds: What are the “could haves” and the “if maybes” that may have prevented the escalation of events to the point of conflict?

List the cans: What needs to be done to move those in conflict to a point of resolution? Make an exhaustive list of the options.

Evaluate the shoulds: What are the pros and cons of each option? What is the anticipated conclusion of each option?

Commit to the will: What is the option all parties are prepared to accept?

Intentionality in each step will yield the most positive results. It is the road map and strategy that will lead to positive conflict resolution.

RICHARD L. DRESSELHAUS, D.Min., San Diego, California. Adapted from class notes at Fuller Theological Seminary.

the gift of prophecy complements a controlling/taking style of leadership.

Different leadership styles can be equally effective

Each style is effective if it is understood and disciplined. A pastor who leads by supporting/giving must be prepared to cut across natural inclinations and make hard calls. Conversely, a pastor who leads by controlling/taking will be wise to temper that style with a touch of supporting/giving.

Leadership styles should be considered when selecting a pastor

A church should carefully consider a candidate's style of leadership when selecting a pastor. If a church gets the wrong mix, it may spell disaster. The illustrations are myriad. A board that desires a strong leader may resist that leadership once it is in place. The consequences of that choice then are painfully clear. Or a senior pastor desirous of strong affirmation selects only those associates who will serve that need. The inevitable result is tragic mediocrity and inertia.

Leadership styles must be in submission to Christ

Leadership styles must always be in submission to the Spirit of Christ — both for example and for empowerment. Arrogance and pride will make any leadership style ineffective. Jesus demonstrated the attitude and spirit that must accompany and characterize each leadership style. His life and ministry were in perfect balance. He was an affirmer (consider His words of consolation and comfort so frequently spoken), a controller (consider His march through the temple — whip in hand), a conserver (consider the care taken in His analysis of mission and purpose), and an adaptor (consider the many ways He fostered consensus among His followers). Jesus is our example as we seek to work our style to the greatest advantage for the kingdom of God.

A knowledge of the way we do our work provides a valuable preemptive strategy for positive resolution of the conflicts in the ongoing life of any church. Wise leadership does not wait for disruptive conflict to develop. It acts preemptively to provide the organizational climate that will be conducive to positive conflict resolution.

Strong churches welcome conflict. They focus it in a positive direction and allow it to become an occasion for dynamic growth and development. Some have said: "Pity the debt-free church." Would it not be just as appropriate to say: "Pity the conflict-free church"? Conflict, that is constructively and biblically managed, builds spiritual muscle in the body of Christ (although conflict typically feels far more like foe than friend).

KNOWING WHERE WE ARE GOING

Dan Betzer, senior pastor of First Assembly of God, Fort Myers, Florida, has pinpointed the mission of the church: "The church is in the redemption business." He has also stated that a congregation with this vision will not have the time, energy, or interest in quarreling over trivia. I would agree enthusiastically. This assessment is both biblical and incredibly motivational.

Embracing a captivating vision creates congregational unity, spiritual wholeness, and positive conflict resolution. It is hard to find a church that is driven by a Spirit-given vision that is also struggling with issues of unity. Followers of Jesus who are united in the mission to win the world for Christ will find any distraction from that mission unbearably distasteful.

Over 3 years ago San Diego First Assembly launched a capital campaign to eliminate long-term debt. I remember well the spirit of unity that joined our hearts around this common vision. We had a job to do. Urgency and a definite purpose characterized our pursuit together. It was a wonderful and successful venture.

Projecting a vision is the hardest work a leader can do. Nothing strains one's imagination, faith, and energy more than vision-casting. Its pursuit and articulation will call for the best and deepest in every dedicated leader. Only the leader can fulfill this assignment.

This is the third preemptive strategy. Wise leadership will accept the challenge and lead the people to meet a goal that is so compelling and captivating that matters of lesser significance are lost in the execution of the vision. Without a vision people perish. Put positively, where there is a vision, people prosper. Let this preemptive volley be released in the name of the Lord.

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"Council insisted on a skylight for my study, but I wanted a window. I'm also trained in conflict resolution."



Strong churches welcome conflict. They focus it in a positive direction and allow it to become an occasion for dynamic growth and development.

KNOWING WHO IS IN CHARGE

As a young man, I waited anxiously to view the new models in the automobile showroom. I still recall my first glimpse of a 1957 Chevrolet — with a compact and classy-looking V-8. This model is still one of my favorites. General Motors got it right on that one.

Showrooms. This is where we went to view automobile design up close.

And this is the role of the church — at least it should be. When the world wants to view the gospel up close, the church must be the showroom. There, the world will view the good news of Christ's redemptive love being demonstrated in real life.

The world knows better than to expect perfection in the church. After all, people are people. But they do have a right to expect church people to understand how to resolve conflict in a way that demonstrates the restorative grace of God. They must be able to observe reconciliation up close — in the rough and tumble of life.

PREEMPTIVE STRATEGY CHECKLIST

1. Decision makers are provided with precise, complete, and relevant information.
2. Systems are in place to provide the highest level of accountability.
3. Job descriptions are participatory, achievable, and measurable.
4. Strategies of affirmation are well-defined and meaningfully expressed.
5. Compensation and benefit schedules are competitive, systematically reviewed, and compatible with performance.
6. Intentional intervention programs are in place to identify stress before it develops into distress.
7. Conflict is understood as normal, manageable, and potentially strengthening.
8. Biblical relational health principles are ingrained into congregational life.
9. Servant leadership is understood as strong, proactive, and decisive.

RICHARD L. DRESSSELHAUS, D.Min., San Diego, California.

Here is the challenge: "And He [Christ] has committed to us the message of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:19). The church, by inference, must deal with all that requires reconciliation — including conflict. It is the positive and godly resolution of conflict that provides demonstrable proof of this biblical injunction. The church becomes the showroom where the ministry of reconciliation is demonstrated.

We readily admit to the world that our imperfections surface from time to time, but our request is that they stay around long enough to observe the process of reconciliation in operation. This is a challenge that will humble and sober the most confident among us. But anything less violates the clear mandate in this passage. What God has done to reconcile the world to himself through Christ is gloriously observable in the ongoing life of the church. By God's grace the church fulfills the ministry of reconciliation visibly through the healing of its own hurts and brokenness.

It is reassuring to know that the church lives in the power of Christ's promise given in Matthew 16:18: "I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it." Up against a hostile Roman empire, in repeated seasons of bitter persecution, despite threatening doctrinal heresies, regardless of the encroaching influences of godless societies and cultures in every generation, and irrespective of persistent conflict within its ranks — Jesus builds His church.

Spiritual leadership must act preemptively to prepare the people of God to see inevitable conflict as an opportunity for spiritual growth and personal development. It is sheer folly to leave the flock of God unprepared to work through the challenges of conflict resolution. This preparation calls for well-formulated organizational systems that are intentionally designed to promote organic wholeness and spiritual vitality. This must be preemptive and highly intentional.

The last time I checked, there was no fox in the hen house. The sheep were safely in the field, and the cows were producing well. That is, the church is healthy and strong when the climate is corrigible and the organizational structures are sound.

That we may all be one. ■



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CHURCH ANTAGONISTS

Can't Live With Them, Can Live Without Them

Over 1,000 people had crowded into the sanctuary of a California church to celebrate Pastor Smith's installation. He had successfully served a congregation in Oklahoma for 15 years and was looking forward to the opportunities and challenges of his new pastorate.

Early in his ministry in Oklahoma, Pastor Smith had weathered a vicious attack from an antagonist. Fortunately, the situation had been handled with a limited amount of damage, the antagonist had left the congregation, and the congregation had thrived during the remainder of his years there.

Life is good, the pastor thought as he entered the fellowship hall for a reception after the service. He gazed over the crowd gathered for the festivities. That's when he saw them. The Oklahoma antagonist and his wife had traveled 1,500 miles to attend the installation and sow discrediting rumors about him.

Antagonism is a painful reality in many congregations. It leaves in its wake broken lives and people who are hurt, discouraged, and apathetic toward their new life in Christ. Words can hardly express the tragedy of antagonism in the church. A broken world ought to be able to echo the words of Tertullian, "See how they love one another." Instead, the scenes played out in public lead people to say, "They fight more than the rest of us put together."

Many church members — even pastors — find it hard to believe there are people in their congregation who wantonly, selfishly, and destructively attack others. These attacks can mean repeated disruption of boards, committees, even the

ministry of the entire congregation.

We must not confuse antagonism with mere criticism or healthy conflict. People sometimes used the word *antagonists* to describe those on different sides in an argument. For healthy conflict the church would do well to adopt the terminology of the British Parliament, calling those with differing opinions the *honorable opposition*. This is not the intended use of *antagonism* in this article. Antagonism is unhealthy conflict, and antagonists are not honorable people.

If you already have someone in mind you think might qualify as an antagonist, ask yourself:

1. *Is this person's behavior divisive?*
2. *Is the attack irrational?*
3. *Does the person go out of the way to initiate trouble?*
4. *Are the person's demands insatiable?*
5. *Are the concerns upon which he bases the attack minimal or fabricated?*
6. *Does the person avoid causes that involve personal risk, suffering, or sacrifice?*
7. *Does his motivation appear selfish?*

If you answered yes to several of these questions, you have enough evidence to suggest you have an antagonist on your hands, and you need to take a closer look.

BY KENNETH C. HAUGK



WHO ARE ANTAGONISTS?

Antagonists are not just misguided and misunderstood people. They are out to hurt others, and they do. Sooner or later most individuals and congregations encounter antagonists. In addition to churches, they turn up at school board meetings and in healthcare settings. You find them among parents at

speaking could result in an attack. Antagonists would rather cause trouble than give anyone the benefit of the doubt.

Insatiable demands

Antagonists are never satisfied. No amount of appeasement on your part or the congregation as a whole will suffice.



Little League games or band booster associations. They disrupt neighborhood associations, fraternities and sororities, as well as volunteer organizations. In short, they can be anywhere.

Antagonists, although few in number, have the potential for disproportionately disrupting or destroying the ministry of any congregation, as well as the peace of mind and well-being of everyone in the congregation.

The word *antagonists* is defined and used throughout this article in this way: Antagonists are individuals who, on the basis of *nonsubstantive evidence*, *go out of their way* to make *insatiable demands*, usually attacking the person or performance of others. These attacks are *selfish in nature*, *tearing down rather than building up*, and are frequently directed against those in leadership.

Some key phrases in this definition deserve closer attention.

Nonsubstantive evidence

The arguments that antagonists present are typically founded on little — or grossly misrepresented — evidence. They tend to quibble over trifles, providing strong proof of irrelevant points, or exaggerate the positions of their opponents. A favorite tactic is to make an assertion that cannot be disproved and then claim that the inability to disprove it makes it true.

Go out of their way

Antagonists initiate trouble; they do not wait for trouble to come along. This often goes hand-in-hand with hypersensitivity on their part. They tend to take every word and action as a personal attack and respond aggressively. For example, their response to something seemingly as minor as your being preoccupied and passing them in the hallway without

Instead of calming antagonists, attempts to placate them only encourage them to make more demands. Many antagonists fight until there is nothing left but rubble. Sometimes even that doesn't stop them.

Attacking

Harsh as the word *attacking* is, it accurately applies to antagonists. Although they may present some valid points, antagonists generally don't offer constructive criticism. Their implicit goal is control, no matter what it costs others.

**We must not confuse antagonism
with mere criticism or healthy conflict.**

Selfish in nature

The attacks of antagonists are self-serving. They often seize on a slogan or pick some side of a valid issue and pretend that is what they are fighting for. It rarely is. An antagonist will quickly drop a particular slogan or issue once it no longer serves his ambitions.

Tearing down rather than building up

When people are at odds with each other, it is the result of an antagonist's actions. Instead of pulling God's people together, an antagonist divides them. Show me a divided and strife-torn congregation, and I will show you a congregation that has one or more antagonists in its midst.

At times most of us are selfish or headstrong. Without excusing such behavior, we can be sure that occasional surly behavior does not make an antagonist. What separates us from antagonists is the ferociousness of the attacks and the insatiable or tenacious quality that drags out problems interminably.

WHY DOES ANTAGONISM HAPPEN IN CONGREGATIONS?

Antagonists surface in congregations because of their own natures, the support they receive from others, and the structure of congregations.

The nature of antagonists

Antagonists exist in the church because they exist everywhere. If they were not antagonistic in your congregation, they would be antagonistic at another church, at work, at the PTA, or any place they frequent. They are antagonistic by nature. Antagonism is part of their psychological makeup; it's part of their personality. (See sidebar "Types of Antagonists.")

Support from others

Antagonists tend to attract followers because most people have a tendency to follow powerful leaders. But those who actively support antagonists allow this tendency to blind them. The assistance of these followers accounts in part for the escalation of antagonistic conflict in congregations from teapot tempests to the level of devastating typhoons.

The structure of congregations

For too long, antagonists have operated successfully in congregations. They find that their risks in a congregation are relatively small with few repercussions because people don't believe they have the right to stop them. Many Christians believe they are to love one another at all costs, to live peaceably with each other, and not to confront another Christian.

Because congregations are often relatively small, antagonists also find them ideal places to gain the attention they crave. In the small and friendly fishbowl of a congregation, antagonists more easily fill their need for attention — the need to be a big fish.

Antagonists often flourish in congregations because church is where issues are openly prayed about, preached about, studied, and discussed. Tensions over doctrinal points and practical issues can be healthy and will be part of church life until Christ returns. However, when an antagonist takes hold of such issues, the result is often destructive and divisive.

Since we are all human, won't there always be conflict in congregations? The simple answer is yes. On a values scale, conflict is neutral. It can be good or bad, healthy or unhealthy, creative or destructive. Antagonism makes up only a small percentage of the wide range of conflict that exists in congregations. But recent literature in the area of conflict resolution recognizes that there are individuals who initiate and thrive on unhealthy conflict, persons who have no desire whatsoever to see conflict resolved. These are true antagonists.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT ANTAGONISTS?

Antagonists are not a new phenomenon, a development in the church of the last few decades. The Bible speaks straightforwardly about their existence and motivations, their effects, and the necessary treatment.

Causes of antagonism

"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 6:12).

The spiritual forces that stand in rebellion against God and God's claim on people lie behind — indeed, precipitate — the behavior of antagonists. Antagonists play into the hands of forces that are intent on destroying the healing and caring mission of the church. The fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23) ought to characterize the life of a Christian community. But antagonists sow seeds of bitterness, anger, and hatred. The tragedy is that not only are the antagonists in the grip of evil forces, they also enjoy it. Because an antagonist refuses to participate in

TYPES OF ANTAGONISTS

Hard-core antagonists are seriously disturbed — often paranoid — individuals who are out of touch with reality. They tend to have incredible tenacity and an unbelievable desire to make trouble. The apostle Paul may have had them in mind when he warned the leaders of the congregation at Ephesus: "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. ... I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock" (Acts 20:28,29).

Major antagonists have a character or personality disorder but are not as severely disturbed as hard-core antagonists, although they may at times exhibit similar behaviors. They carry a great deal of hostility, coupled with an overwhelming drive for power.

Moderate antagonists can be distinguished from the others in two ways. First, they lack the self-starting quality of the others. An opportunity must be more closely available to a moderate antagonist before he becomes actively antagonistic. Second, they lack the tenacity of hard-core and major antagonists. However, they do make good followers of hard-core or major antagonists.

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church life as a repentant and forgiven sinner but insists on the way of hatred and strife, his presence means trouble for a congregation.

Effects of antagonism on the church

“By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35).

When arguing and antagonism wrack a congregation, its witness to the God of love is destroyed. Antagonists choose not to live out the love of Christ. Strife is introduced in love’s place, and with strife goes jealousy and anger. The primary effect of antagonism on God’s people is destruction. Visible expressions of the unconditional love of Christ are among the first casualties of active antagonism. Antagonism destroys the unique, loving witness of Christians and the vitality of the congregation, calling forth God’s anger.

Treatment for antagonism

“I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them” (Romans 16:17).

This is always the first step toward dealing with antagonism: watch out for it, be aware of it. The apostle Paul did not leave to his readers’ imaginations whom they were to watch. They were to watch for those who created dissension and caused divisions.

The Bible speaks definitively about the final treatment for those who persist in causing division and heartache in the church: “Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him. You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned” (Titus 3:10,11).

Dismissing someone should not be done lightly. But the words “have nothing to do with him” are a clear-cut response to an individual who persists in divisiveness after the first and second warnings. Paul told Titus not to engage in extensive attempts to smooth things over with the troublemaker; he was simply to avoid having anything to do with that person.

The apostolic guideline is clear: When confronted with an antagonist, face the *probability* that change simply will not occur. He is “self-condemned.” Stay away from that person.

HOW CAN I RECOGNIZE AN ANTAGONIST?

Most antagonists will come at you proudly waving red flags. Chapter 8 in my book, *Antagonists in the Church: How To Identify and Deal With Destructive Conflict*, describes 20 red flags that announce the presence of an antagonist. Even one of these red flags should signal the pastor to be alert. Here are a few of the most significant red flags.

When a congregation is wracked by arguing and antagonism, its witness to the God of love is destroyed.

Previous track record flag

Some antagonists will wave a red flag announcing: “See how antagonistically I behaved before.” If you discover that person in your congregation has attacked one or more pastors or other people in the past, watch out. It is sometimes tempting to think you will be immune to attack because you try to be a good pastor. This is dangerous thinking. Antagonists do not exempt good pastors from their attacks.

Parallel track record flag

Individuals who behave antagonistically in other arenas — civic gatherings or the workplace — are prime candidates for becoming active antagonists in the church. They may even gloat about their antagonistic behaviors. You might expect these people to keep quiet about their involvement in destructive conflict, but they often do not. Because of their grandiose natures, they are often convinced that no one could possibly disagree with them.

“Nameless others” flag

Be alert if someone criticizes you and couples the criticism with “and others agree with me about this.” Those who are not antagonists don’t need to talk about others who feel the same way; they simply express *their own* thoughts and feelings. To test it out, ask who the others are. If the person lists a few names, you probably are not facing an antagonist. On the other hand, an antagonist is more likely to answer: “I can’t tell you. They came to me in the strictest of confidence.”

Predecessor-downer flag

Steer clear of the person who cozies up to you with inside information about how worthless or ineffectual your predecessor was. If he flatters you while criticizing your predecessor, be wary. He is waving a scarlet flag.

Church-hopper flag

Keep an eye on someone who consistently moves from one congregation to another. Any reasonable person tries out several churches before settling on one. But someone who moves from church to church — and never has anything good to say about other congregations — is not looking for the church that best matches his beliefs and practices. Watch out.

Flashing \$\$\$ flag

Anyone who *conspicuously* uses money to draw attention to himself has a better-than-average chance of being an antagonist. Churches are ideal places for antagonists to demonstrate this characteristic. An antagonist is likely to make a special contribution to a particular program, and he will be sure his contribution is visible to all. As a church leader, you might be tempted to disregard the flashing \$\$\$ flag. The need is always great. But be careful not to sell out for money. The long-term costs are too great.

Avoid making snap judgments about people, but remember that for the sake of the congregation and God's mission and ministry, discernment is necessary. People who wave these red flags merit close scrutiny. After some consideration, you may relax, or you may decide to pay closer attention.

WHAT ARE THE WARNING SIGNS OF AN IMMINENT ATTACK?

Just as antagonists reveal themselves by their red flags, they also exhibit warning signs that telegraph their intentions to begin an attack.

Early warning signs

By being alert to the early signals of an antagonist's attack, you can minimize potential damage by dealing effectively with the person before major problems erupt.

A chill in the relationship. When a person who has been exhibiting red flags changes his manner of relating to you, beware. An icy coldness or blatant rudeness, especially in group situations, is often an initial sign of an antagonistic attack.

Honeyed concerns. As an antagonist begins activity, he might pay you a visit or send you a letter of concern. Consider the visit or letter as only the opening volley. More will follow — how much more depends on your response to these initial moves.

Nettlesome questions. A red flag might begin by asking a number of picky questions, checking out details like, "Where do we buy our computer paper?" or "How many times did the board meet last year?" You may find yourself feeling nettled as the antagonist becomes a constant fly-in-the-ointment, often checking out things that aren't any of his business.

Mobilizing forces and pot-stirring. To wage an effective campaign, an antagonist must gather support and create discord, conflict, and doubt. He might try any number of approaches to accomplish this end. The behavior could be as innocuous as whispering to others during a committee meeting. The antagonist might also call unofficial meetings, usually not held at the church. He might flood the congregation with rumors, destructive, insinuating gossip strategically directed against key people. As a result, others could indeed become critical, swept along in the antagonist's wake. The force of numbers

may give you pause: *Could something be wrong with me or my leadership?* Ask yourself that question, but don't be overly introspective if the source of the confusion is someone who has been waving a number of red flags.

Resistance. You might detect growing resistance from a red-flag person — openly ridiculing the leadership of the congregation, defying your authority as pastor or lay leader, blocking the approval of certain matters that ordinarily glide through the governing machinery with ease. An antagonist may also exhibit passive resistance, such as withdrawing from an activity while making a public issue of it — emphasizing that his nonparticipation is connected with the concerns he is expressing about the church.

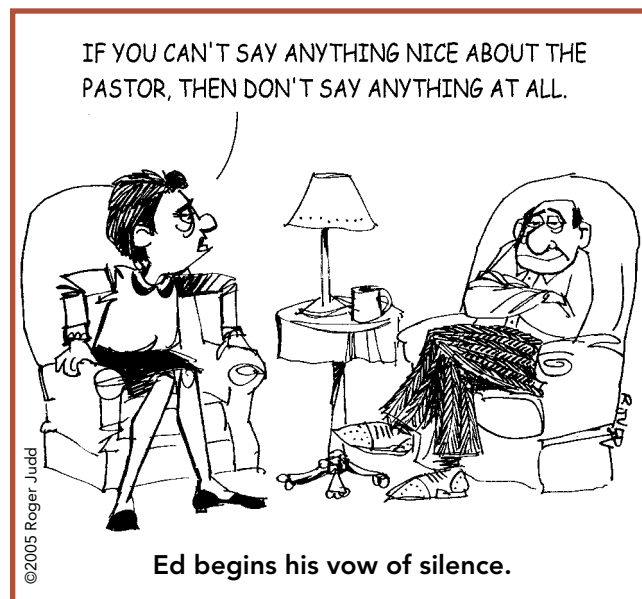
Later warning signs

Antagonists are not stamped from the same mold. Nevertheless, from the diversity of their behaviors certain patterns emerge. A partial list follows, describing typical behaviors of antagonists when their attacks are well under way. If you encounter an active antagonist, you will witness at least some of these characteristic behaviors.

Sloganeering. Antagonists often use one or more emotionally laden slogans to spread troublesome dissension. For example, "Pastor John is a good man, but just not right for this congregation."

Accusing. When an antagonist's concerns are no longer sugarcoated, you might hear: "You are never (or always) in the office." Or, "You are too old (or too young) to adequately meet the needs of this congregation."

Spying. In more or less obvious ways, an antagonist may begin to spy on you. He might telephone to where you are or even follow you. Antagonists sometimes tape-record their phone conversations. A wise rule is: Be as noncommittal as



possible when talking on the telephone with a red-flag person.

Distorting. Antagonists frequently distort reports of incidents, leaving grains of truth to maintain credibility. For example, if one of the deacons becomes slightly vexed during the course of a meeting, an antagonist might comment to someone: "Did you see how John blew up. Such a lack of control cast a cloud over the entire meeting. How was a person like that ever elected?"

Misquoting Scripture. Antagonists frequently misquote the Bible to prove their campaigns or behaviors are legitimate. By excising passages from their contexts, imparting their own idiosyncratic meanings to words, or using various other methods, they appeal to a congregation's loyalty to Scripture, falsely equating their causes with the Bible itself.

Smirking. An antagonist might wear an inappropriate smile or a cocky grin when he encounters the person under attack. Such a smirk says, "I've got you on the run." It is infuriating, but will gratify the antagonist only if you allow its effect to be perceived. Smirks and other mean-spirited facial expressions may take place in meetings, too.

Pestering. Antagonists sometimes pester church leaders by constantly calling on the phone or by hanging around after a service or a meeting, saying, "I'd just like a brief word with you." Their constant pestering substantiates the tenacious character of an antagonist.

Copiously communicating. Antagonists frequently barrage

leaders with e-mails, memos, or even letters. Acknowledge these at first — perhaps with a very brief phone call or by sending a response such as this:

Dear _____,

Thank you for your concern. I appreciate responsible feedback.

(Signed or initialed)



Educate your church leadership about antagonists so they can help you deal with the problem.

One of the most counterproductive courses of action is to respond at length in a long letter refuting the antagonist's accusations point by point. That only adds fuel to the antagonist's fire rather than quenching it.

Here is a fundamental assumption about antagonists that you need to apply as a guiding principle in dealing with them: Normal ways of dealing with conflict and criticism not only do not work with antagonists but make things worse. Once you make this adjustment in your thinking, much of the battle is won.

Sources of information

Knowledge about the warning signs is helpful, but you may still be wondering how you can gather the information you need to tell whether or not an attack is about to begin.

Keep your eyes and ears open. Be aware of what is happening around you. If you know the 20 red flags of an antagonist and can recognize when someone is waving one or more flags, you have a major advantage.

Pay attention to the observations of trusted church members. When people you trust and respect make assertions about those whom you might have already recognized as red-flag wavers, you would be well-advised to consider what they say.

Ask questions. Take care how you do this. You need to be extremely sensitive to the time, place, occasion, and recipient of your questions. A trusted board member who has served faithfully for many years may have observed something. Ask, but be discreet and caring.



Trust your sixth sense. Sometimes you may sense that something is wrong — a vague uneasiness that a certain individual cannot be trusted. Don't become overly suspicious, but at the same time grant your sixth sense a fair hearing.

Whatever you do, keep your eyes and ears open. Don't close your eyes and hope that what you don't like will go away. It won't.

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO DEAL WITH AN ANTAGONIST?

In the face of Christ's commands to love our enemies and turn the other cheek, pastors and lay leaders are sometimes confused and baffled as they have tried to deal effectively with antagonists. Pastors are often torn between wanting to minister to the antagonists out of vulnerable love or attacking that person with the full force of law and judgment. Pastors begin to feel ineffective and defenseless. They may even begin to feel that almost everyone in the congregation is against them and that their ministry has been compromised.

Even beyond the harm done to the pastor, an antagonist's attack is very destructive to the whole congregation. The church's lay leadership often spends many wasted hours in attending meetings, writing letters, making phone calls, or preparing documents — all to deal with one person or a group of people stirred up by that person. Occasionally, the vindictive spirit is allowed to fester until it pervades the congregation. People become hurt, indignant, and apathetic. Some stop contributing money to the church, thinking that they want their contributions used for doing ministry, not just fighting. Others end up transferring their membership. The conflict has gone on so long they no longer feel their spiritual needs are being met at the church.

To avoid the damage an antagonist can generate in your congregation, it is important to act quickly when you see antagonistic activity begin.

Nipping the problem

When antagonists attack, they usually want power and authority — *your* power and authority. Your response needs to show that this authority is indeed still yours, and you do not plan to give it up.

As the attack broadens, an antagonist may begin to publicly call you names and make senseless charges, trying to make you fight back. The greatest show of your power is to avoid falling into such a trap. Do not immediately return the attack; do not wonder aloud how anyone could say such stupid things; do not do anything. In this way, you will show you are above such tactics and you do not think such accusations worthy of response. Open confrontations are not desirable. An emotional public scene lessens your authority and gives credence to

the antagonist. Power is shown by calm, controlled action, working through committees and other established channels.

While refusing to respond to an antagonist's irrational attacks can effectively remove credence from those attacks, the time may come when, by actively using your authority, you can nip the problem. For instance, if an antagonist is using a biblical passage inaccurately as the basis for criticizing you, use your authority to say, "That is not a correct interpretation of that passage." Do not argue about the interpretation. Rather, if necessary repeat again that it is an incorrect interpretation and, in as few words as possible, give the correct interpretation.

Pastors may want to prevent the antagonist from achieving any positions of power in the congregation. If the antagonist already has a position of power and threatens to quit, accept his resignation. It is best not to let the fox keep watch over the chicken coop.

Sometimes antagonists become so angry their attacks continue with increased vehemence. This is time to deal with them quickly and effectively.

Dealing effectively with antagonists

With the turmoil and confusion an antagonist produces, it is tempting for a pastor to begin to believe he is the sole cause of the problem. Remember, the reason an antagonist is attacking you and your ministry is usually not your fault; the reasons lie deep within the antagonist. You are just the recipient of his anger and hostility.

Educate your church leadership about antagonists so they can help you deal with the problem. The church is under attack, not just you. When the pastor and church leadership work together, they can form an effective defense against the antagonist. Antagonists can only be successful if there are people who believe and support them. Forming a phalanx with the congregation's leadership can help eliminate any support for the antagonist.

Your public image — the way your congregation sees you while under attack — should be one of business as usual. In your dealings in the congregation, be consistent, responsible, and self-controlled. Don't politic. Don't use your pastoral visits as an opportunity to convince people of the rightness of your cause. That will only cause confusion and resentment.

Neither should you use your public communications as media for bringing up the problem with the antagonist. Sermons are for proclaiming the gospel and building up the body of Christ, not for defending oneself or for subtly reprimanding someone. Church bulletins, newsletters, and other communications should not reflect any anxiety nor be used to obliquely refer to the problem. If you begin to speak about the controversy with any degree of concern, you are admitting weakness to your attackers as well as dragging your congregation through the gutter.

Avoiding the compassion trap is also vital for a pastor under attack. Many pastors thrive on the acceptance and gratitude they receive from those to whom they minister. They see themselves as all-giving servants of their people. They may feel guilty if they must be confrontive and hard. Combined with this is the fact church members often expect their pastors to be superhumanly compassionate and willing to suffer. All of these factors may cause pastors to be compassionate with an antagonist rather than challenging his destructive behaviors. Church members may even try to convince their pastor to apologize to the antagonist in an effort to make peace. However, this kind of compassion almost never works with antagonists. They will often take this as a sign of weakness and redouble their attacks. When you are asked to step into the compassion trap, simply refuse by saying, “It will not work.”

The time may come when all efforts to control the activity of an antagonist are to no avail. The antagonist’s attack continues, and the church is being split by his efforts. In this situation, there are two more options: the pastor may resign or the antagonist may be removed.

If the pastor resigns, the problem has not been solved. The congregation not only loses a good, experienced pastor, but the antagonist will still be present, ready to attack the next pastor who comes, as well as the next, and on and on. (See sidebar “When Leaving Is Necessary.”)

Sometimes an antagonist’s attack reaches the point where a decision has to be made between excluding that person from the church or having very little church left. The antagonist’s behavior has to be such that the church bylaws mandate

removal. The extreme measure of removing the antagonist is a last resort, a step that must be approached with fear and trembling — and much prayer. This is a hard step to take, but it is sometimes necessary to ensure the stability of the congregation.

PREVENTING ANTAGONISM

A single antagonist in a congregation can so affect the pastor and church leaders that they expend what seems to be 90 percent of their time and energy dealing with that person and the havoc he raises. Prevention is the best cure. The two primary avenues of prevention are creating an antiantagonist environment and educating church leadership about antagonism.

Create an antiantagonist environment

When effective policies and procedures are in place for church administration, an antagonist has less chance of wreaking havoc in a congregation. Several measures can go a long way toward creating this environment.

Follow established policies. Everyone should follow established congregational policies and procedures. Leaders must never practice or tolerate corner-cutting because these procedures are safeguards against antagonists.

Establish functional feedback channels. Establish and use clear channels of communication. Two-way, open communication between church leaders and members is vital. To facilitate this, leaders must clearly explain to the congregation appropriate channels of communication — and

WHEN LEAVING IS NECESSARY

Although resignation is usually unnecessary, it is still one alternative for dealing with an antagonistic situation. Since the decision to resign is often made in circumstances less than conducive to clear thinking, here are a few good reasons for resigning:

- if you have made many serious mistakes or committed great and actual offense.
- when a significant majority is against you.
- when you have lost effectiveness as a leader.
- when staying poses a risk to your physical or emotional health.
- if one or more judicatory officials in all love and honesty recommends it.

When you have considered the above factors well and resignation seems proper to you, here are some ways to proceed.

1. Be honest. Your honesty can educate your constituency, but don’t stoop to the level of name-calling or mudslinging. One congregation went through four pastors before one was assertive enough to confirm openly what most suspected:

He, like the others, was leaving, not because God was calling him elsewhere, but because of an exceptionally obnoxious antagonist.

2. Leave no time bombs behind. Do all you can to smooth the transition to a new leader.

3. Arrange for an exit interview with appropriate leaders. Leaders have a right to be fully informed about your reasons for leaving.

4. If you were the victim, resign your office according to a schedule that suits your convenience. If you were in the wrong yourself, move on as soon as possible.

5. Sincerely apologize if, in any way, you are to blame for what has transpired. Confess and ask for forgiveness from those you offended.

Resignation is never an easy choice and calls for a great deal of prayer, thought, and personal struggle.

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Even beyond the harm done to the pastor, an antagonist's attack is very destructive to the whole congregation.

reiterate them frequently. When clearly spelled-out means of response are available, an antagonist who blatantly disregards them is more easily detected and exposed.

Create job descriptions. Clear job descriptions create an unfavorable environment for antagonists. Pastors,

elders, deacons, church board chairpersons, and others in positions of authority need to clearly understand their jobs and their relationships with other leaders. Church members need to be apprised of this as well. The risks of encouraging unhealthy conflict will then diminish.

Establish a broad base of responsibility. A strong, broad base of authority in matters of administration and program can do much to thwart antagonistic attacks. When a single individual holds power in a congregation, a one-on-one struggle (usually antagonist versus pastor) often results. When an antagonist realizes that power is carefully distributed among a group of people, then he will think twice before instigating trouble.

Discipline as necessary. Functional disciplinary measures are also essential to maintaining an antiantagonist environment. Congregations in which discipline is minimal or absent tend to encourage antagonists. The crucial factor is this: Whatever your denomination or congregational procedures are about discipline, follow them.

Establish a united front. Church staff and lay leaders must maintain a united front with no room for backbiting or unhealthy friction. An antagonist will discover unhealthy conflict among leaders and use it. A united front does not mean agreement on all things but, instead, the mutual respect and support of others in their roles.

Educate church leadership about antagonism

Education equips people to do what must be done, no matter how uncomfortable the task — and few tasks are more uncomfortable than dealing with antagonists. Education about antagonists falls into two categories: general and specific.

General education. Prevention is the first purpose of general education. The goal of general education is to communicate an understanding of the dynamics of antagonism and ways to handle it effectively. Include as many church staff and lay leaders as possible in the process. When church leaders are cognizant of antagonists' ploys, they are better equipped to lead. The second purpose is to provide a foundation for *specific* education when or if it becomes necessary.

Specific education. This educates leaders about specific individuals who are beginning to behave antagonistically. You are not talking about the subject of antagonism; you are talking about specific people. Specific education differs from general education with respect to audience. Specific education is only for leaders who bear legitimate responsibility for the problem. If your congregation assigns a separate committee or board to handle disciplinary issues, members of that board, along with those directly involved in the attack, might be the ones to receive specific education.

The purpose of specific education is twofold: First, leaders are enabled to assess accurately the particular situation. Second, specific education paves the way for planning strategies to solve the problem, ultimately permitting the appropriate leaders to deal with the situation.

CONCLUSION

Whose problem is antagonism? It's *everyone's* problem. In the ark of salvation, that is the church, no one can afford to say, "Your end of the boat is sinking." An attitude that "We are all in this together" provides an immensely powerful, effective antidote to the disruptive poison of antagonism.

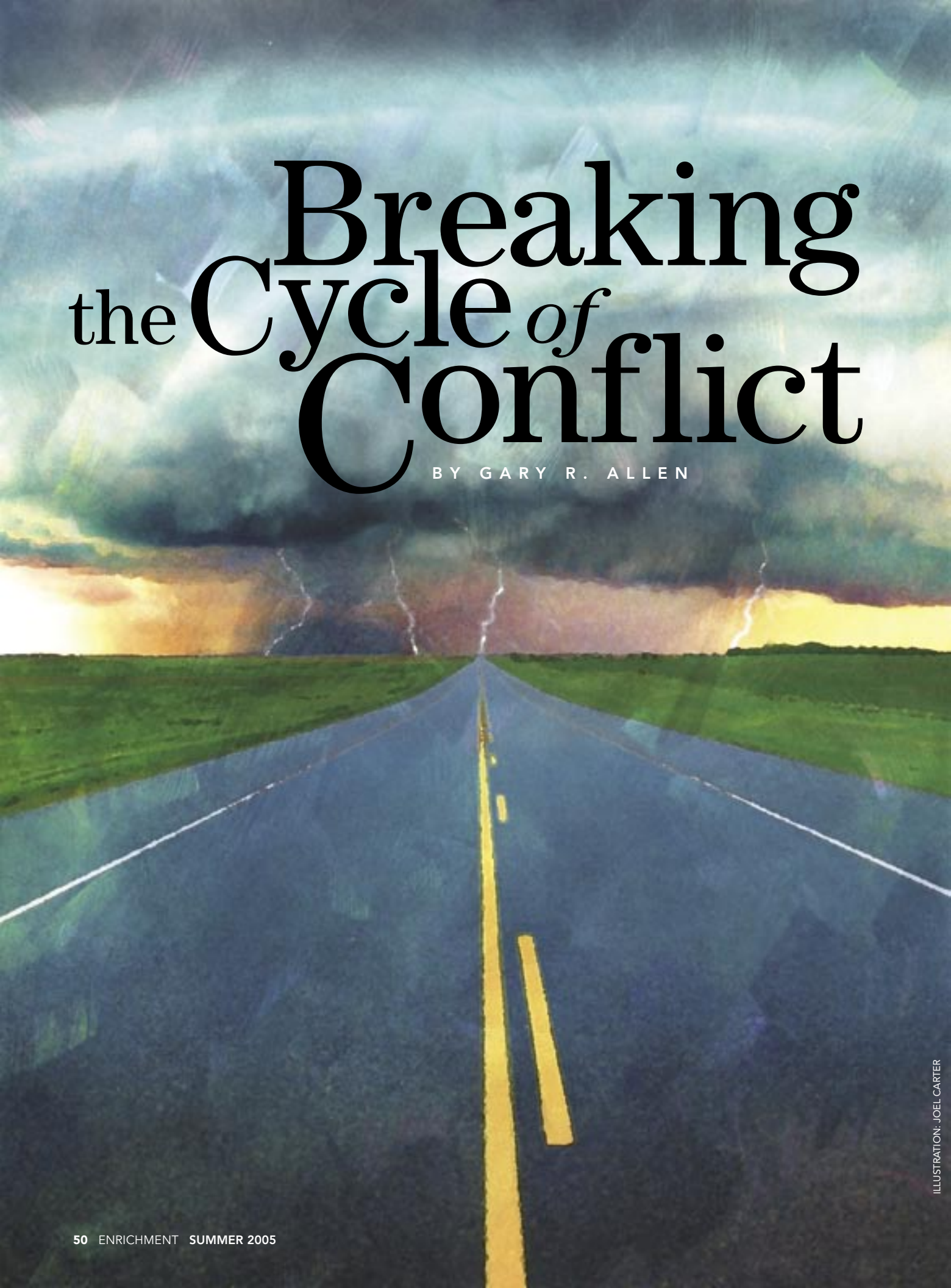
A congregation is uniquely structured to undertake this obligation because a church is a Body — Christ's body — and is considerably more than the sum of its parts. It resembles an organism more than an organization, pulsing with the very life of Jesus flowing through its members by means of the Holy Spirit.

Antagonism is like a virulent disease in the body. A body cannot regard attack on a single part as an inconsequential threat requiring no response by other parts. Antagonism poses a threat not only to an isolated organ but to the entire organism which suffers until the disease is overcome. The whole body must work to overcome it.

Overcoming antagonism is not a hopeless cause. Learning skills for dealing with antagonists and methods for preventing their attacks is a source of hope. Most important, the church is the Lord's. He has called it into being, and He will not fail it. This is hope beyond measure. ■



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A dramatic landscape painting. A two-lane road with a yellow center line and white edge lines stretches from the bottom center towards the horizon. The road is flanked by green fields. In the distance, a dark, stormy sky with heavy, dark clouds and several bright lightning bolts is visible. The overall mood is intense and dramatic.

Breaking the Cycle *of* Conflict

BY GARY R. ALLEN

People can learn to manage conflict.

It is crucial for a pastor to adopt this belief and teach it to others.

Nearly 85 percent of churches today are either not growing or are declining. One of the primary reasons for this is the fact many churches are stuck in interpersonal conflict that hinders effective ministry. This conflict cycle continues because the church does not have the ability to resolve conflict.

The pastor is key to managing conflict and teaching others how to manage conflict. If the pastor is intentional in learning better conflict management skills, demonstrating those skills, and leading the congregation through effective conflict management, he can significantly minimize conflict in the church.

People can learn to manage conflict. It is crucial for a pastor to adopt this belief and teach it to others. People do not want to live in constant unhealthy tension and destructive conflict, but they often do not know how to behave appropriately in their relationships. Interpersonal conflict becomes a vicious cycle and those involved feel helpless and hopeless. When the conflict cycle is not broken,

the church usually becomes ineffective in sustaining itself and reaching its community. Those outside have no desire to affiliate with a conflicted church.

THE CONFLICT CYCLE

The conflict cycle (see chart) described by Norman Shawchuck is a predictable, cyclical process through which conflict passes.

By understanding this conflict cycle and learning the skills necessary to reverse the cycle, people can often bring resolution to present conflict and minimize future conflict. This is an excellent tool that assesses the current stage and intensity of a conflict.

Stage 1: Tension Development

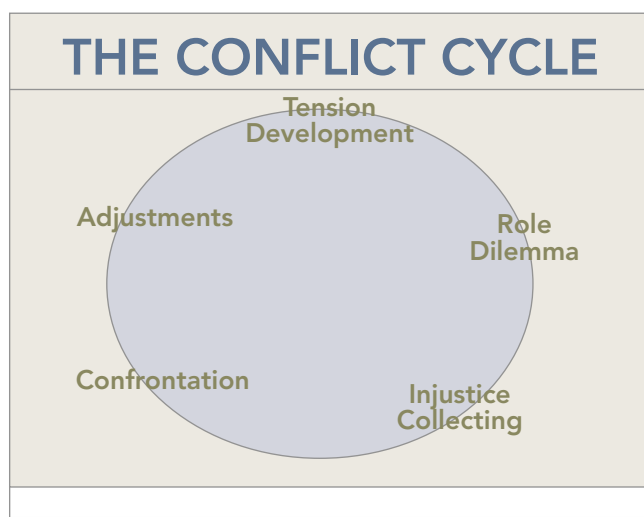
All conflict begins as tension in a relationship. The tension signals that someone is sensing a loss of freedom in the relationship — and this sensed loss of freedom sets the stage for conflict. Something is different in the relationship, but it is hard to identify.¹

Stage 2: Role Dilemma

The confusion that develops as a result of the tension creates questions. What am I doing to cause this tension? What is he or she doing? What's happening here? Who's in charge?

Stage 3: Injustice Collecting

This is the first dangerous stage. People are convinced that matters will only get worse, so they begin to pull apart and prepare for the battle they believe will come sooner or later. They begin collecting injustices and hurts they will later use as artillery. Injustice collecting generates negative energy that must be spent before persons will focus on the issue rather than on the enemy. This is the blaming stage where persons justify their attitudes and behavior by pointing out the other party's faults.



Stage 4: Confrontation

Confrontation may range from clearing the air to outright violence. In unmanaged conflict persons confront each other. In well-managed conflict they confront the issues that caused the tension.

Confrontation is the fight or contact stage. The battle lines are set and the conflict erupts. The contact stage is inevitable after injustice collecting has gone on for some time. This is often the point where the church becomes stuck and cannot determine what to do. When they do determine what action would help resolve the conflict, they find they do not have the resources and skills needed to accomplish it.

Stage 5: Adjustments

Adjustments are the changes people make to end confrontation. Adjustments made in poorly managed confrontations result in avoidance, divorce, domination, and cold war. Adjustments made in well-managed confrontations involve renegotiated expectations and freely made commitments to honor the new expectations.²

If the adjustments are not adequate to resolve the conflict, the tension develops again and the cycle of conflict repeats itself. When conflict becomes repetitive, it creates a downward spiral of dysfunctional relationships that continues the destructive cycle, usually fragmenting the relationship to the point that resolution is nearly impossible.

THE CONFLICT-MANAGEMENT CYCLE

Shawchuck designed a cycle of conflict management (see chart) in response to the conflict cycle just described. The

cycle of conflict management is intended to reverse the downward spiral of tension development, role dilemma, injustice collecting, confrontation, and adjustments that can be damaging to personal relationships and organizational structure. This process can also be beneficial as a preventative measure for conflict in the initial stage of tension development. The cycle of conflict management includes five stages:

Injustice collecting generates negative energy that must be spent before persons will focus on the issue rather than on the enemy.

Stage 1: Tension Defused

Most conflict can be averted at this stage if there is a proper understanding that some interpersonal tension is constant and normal and that tension can be a creative force.

Define healthy tension and unhealthy tension. Within the church, healthy tension is in the diversity of people, ideas, and opinions that necessitates clarifying values, vision, mission, goals, and strategies. Unhealthy tension results when there is an effort to coerce or impose ideals and opinions on others. If the church quickly capitalizes on healthy tensions, it can better divert unhealthy tensions and sustain an atmosphere of interpersonal and organizational creativity.

Tension can develop from the abuse of power. Control, authority, or influence is used to exert power. While control and authority may need to be exerted in special circumstances, influence is usually most effective for the strategic leader.³

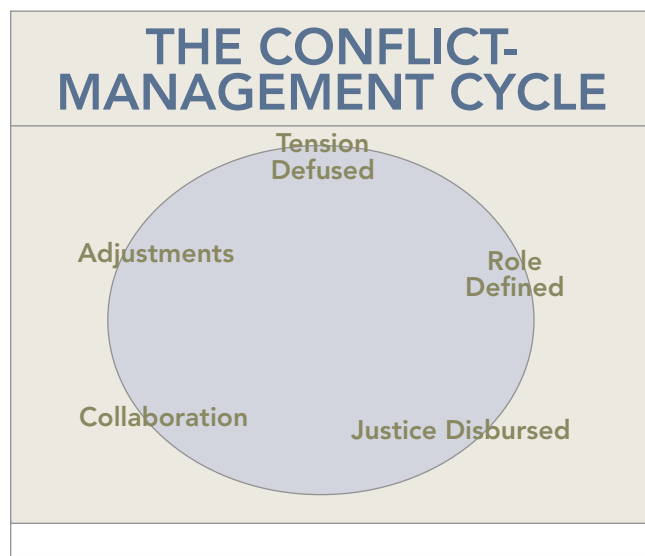
When tension develops, a sense of injustice often emerges from personal insecurities and wounded feelings. This injustice can surface from past experiences and may not be directly connected to the present situation.

We can depend on the Holy Spirit to help us discern the dynamics and contributing factors in a conflicting situation: "Let us discern for ourselves what is right; let us learn together what is good" (Job 34:4). In Acts 5:1–11, the Holy Spirit revealed a selfish plot of deception. Peter's discernment, or knowledge, of what Ananias and Sapphira had done was a manifestation of the Spirit.

Interpersonal tension can also evoke defensiveness and anger that interferes with productive conflict management. Most anger is rooted in the fear of embarrassment, loss of self-esteem, position, or power.

At times the pastor may need to be firm in dealing with people who have become angry and defensive, but it is important to be kind. When the leader becomes angry, loud, and defensive, tension will escalate and the real issue of the conflict is lost in the tension.

Value diversity. To value diversity in the community of



faith is to appreciate different cultures and establish a unity that can defuse tension. Conflict can be avoided when basic differences are valued and accepted.

Valuing diversity does not mean approving another person's sin. The concept of Christian diversity is respecting each person's God-created differences. When we knowingly behave in a manner that is contrary to biblical principles and intentionally aggravate each other, we are not expressing diversity; we are sinning against our brother or sister.

Observe personality types, leadership and conflict management styles. Having a basic understanding of why people act the way they do is essential to maintaining unity within diversity. Utilizing tools such as a personality-type survey, a leadership-styles survey, and a conflict-management style survey can greatly reduce tension by helping people in the organization better understand and appreciate each other.

Understanding the behavioral tendencies of basic personality types under stress provides valuable insight into why and how people act. Though it does not excuse inappropriate behavior, it does allow some predictability of a person's response to conflict. For example, the dominant personality type will become autocratic, the influencer will attack, the steady will acquiesce, and the compliant will avoid.⁴ (See sidebar "Personality Profiles.")

Disseminate vital and useful information to everyone. The church should maintain consistent and thorough communication that provides vital and useful information to everyone. This empowers people. Tension develops when information is only given to a select few or is used to coerce others. Important verbal announcements should be clear and supported by written material that people can take with them. How many times has a clear, well-meaning public statement been misquoted and misapplied?

Maintain an accessible feedback system. Leadership may better facilitate valid feedback by providing an open-door policy, providing adequate discussion in meetings, and exhibiting an attitude of appreciation for opposing views. Often team members simply want to know they are heard and respected.

The phrase *conflict prevention* may be used to describe stage 1. Matthew 18 provides a biblical model for this stage that instructs us to go to the other person with whom tension has developed. Usually, the sooner this is done the quicker tensions can be relieved and conflict averted.

If the steps in this stage are implemented to defuse tension, most destructive conflict can be averted. If the tension is not or cannot be defused, however, it will progress to role dilemma and becomes a situation of conflict management.

Stage 2: Role Defined

When interpersonal tension is not immediately defused, people begin to question their role and function in the relationship

and also the role and function of others. The following steps will help people keep proper role definitions:

Provide appropriate role descriptions. People work better when they understand their role and how they are expected to interact with others in the organization. Job descriptions enable participants to work effectively within a functional structure to accomplish the church's mission more effectively. Vague job descriptions for staff and unstated role expectations for members leave church parties vulnerable to conflicting assumptions about one another's callings.⁵

Define expectations. Workers need to know exactly what is expected of them and to whom they are responsible. When people are uncertain about their roles and expectations they may infringe on the roles and expectations of others and create unnecessary conflict.

Give clear instructions. Knowing the boundaries of their authority and having clear instructions enables workers to concentrate on the effectiveness of their efforts. Knowing the boundaries of their fellow-workers also minimizes conflict.

Commit to mutual accountability. Those in leadership who

PERSONALITY PROFILES

DISC Temperament/Personality Model

The DISC Model of Human Behavior describes the four basic temperament types: Choleric (D-type), Sanguine (I-type), Phlegmatic (S-type) and Melancholy (C-type). Everyone is a blend of DISC behavior. No normal person has a bad personality. It's what you do with your DISC personality that may be good or bad. Identifying your DISC personality blend/s is vital to effective leadership and relationships.

The most popular Spiritual Gifts profile with the 4 DISC Personality Types Profile can be purchased online for \$7.50 each. This provides an over 40-page personalized report. For more information, visit:
<http://www.uniquelyyou.com/disc.shtml>.

DISC® Classic™ Profile formally the Personal Profile System 2800 Series DISC Profile C-128 by Inscape Publishing

This disc profile is the original 28-question assessment that utilizes the DISC Model to explore dimensions of behavior. DISC has also been referred to as the disc assessment, disc profiler survey, or DISC assessment analysis, disc behavioral personality test, personality profile assessment, personality analysis tool or test. For more information, visit:
<http://www.internalchange.com/>.

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expect accountability from the community of faith but are not accountable to those whom they serve will quickly lose respect and credibility within the community. Loss of respect and credibility leads to interpersonal and organizational conflict.

Mutual accountability applies to most interpersonal relationships. We are to live in a godly, ethical manner with everyone regardless of organizational role and function. Pastors encourage this kind of accountability as they demonstrate it in their interaction within the congregation.

To value diversity in the community of faith is to appreciate different cultures and establish a unity that can defuse tension.

This kind of accountability does not make us each other's policemen. Mutual accountability is how I hold myself accountable to others more than how I hold others accountable to myself.

Stage 3: Justice Disbursed

In this stage, behavior is critical. How we have treated one another and how we are presently treating one another determines if we move into the collaboration stage. As we practice the preceding stages, we minimize injustice collecting because we have lowered tension, defined our respective roles, and held ourselves accountable for our behavior. We can now intentionally disburse justice by:

Distinguishing between equality and fairness. Often the first impulse of leadership is to treat people equally. But each person is distinct. By treating people equally their personal development and ministry in the church may be limited. Therefore, it is important to know people well enough to provide the kind of leadership necessary to help them be effective in their ministry.

Demonstrating fairness. Leaders must be fair to everyone. To verbalize fairness and then intentionally practice discrimination destroys the authenticity and credibility of leadership. When the leader is fair, the people he serves are more likely to be fair with each other.

Being expeditious in decisions. Trust and unity are developed, maintained, and reinforced when decisions are made quickly. Delays in making decisions frustrate team effort, threaten trust in leadership, and fragment unity.

There may be times when the decision is to do nothing — waiting for a greater degree of openness in the group to find a better opportunity of intervention.

The key is to understand your own tendencies in

decisionmaking. If you are too quick to shoot-from-the-hip, you may miss consultation from others and the assessment you need. On the other hand, if you are too analytical and seek too many counselors, you may miss the window of opportunity to make strategic decisions.

Being quick to admit errors and make appropriate adjustments. The personal pride of a leader can get in the way of admitting wrong, expressing regret, asking for forgiveness, and changing behavior. When leaders are quick to demonstrate humility and ask for forgiveness, they influence others to do the same.

Stage 4: Collaboration

Getting the right people to the right place at the right time is crucial when addressing conflict. Collaboration means coming together to process

and reason through the conflict and reaching a mutually agreeable resolution. Confrontation is often a win-lose process because some people go away feeling they have not been heard and in some aspects, lost the contest. Collaboration is more of a win-win process where everyone has opportunity, voice, and ownership. The collaboration process should:

Involve everyone who needs to know. Everyone involved in the conflict needs to be a part of the solution. Those who need to know are those who have been directly affected by the conflict and its resolution.

Facilitate participation and ownership of those involved. Every participant must have a sense of ownership of the information, the conflict-management process, and the resolution. When only a few in the group are viewed as owners of the situation, others in the group are disenfranchised. This sets the stage for more tension and more conflict.

Ownership develops when participants sense they are respected, that their input is valuable, weighed, and considered in the situation. Even if participants come to realize they are wrong, they remain a valued stakeholder.

Ensure that all relevant information is obtained and available. It is the responsibility of leadership to gather information and maintain focus on what is germane to the situation. Irrelevant information slows the process and creates diversions. Everyone in the process must have access to the same information to avoid possible manipulation of power and control.

Facilitate open discussion. Everyone must be free to state his perspective and ask relevant questions without fear of reprisal. The group must be free from coercion and intimidation. It is the responsibility of each participant to respect the others and stay on the subject.

It is better for the stakeholders to process information through open discussion if possible. If an outside mediator or negotiator is involved, it can add another conflicting element.

Stage 5: Adjustments

Adjustments involve both personal and organizational matters. Usually some personal adjustments of attitude and behavior are necessary before organizational adjustments will be effective. In this stage it is necessary to:

Clearly define the adjustments. Determine what needs to be done and why. It is helpful to define, state, and rephrase the adjustments until they are clear to everyone. Putting them in writing may prove beneficial for immediate clarity and future reference.

Adjustments should be in response to the primary cause of the conflict. Adjustments that only include side issues to the main conflict can be interpreted as avoidant, superficial, and will probably reignite tension.

Utilize a consensual process. Formulate decisions by involving everyone who is a stakeholder in the situation. A process that disenfranchises any of the participants creates tension and risks beginning another cycle of conflict.

Disseminate vital and useful information to the entire organization. When vital and useful information is disseminated throughout the church, the potential for future conflict is minimized. Most conflict resolution results in some degree of personal and organizational change. However, change is not really change until everyone in the organization understands and embraces it.

Affirm people. People need to know they are valuable and appreciated. They will continue to participate in an organizational process that works if they know they are as important as the issues and the processes.

Affirm the process. When people realize that the process has worked well, they will continue to utilize it and will be more likely to influence others in a positive manner toward the process in future conflicting situations.

CONCLUSION

The cycle of conflict management can be a helpful tool in the ongoing process of managing conflict in the church. It helps people feel empowered and more confident and, if continually utilized, can avert many conflict situations and minimize the conflicts that do arise.



**Everyone in the process
must have access to the same information
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Every personal relationship and every church will at sometime have conflict. A church is not unhealthy because it has conflict. The church is unhealthy when it refuses to acknowledge conflict and is unwilling to take intentional steps to address it.

The healthy church realizes that some conflict is inevitable and trains its leadership in conflict management. When a church provides a stable environment for personal and spiritual growth, it will also be more attractive to those looking for a church home. ■



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ENDNOTES

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5. Hugh F. Halverstadt, *Managing Church Conflict* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 3.



KEN SANDE

THE PEACEMAKER CHURCH:

LESSENING THE IMPACT OF CHURCH CONFLICT

Many churches are not prepared to proactively deal with conflict. When they become involved, they do not have the tools to solve the conflict in a positive way. Sometimes churches become so embroiled in conflict they need outside help in resolving it.

Ken Sande, president of Peacemaker Ministries, and his team of associates have used biblical peacemaking

principles to help resolve thousands of conflicts, including business, employment, and family disputes; church divisions; and complex lawsuits. Sande is an attorney, a Certified Christian Conciliator,TM and has authored numerous resources on conflict resolution, including The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide To Resolving Personal Conflict, and Peacemaking for Families.

Richard L. Schoonover, associate editor, Enrichment journal, talked with Sande about church conflict and how churches can learn to manage conflict in a Christlike manner.

WHAT CAUSES CHURCH CONFLICT?

SANDE: James 4:1 says, “What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you?”

Ultimately, church conflicts are caused by people’s desires. Some desires are inherently sinful, such as power and control. But good desires can also take on controlling proportions.

The desire to see a church grow is a good desire. But if people who want to see numerical growth aggressively push new programs and strategies that may not be appropriate for their church, this can be harmful.

Others may have a desire for missions. But if they become consumed by this desire, they might judge and criticize people who are not as enthusiastic about missions.

A pastor wants more staff. But if he becomes consumed with this desire, people who stand in his way become his enemies. This becomes a controlling desire and causes conflict.

The list goes on and on: budgeting, staffing, vision, worship, and the role of women in ministry. Most people view these issues positively. But they become divisive when they become controlling demands, we begin to judge or punish other people because they are not as enthused as we are, or people are standing in our way.

People often dress up their controlling desire as something good. One of the warnings signs of a controlling desire I listen for is someone saying, “All I want is. . . .”

WHY DO CHURCHES IGNORE ISSUES WHERE ONE GROUP HAS A CONFLICT WITH ANOTHER GROUP?

SANDE: I give the same answer Jesus gave the Sadducees: It is often ignorance and unbelief. Lack of training is one reason churches ignore conflict. In many cases the church has never learned how to deal with conflict. When pastors are asked what was most lacking in their Bible college and seminary education, the top answer is training in conflict management. It should not be a surprise, then, that the average elder or deacon is not trained.

Second, churches don't obey the Bible. First Corinthians 6 instructs Christians to bring lawsuits with each other to the church for resolution. The average pastor properly exegetes this passage, but often says, "We cannot do this." This is unbelief. We need to believe that when God commands us to do something, He also gives us the grace and ability to do it.

DISCUSS WAYS PASTORS AND CHURCHES CAN LESSEN THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF CONFLICT.

SANDE: An ounce of prevention is worth hundreds of hours of cure. The No. 1 way to lessen the negative impact is educating, training, and equipping people before the storm hits. This is like sailing a ship. If your crew is well trained, when the storm hits you are not in danger. But if you wait until conflict breaks out, it is more difficult to survive.

There are three levels of training I would encourage a church to receive. We call our church-conflict management seminars *The Peacemaker Church*. The first level of material is geared toward leadership and focuses on how to give leaders a vision and a framework for creating a culture of peace that can change a church's entire culture. Certain skills are needed to guide a church through controversial new ministry programs, a new building program, a philosophic change in ministry, or a change in worship style. If leaders have been trained to guide their church through these things, they can transition smoothly.

This training also addresses how leaders view conflict and respond to it. This comprehensive program lays out the process for the church in a simple format. The program contains a set of DVDs and different classes for leadership.

The second level of training involves teaching basic peacemaking principles through Sunday School classes, small-group Bible studies, or discipleship courses. We have three types of training a church can choose from depending on its educational system. We even have material for children. If we can teach these principles to children, we have less work to do later on.

The third level of training is Reconciler Training. The church finds gifted people in the congregation who can coach others through conflict disputes. They sit down with people and give

biblical counseling on how to live out the gospel and resolve their conflicts.

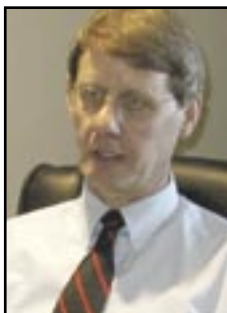
Reconcilers are also trained to mediate disputes. For example, church members know and trust each other and often engage in business transactions. When these deals do not go well, members need to be able to turn to their church for assistance. Every church needs trained reconcilers who can sit down with members and help them work through their problems.

An example of this is in Exodus 18:13–27. Moses is judging the people, and his father-in-law tells Moses that he cannot continue to do this alone. He needs to appoint other judges.

That is what a wise pastor does. He knows the enemy loves to overwhelm him with nitpicky conflicts that take him away from his important work. The senior pastor, like Moses, has a responsibility to make sure people are properly taught about biblical conflict resolution. The pastor also needs to delegate responsibilities to gifted people such as associate pastors, small-group leaders, elders, and deacons.

The numbers Jethro suggests to Moses are interesting. He said to appoint judges over groups of 10, 50, and 1,000. This is comparable to a small group, a Sunday School class, and a large church. Moses chose people who could resolve conflict in each of these groups.

We love to see conflict management done in small groups. When Christians meet in small groups on a weekly basis, they form relationships built on trust. They understand each other. When a conflict breaks out, they go to their small-group leader in whom they have developed a high level of credibility and trust. Teaching and peacemaking at that level are wise.



Ultimately, church conflicts are caused by people's desires.

A church can also draw on its most gifted people for what we call a church-based reconciliation ministry. These people are the S.W.A.T. squad who handle the tough cases. Allow these people to practice internally the first 2 or 3 years to develop their skills and gifts. Then consider opening up their ministry to the community. This can be a tremendous outreach and witness to the community. People will begin to say, "That is the peacemaking church. You can go there with difficult problems. They can even help you settle a lawsuit."

We trained about 60 reconcilers at one church. They now have a vibrant reconciliation ministry. One night each week

volunteers help anyone who walks through the door. People from outside their church, even unbelievers, have heard about this ministry and come. Volunteers help people with failed marriages, conflict at work, and family conflicts. This church is introducing people to the God of peace by ministering to conflict in people's lives. This becomes an evangelistic and church-building tool. The more these reconcilers help people, the more excited and confident they become.

DESCRIBE THE STEPS PASTORS AND CHURCHES NEED TO TAKE TO SOLVE CONFLICT.

SANDE: The specific steps that need to be taken depend on the conflict. Every situation is unique. Our approach to conflict has four basic steps that will work in every conflict: lawsuits, sexual abuse cases, or failed marriages. We call these the four Gs.

The first G: Glorify God. We encourage people to get their focus back on the Lord, not on what they want or on what they are afraid of losing. It is amazing how many conflict resolution passages in the Bible tell people to get their focus back on the Lord. Philippians 4:4 is an example: "Rejoice in the Lord." Paul was not writing about a prelude to a meeting but about the first step in resolving a conflict, which is to get our worship and attention back on the Lord.

Having a person ask himself, *How can I please and honor the Lord in this situation?* has a tremendous effect on how he goes through conflict. He stops focusing on his agenda and begins focusing on having a positive witness for Christ.

The second G: Get the plank out of your own eye (Matthew 7:3). We encourage people to take responsibility for their contribution to the conflict before pointing a finger at someone else. Usually the whole complexion of conflict changes dramatically when one person says, "Here is what I did wrong."

The third G: Gently restore (Galatians 6:1). How can we lovingly correct so a brother or sister thanks us later? Christians can learn skills that enable them to correct one another in a loving, constructive way without attacking or tearing down.

The fourth G: Go and be reconciled (Matthew 5:24). This means resolving the substantive issues in a just and fair way. Then also restoring the relationship — not with a superficial forgiveness that really means I don't want to have anything to do with you again — but with gospel-powered forgiveness. The richness of forgiveness is amazing.

Another key part of resolving conflict is what we call *building passport*. A passport is relational. It is the point in a relationship where people trust each other enough to open up and share personal information. There are three keys to building passport. These three keys are the questions people ask themselves when they are considering how much they will tell you.

Can I trust you? Will my confidences be respected or will this be broadcast from the pulpit next week? Will you throw this back in my face and use it against me? It is essential to build trust and confidence.

Do you care about me? Unless people sense that you love them and are looking out for their best interests, they will not open up to you.

Can you help me? People might believe you will guard their confidences and that you care, but they may not believe you have the skills to help. Developing the expertise to deal with conflict is important.

Our teams are backed by the reputation of our ministry. That is often a key to building passport. But it is also something



*People often dress up
controlling desire as
something good.*

we encourage pastors and church leaders to be deliberately building day by day. Each time a pastor steps in the pulpit he is either building or destroying passport with the people in his church. If he is acting deliberately, he can steadily build passport.

Pastors can build passport with others by being transparent about their need for God and by admitting some of their struggles in appropriate ways. At least once a year my pastor makes a confession before the whole church. Recently, during public prayer time, he responded to a woman in what seemed to be an abrupt way by moving on to another prayer request. Several people noticed his abruptness and mentioned it to him. The first thing he said as he entered the pulpit the next Sunday was, "I need to ask forgiveness." He named her by name. He said, "I am so sorry I spoke abruptly. I was not paying attention and showing you respect." Many people think that would cause him to lose respect, but our people love to see this kind of honesty. This is a key part of building passport.

WHAT IS A CONFLICT-MANAGEMENT RESOURCE TEAM AND HOW DOES IT HELP SOLVE CHURCH CONFLICT?

SANDE: The more a church can deal with its conflicts internally the better. A church loses that capability when the leadership gets dragged into the issue and is viewed as being a party to the conflict. As long as leadership can maintain neutrality, objectivity, and trust, they can do much of this themselves. If they lose neutrality, people think the pastor has an agenda or the elders are not willing to listen. Then they need an outside team.

We believe the ministry of peacemaking belongs to the church, not to a parachurch ministry like ours. While we have several teams that help bring peace to major church conflicts, we prefer to work with denominations at the church and district level to train people in a region. If a church has a conflict they cannot resolve, they can look to their district. If this fails, the church can call us and we can field teams with many denominational backgrounds.

Education is the most important part of what we do when we are asked to help with a church-wide conflict. We are primarily an equipping ministry — like an attendant to a bride. We want to make the bride more beautiful.

Our typical approach is to have a 1-day Peacemakers training seminar to train the major players in the conflict on the basic concepts of peacemaking. This way, when we talk about forgiveness we all mean the same thing. We also take the personal peacemaking structure — the four Gs — and use it to help the entire church.

Each person needs to go through the process. Conflict is not two big groups against each other; it is people angry at one another. Each person has to deal with anger at his own heart level. Anyone who wants to participate in the conflict-resolution process must come to that training. If they do not want to learn how to grow, but only want to fight, they are not welcome to be a part of the process.

Sometimes, depending on the nature of the conflict, our team preaches or teaches Sunday School on Sunday morning. Then, depending on the size of the church and the extent of the conflict, the team spends the next few days working with various levels in the congregation, helping them, listening to them, hearing complaints, and putting together a complete picture of what is going on. An article on our website “The Key to Revival” describes this intervention process.

Early on we also like to identify people who can work with our team and start learning the techniques and skills necessary to resolve conflict. When the team leaves at the end of the week, these people are trained to continue the process. They continue working with different groups in the church for the next few weeks or months. Within 30 days of our first visit, the trained church members prepare a report

listing suggestions on further action. In some cases, they ask our team to come back in 3 months. Our team then comes back to reassess the situation and deal with those unresolved issues. We often have a celebration service to honor what God is doing.

HOW DOES YOUR TEAM UNCOVER HIDDEN ISSUES IN A CHURCH?

SANDE: Many churches have issues that are simmering below the surface. We uncover these by talking to people in safe groups. We want to help people — whether it is one person or a group of people — to share difficult issues. We form a group where each member feels safe and can say whatever is on his mind without fear of retaliation. If people sense the conciliator is someone they can trust, they will open up and share what has often been below the surface for years. Little things can trigger a conflict, but the true cause of major conflict is often a hidden problem that has lurked under the surface for a long time.

DISCUSS THE ROLE OF FORGIVENESS AND RESTITUTION IN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT.

SANDE: Forgiveness and restitution in conflict management are absolutely vital. Forgiveness is the mark of the gospel. Sin offends a holy God and makes each of us worthy of eternal punishment. Yet, God sent His Son to die for us, opening the way for forgiveness. Colossians 3:13 says, “Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”

Forgiveness is one of the greatest opportunities we have to show that the gospel is real, especially when there has been a deep hurt, such as infidelity in a marriage or people slandering their pastor. We must truly forgive people. I do not mean a superficial-type forgiveness like, “I forgive you, but I still do not want to have anything to do with you again.”

We describe true forgiveness as four promises. When I say I forgive you, I promise to not dwell on it anymore. I will not think about it and brood over it. Second, I will not bring it up and use it against you in the future. Third, I will not talk to other people about it. Fourth, I will not allow the issue to stand between us or hinder our personal relationship. This is where we need the grace of the Holy Spirit, especially if there has been a deep hurt. When we forgive others at this level and people see us live it out, it lends credibility to the gospel. We can say, “I couldn’t have done this on my own, but God through Christ gave me grace to model what He has done for me.” This creates tremendous evangelistic opportunities.

Restitution is equally important. In my book, *The Peacemaker*, there is an important appendix on restitution. This is an important concept, especially in America where we are rights oriented, damage oriented, and money oriented.

The Bible has much to say about restitution. The simplest statement in Exodus says when we have damaged someone we need to make him whole. We need to do whatever it takes to return him as close as we can to his initial position. For example, if I smash someone's car, I need to pay for the damage and make sure his car is fully repaired or he is given an equivalent vehicle. If I slander someone, I need to go to others and set the record straight.

When we forgive, it does not mean we cancel the other person's obligation to make things right. In the church there is confusion on what forgiveness is. Some believe forgiveness completely cancels the consequences of one's behavior. This position does not reconcile with Scripture. In the Bible there are examples where God forgave His people Israel, but still corrected them with loving discipline.

The real issue is whether to insist on restitution or not. We can determine this by asking ourselves, *How can I help this brother grow?* If someone accidentally damages something I own and he is hard pressed financially and I can easily cover the cost of the repair, to release him from his obligation is an act of mercy. But if the 16-year-old across the street comes home drunk and sideswipes my car and I let him off the hook, he will smash another car next week, and the following week.

A part of restitution is to prayerfully consider how to help someone grow and overcome the obstacles in his path. When we ask these questions and when we make restitution a part of the process of forgiveness, it is a sign of the Holy Spirit working in us.

WHAT IS THE POSITIVE OUTCOME OF CONFLICT?

SANDE: God has chosen to make conflict one of the primary vehicles of building His kingdom and displaying His glory. Genesis 3:15 says, "I will put enmity between ... your offspring and hers." Conflict is woven throughout Scripture. Every major spiritual advance takes place in the midst of conflict. God uses conflict to remind us of our need for Him. Like the Israelites, when things are going well many of us tend to drift from God. Conflict brings us back.

Second, conflict reveals our sin. We see our pride, stubbornness, and unforgiveness. In His great love God exposes our sin so we can see it, repent, and call out for Him to forgive us and help us grow.

Third, conflict provides the opportunity to practice the spiritual disciplines of patience, forgiveness, forbearance, and gentleness. It is like lifting weights. You do not get strong if you do not go to the gym. That is how we develop spiritual characteristics.

Fourth, through conflict the power of the gospel is revealed. Conflict puts believers in the spotlight so others may witness how they demonstrate the saving, redeeming power of Christ. When a marriage is torn apart by infidelity or a church is

threatened by a split, Christians need to get their focus back on God, remember what Christ has done for them, and live out that same love toward other people. When these situations are reconciled, the world notices. We can then proclaim Christ.

A woman who had attended our first level of training heard about a conflict in her company involving two top executives. This conflict was going to have a multimillion-dollar effect on the organization. Because these two men were estranged, their company could not accept a particular contract. This woman went to these men and asked if she could talk with them. In 60 minutes she did what the president of the organization and the HR team had not been able to do — reconcile them. By the discerning power of the Holy Spirit she helped them see the real issue. The next morning they walked into the president's office and said they had been reconciled and wanted to work on the contract. In the days following, the woman who reconciled them had many opportunities to share the gospel as others approached her and asked how she had done it.

ARE THERE LEGAL ISSUES THAT A PASTOR AND A CHURCH NEED TO BE AWARE OF IN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT?

SANDE: Yes. However, most legal issues can be avoided if pastors act in a godly way. We must not slander, gossip, or tell lies about people, but live out our faith and treat others as we want them to treat us.

One area where even the most faithful pastors can get into trouble is with church discipline. The situation may involve someone who has been stubbornly involved in a sin and refuses to repent. The church, in obedience to the Lord's command in Matthew 18, decides to take disciplinary action, perhaps to the point of disfellowshipping that person.

Church discipline is ultimately an act of redemptive love. It is a wake-up call to help people see the seriousness of their sin. It is designed to open their eyes and show them their need to repent and return to the Lord. Discipline should always be done redemptively. But even if we discipline out of love, we can easily find ourselves facing a lawsuit for invasion of privacy, infliction of emotional distress, and defamation.

Most of these problems can be avoided if a church trains its people in biblical peacemaking before conflict arises. A church also needs to make sure its bylaws clearly spell out a biblical course of action when there is a conflict, and how the church will administer discipline. Our ministry works with churches and denominations to draft bylaws that will complement their church governance.

A church's bylaws should specifically spell out some of these issues. For example, if someone is disciplined, in what situations will the leaders announce it to the entire congregation? Sometimes that is necessary. If a man has been defrauding elderly people in the church, you do not want him to continue preying on elderly

people after he is disfellowshipped. You want to warn them not to do business with this man. The bylaws need to allow the church to inform the congregation of matters it needs to be aware of for its own protection. Make sure you have informed your people, and they have agreed to it. The legal concept here is *informed consent*. If the church establishes biblical policies, writes them



We encourage people to get their focus back on the Lord, not on what they want or on what they are afraid of losing.

out, teaches them to their church, and the church adopts them, the church can avoid almost any legal problem in this area. We have model forms churches can download and work from. All of our forms come with our materials. Without informed consent, a church can be in enormous trouble.

The second area of caution is sexual abuse, especially of children, but also seduction of women in counseling. This is an area where an ounce of prevention can save the church thousands of dollars in legal fees. A church needs to have good screening guidelines in place and a good policy for responding to allegations of abuse. Pastors must not

counsel women alone or have offices with obscure doors. These are some common sense steps churches can take to guard their members, and especially their children, from being sexually abused.

Sexual abuse is probably the most destructive type of conflict with which a church deals. A church that guards its members will reap many benefits. They will make new people feel more secure, and that is what you desire to do.

WHAT RESOURCES DOES PEACEMAKER MINISTRIES PROVIDE?

SANDE: We have a new PeacemakerChurch program. We would like to train

Assemblies of God people so they can be available to serve as peacemakers and reconcilers within your own denomination. This would provide you with your own in-house peacemaking ministry.

The third edition of my book, *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide To Resolving Personal Conflict* became available January 2004. We also have a book entitled, *The Young Peacemaker: Teaching Students To Respond to Conflict God's Way* by Corlette Sande.

Pastors can also visit our website at www.Peacemaker.net for more information. ■

PEACEMAKER MINISTRY RESOURCES

Peacemaker Ministries new Peacemaker Church kit features a DVD of Ken Sande as he shares 10 sessions of peacemaking instruction for leadership training. This kit is also suitable for sharing with a whole congregation, a Sunday School class, or a small group. Included in the kit are leaders' guides, students' guides, sample sermons, and a diagnostic diagram enabling churches to examine their own peace quotient. For more information, contact Peacemaker Ministries at 1-406-256-1583, or e-mail peacemakingchurch@hispeace.org.

Interested in exploring biblical peacemaking with a small group or Sunday School class? *Peacefakers, Peacebreakers, Peacemakers* is a six-unit Sunday School curriculum (with an optional six more units) that offers rich, practical insights from God's Word and highly relevant case studies for anyone who wants more peaceable relations with family members, coworkers, neighbors, fellow church members, and others. Leaders' and students' guides are available through the Peacemaker Ministries website www.Peacemaker.net, or through the Peacemaker resource line, 1-800-711-7118.

The classic biblical peacemaking resource remains

Sande's book, *The Peacemaker*. Now in its third edition, the book contains biblical principles you can use to resolve everything from simple personal offenses to family and marital conflicts, church divisions, business and employment disputes, and complicated lawsuits. A knee-level companion, *The Young Peacemaker*, teaches biblical peacemaking to children in comic-book form and is also available with a teacher's guide. Both resources are available through the website, www.Peacemaker.net, or through the resource line, 1-800-711-7118.

Peacemaker Ministries also offers 1-day seminars to introduce your church to the principles of biblical peacemaking. For more information, call Jonathan Boll at 1-406-256-1583, or e-mail jboll@Peacemaker.net.

Peacemakers website contains other resources ranging from husband/wife companion peacemaking materials, Spanish language resources, and individual certification courses in peacemaking and biblical conciliation.

ERIC FOLEY, Peacemakers Ministry, Billings, Montana.



ILLUSTRATION: MATTHEW ARCHAMBAULT

MANAGING *STRIFE* WITH STYLE

IDENTIFYING, DEVELOPING, AND USING CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES

Conflict management is not sweeping conflict under the rug or teaching people how to fight fair. Conflict management is the process of influencing the activities and attitudes of an individual or group in the middle of disagreements, tensions, and behavioral actions that are threatening relationships and/or accomplishing goals. This process also includes the ability to use applicable tools and processes to consult with a conflicted person, group, or congregation so those involved might come to clarity and agreement about the root causes of the conflict and seek common ground regarding the next steps required to address the situation. I use the term *next steps* because it is highly unlikely any significant conflict will be resolved in one day.

BY NORMAN SHAWCHUCK

UNDERSTANDING THE CONFLICT CYCLE

Conflict arises when the actions of one person or group threaten the values, goals, or behaviors of another person or group. Conflict always involves these four steps.

(1) An action: A person or group does something.

(2) A threat: The property or goals of another person or group are threatened.

(3) A reaction: The perceived threat causes a person or group to react.

(4) The stage is set for the next cycle of conflict.

Social conflicts are usually cyclical in nature. People and organizations tend to form habits of self-defeating, destructive behavior; and like all bad habits, once formed, people become more-or-less blind to their own destructive behavior. Often people go around and around until someone dies, moves away, a catastrophe causes everyone to forget the conflict and huddle together, or someone in the group demonstrates a better way to handle conflict.

When people have a choice, they may choose the better way, or they may choose to remain in conflict. Also, the outcome of a conflict often depends on whether someone in the group is skilled in conflict management.

Conflict begins at the *tension-development* level. At this level someone says or does something that causes a person or a group to become upset. If this tension is not addressed,

Conflict management is not sweeping conflict under the rug or teaching people how to fight fair.

then the person or group under stress experiences increasing degrees of anxiety. Conflict is often not addressed at this point because those not affected by the stress view the momentary situation as inconsequential. If this increasing stress is not addressed, the church enters the *role-dilemma* stage.

At the role-dilemma stage, the congregation and its leaders are cast into confusion. *Who is responsible? Who is causing this stress? What are they doing? Who is responsible to manage the stress?* As a rule, the congregants will hold the pastor and board responsible to manage the stress and resolve the conflict. If the conflict is not satisfactorily resolved in the role-dilemma stage, it escalates into *injustice collecting*.

In injustice collecting, people seek someone to blame. Pastors, lay leaders, church members, and attendees begin

collecting artillery to protect themselves when the war breaks out. This artillery includes: gossip, threats, withholding contributions, accusations, and retaliations. Injustice collecting creates increased tension.

Injustice collecting is the first dangerous stage in conflict. Members of the congregation begin to worry that matters will get worse before they get better; they fear the conflict will not go away. A conflict that is not well managed at the injustice-collecting stage will progress into *confrontation*.

Confrontation is the first stage where people use the injustices they have collected as weapons. Suddenly the congregation disrupts. Disruption does not always mean the confrontation will continue indefinitely. After this initial, serious, frightening conflagration, however, the situation will never be the same again.

Confrontation is the most dangerous stage of the conflict cycle because individuals and congregations may become stuck in ongoing cycles of useless or damaging conflict and never achieve resolution. The famous legend of the Hatfields and the McCoys clearly defines the dangers of useless, cyclical conflict. The two families fought for generations. Ultimately, succeeding generations had little or no clear idea why they were fighting. They only knew that the Hatfields always fought the McCoys, and vice versa.

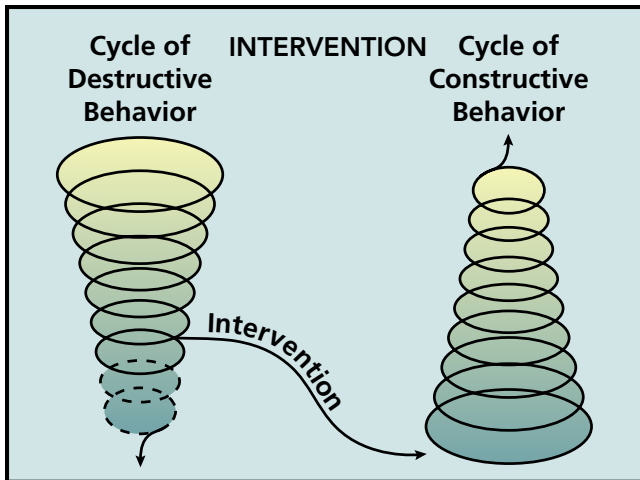
After a conflict runs its course, *adjustments* will be made. Adjustments are the changes people make to endure or escape the results of confrontation. The result of a well-managed conflict is renegotiated expectations and freely made commitments to honor the agreements made between the parties concerned.

If the adjustments are traumatic or poorly managed, then the confrontation will eventually take one of many forms:

avoidance (people drift away), domination, or cold war. The adjustments may also become endless overt and covert hostilities in the life of the congregation. Antagonism begins to fester beneath the

surface. A routine has been established where the parties in conflict continuously seek to gain the upper hand in every minor or major encounter. When the antagonism and wounds are not cared for, sooner or later the conflict will resurface and erupt into another damaging confrontation. Many congregations have been stuck in conflict for years.

The first cycle of a serious conflict may run its course in minutes, hours, days, or years, but conflict that is not handled well in the first cycle results in recurring cycles of conflict with each cycle becoming tighter, more entrenched, more difficult to manage, and more destructive than the preceding cycle. For example, a cyclone is broad at the top, but at the bottom it is a well-organized spiral that can cause horrific damage in a matter of minutes. (See "Intervention" sidebar.)



Conflict intervention, then, is a concrete plan for breaking into the conflict cycle, stopping the destructive behavior, and turning the person or group's energy and behavior into cycles of more constructive, self-enhancing behavior. The earlier the cycle is broken, the better it is for all involved.

TWO FUNDAMENTAL CONCERNS IN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Concern for relationships

In conflict, some believe the most important thing is maintaining friendly relationships. A person who manages conflict well will engage in conflict in such a way to ensure persons are not hurt by the conflict and that relationships are not damaged — even at the expense of his personal goals and interests, if necessary. This is the foundation of the accommodating style. Those who use this style want to take care of other people even at the expense of taking care of themselves.

In most close relationships among God's people, there is a concern to preserve community and to live and work together. This desire is inborn in the consciousness of most Christians. Jesus accentuated the essentials of Christians living and working together. Scripture is replete with events, admonitions, and instructions (beginning with Genesis 1:26), that the people of God are a family, are to live in harmony, and are to care for one another.

Concern for one's own personal goals/interests

For this person, winning is the most important thing. He will engage in conflict in such a way to ensure his goals and interests are accomplished even at the expense of relationships. (See sidebar "Conflict Management Concerns Grid.")

Conflict, as painful as it may be, is often necessary and good. Well-managed conflict can bring good to the church and to individuals. Without conflict, we become placid. The goal of conflict management is not to do away with conflict or to run from conflict, but to manage conflict toward worthwhile ends.

CONFLICT-MANAGEMENT STYLES

People respond to conflict using various styles. The outcome of conflict, good or bad, depends on the degree of aggressive behavior exhibited in the conflict. When a person feels his back is against the wall, he will push back.

We are not born with, or fated to forever act out of a particular conflict style. We learn how to protect ourselves in conflict and danger. A baby begins to draw references from the outside world while still in his mother's womb. Modern medical science claims an unborn child responds to the emotions of its mother and the noise of external stimulations, whether calming and loving, or frightening and dangerous. The unborn child is gathering data that will to some extent influence his earliest premonitions and his life-long experience.

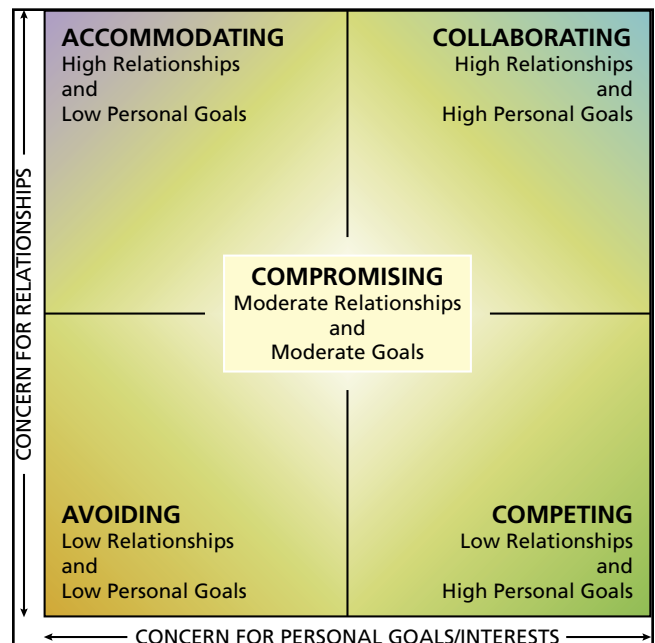
People also learn conflict-management styles while they are children by observing the behaviors of their parents. They learn how to protect themselves in problematic or dangerous situations in a functional or dysfunctional way. Conflict-management specialists have identified five conflict-management styles.

Avoiding (the turtle)

The turtle avoids becoming an active participant in a conflict and claims no responsibility for the conflict or its outcomes. The role of a turtle in a conflict may prove cowardly and damaging or be a brave and wise decision. The turtle, however, must clearly understand his goals and why he is hiding. The goal possibilities are:

1. I do not care about the conflict, and I will not get

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT CONCERNS GRID



involved. I am willing to accept whatever the outcome.

2. I care about the results of the conflict, but I feel the parties involved may learn from their behavior if they are left alone to deal with the consequences of it.

3. I am not going to get involved. This is the role of other leaders to solve the conflict.

The turtle's behavior may facilitate learning and growth by giving people on either side of the conflict opportunity to assume responsibility for their actions and their responsibility in resolving the conflict. There are situations, however, when the turtle needs to come out of his shell, stand up, and be counted.

While working with individuals and groups in conflict, I have found turtles to be slow to speak, slow to act, hesitant to accuse, but often insightful. The turtle's downside is he tends to drive people crazy with his long musings, humming and hawing, and procrastination. However, if you encounter a snapping turtle in a conflict, beware. The snapping turtle can be a tenacious foe.

Accommodating (the teddy bear)

The teddy bear preserves relationships. He communicates, "Getting along with one another is more important than the issues dividing us." The teddy bear works to keep the group intact and living and working together harmoniously.

During my teen years I attended a small church in a farming/ranching town where every person was acquainted and cared for their neighbors. Even in my youth I realized that people cared for and accommodated the needs and interests of their neighbors.

THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

1. Learn to recognize and address a conflict in its earliest stages.
2. Keep everyone focused on the conflict issues.
3. Provide the three "Ps" of conflict management:
 - a. **Permission:** Give the parties permission to disagree without feeling guilty.
 - b. **Potency:** Enable each one to state his position with strength and clarity.
 - c. **Protection:** Keep each one from being needlessly hurt, and from needlessly hurting others.
4. Enable the parties to see a way out of the conflict situation by suggesting options to their present policies and/or behaviors.
5. Work to turn every conflict into a problem to be solved — and involve all parties in searching for solutions to the problem.

NORMAN SHAWCHUCK, Ph.D., Leith, North Dakota

This caring and accommodating were not merely passive words or meager attempts. Everyone felt a responsibility to adjust their routines if necessary to meet the needs of their

People and organizations tend to form habits of self-defeating, destructive behavior.

neighbors. Accommodating is costly. It can demand our time, our energy, our money, and sometimes giving up what we would rather do.

Collaborating (the wise old owl)

The owl is concerned about the group at large and places equal emphasis on the goals of each member of the group. The goal of the owl is to safeguard the interests of the group as a whole. He does this by getting all the parties fully involved in defining the conflict and in carrying out mutually agreeable steps for managing the conflict. He believes conflict can be managed in such a way as to strengthen the organization and relationships. He sits above the petty scimmages in the congregation and observes, ponders, and remembers. When the owl speaks, people listen because they know the owl seldom speaks, and when he does speak he always offers wise counsel.

Compromising (the fox)

The fox provides each party in the conflict some victory and then persuades each member of the group to accept some loss. Compromising seeks to attain the common good for each person and the community as a whole. The fox does this by finding the minimum amount acceptable to every member of the group. Finding a compromise that satisfies each member is often tedious, so the fox is assertive and will use persuasion and, if necessary, manipulation to achieve his goals.

Competing (the shark)

The shark has a clear goal — to win at any cost. The shark usually does not intend to hurt people, but simply places prime importance on personal goals or on his interpretation of what is best for the organization. If necessary, the shark will sacrifice relationships to accomplish his goals.

This style requires the individual to be aggressive, domineering, and generally uncooperative in the pursuit of any solution except his. Often his sense of self-esteem is involved, so he must win at any cost.

DETERMINING OUR CONFLICT-MANAGEMENT STYLE

Each of the above conflict styles may be utilized with intentionality in a specific situation. Most persons, however,

give little thought to the conflict-management styles they use. Rather, they adopt a conflict-management style with little intentionality and are almost totally unconscious of the assumptions and behaviors that comprise that style.

Conflict is both a social phenomenon and a theological concern. A person's presuppositions affect his conflict-management style(s). In Ephesians 4–6, the apostle Paul teaches Christian maturity: "Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. 'In your anger do not sin': Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold" (Ephesians 4:25–27). Here, Paul's teaching takes the negative approach. Paul, however, also teaches with a positive approach when he says, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the devil's schemes" (Ephesians 6:10,11).

Pastors and lay leaders can learn their conflict-management styles by taking time to reflect on their motives, behaviors, and the results in their conflict situation(s). In my notebook, *How To Manage Conflict in the Church*, we include a Conflict Styles Survey. (See sample in the sidebar "Conflict Styles Survey," page 71.) A pastor can also have others evaluate him by using the "How You Can Help Me Manage Conflict More Effectively: A Self-Analysis Tool." Each respondent answers each question based on how he views the pastor's conflict-management styles. My book *How To Be a More Effective Church Leader* also provides help to equip people with concepts and tools to understand the essential elements of conflict management and leadership in religious and secular settings. Another spiritual growth resource that applies is *Develop an Understanding of Your Behavior in Conflict Situations*. All of these resources and more are available through Spiritual Growth Resources at 1-800-359-7363 or visit <http://www.spiritualgrowthresources.com>.

UTILIZING CONFLICT-MANAGEMENT STYLES TO RESOLVE CONFLICT

Pastors and lay leaders can become more effective in responding to conflict by studying, practicing, and using different conflict-management styles, depending on the conflict. Unfortunately, most pastors and leaders, without forethought, have adopted a particular conflict style.

Choosing which conflict-management style is best for each circumstance allows those involved in conflict to intentionally decide how to best respond to a particular situation, and also determine how others involved might respond. Since any action in conflict will likely cause a reaction, it is prudent to be "as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves" (Matthew 10:16), especially in serious conflict.

We generally act and react based on a particular conflict-management style. This style represents the way we protect

ourselves in frightening, dangerous situations, or the way we try to prevail over others against their will. We often do this without assessing the short- and long-term results of our conflict behaviors. But our chosen conflict-management style needs to be an appropriate response to a specific situation. As such, we do not value one conflict-management style over another. Conflict-management styles are neutral.

The effectiveness of a conflict style, however, should not be measured only by the degree to which it reduces tension inside one's self. It should also be measured by the short and long-term effects it will have on the people and the organization. Any style will produce short-term effects when used only once. But using any style on an occasional basis will generally not produce any long-term effects.

The style, or styles, we employ in a given conflict, however, are important. Adopting a particular conflict style in a given situation often determines the outcome of the conflict. For this reason, I emphasize knowing conflict-management styles and knowing your default style.

Over the long haul, the collaborating style is to be preferred above the others. This style commits persons to do everything necessary to see to it that the personal relationships remain strong, that lines of communication remain open, that all persons' goals and interests are honored. In this manner, conflict serves to strengthen member ties, unleash the creativity of all the people, and commit all the members to a wholehearted support of the organization's best interests.

It is important to remember that we are not born with a given conflict-management style. We learn our styles. If we learned them, then we can also unlearn them and relearn new behaviors. Relearning behavior is not difficult, but admitting that we want our own way, we want to win, and we want our enemy to lose is difficult, especially for religious leaders. It is our nature to ascend, to rise up, and to protect ourselves in danger. We may even choose winning over losing, even in matters of small significance.

However, when disagreements among the people of God become a matter of winning and losing, grasping for power, seeking control, and trying to win at every cost, the congregation or church board is no longer seeking the higher way or trying to discern God's desires for the community. The conflicted parties are living in Satan's shadow.

BASIC CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL CONFLICT INTERVENTION

As a young boy, I realized my mother and father's responses to conflict were as different as day and night. My mother would fight at the drop of a hat and as quickly forgive and forget. Whenever two or more of my mother's sisters came together, there was an uproar. They fought with each other and against anyone who attempted to intervene.

My father, on the other hand, was stable, quiet, and enduring. He would never entertain a frivolous issue, and he would go to extremes to avoid conflict. But when he felt it necessary to engage in a serious conflict, he was a tenacious, determined combatant; he was determined to win.

We learn our conflict behaviors by trial and error as we observe the behaviors of our parents and other significant people in our lives. After years of experiencing conflict and working in conflict situations, I arrived at a set of principles. In every significant conflict, it will benefit all parties involved to:

Generate valid and useful information

In any significant conflict there is valid and invalid information. The first principle of conflict management is to separate valid information from invalid information. This includes evaluating the stories, claims, denials, and accusations, and determining whether they are true or untrue. This is perhaps the litmus test of conflict management.

Many approaches exist to generating valid and useful information, such as on-site observation, evaluation, and one-on-one interviews.

CONFLICT STYLES SURVEY

HOW TO PROCEED ... Please Read Carefully

In your organization you are active in one or more committees, groups, or departments that are responsible for significant programs. The group(s) to which you belong must meet regularly to make decisions. In addition, all group members must assume responsibilities for carrying out the decisions.

Following are two situations you encounter; in one of the situations you are the group's leader, in the other you are not the leader. For each situation you have five possible behavioral responses. Please study each situation and the possible responses carefully, then CIRCLE THE LETTER OF THE RESPONSE that you think would most closely describe your behavioral response to the situation.

As you complete the survey, please remember this in NOT a test. There are no right or wrong responses. The survey will be helpful to you only to the extent that you circle the responses that would be most characteristic of your conflict-management behavior in that particular situation.

CIRCLE ONLY ONE CHOICE FOR EACH SITUATION.

SITUATION NO. 1

YOU SERVE ON A STAFF OF THREE PERSONS. THE HEAD OF THE STAFF IS INSENSITIVE AND AUTOCRATIC. THE OTHER MEMBER IS VERY ANGRY. IT IS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE HOSTILITIES WILL OCCUR BETWEEN THEM.

You would: (Circle one)

A. Tell them their behavior is interfering with staff effectiveness, insisting they lay their personal animosities aside and begin putting their energies into productive activity.

B. Remain silent whenever they begin to argue, hoping they would work it out, or that the angry staff member would be able to fend for himself.

C. Encourage them to lay their hostilities aside since conflict of this intensity might leave deep personal scars.

D. Try to avoid outright, hostile confrontation by

emphasizing the need to reach agreement on roles and responsibilities that everyone could live with.

E. Share your observations of their behavior, ask each of them to state their own opinions, and press for a redefinition of working relationships to reduce the hostilities.

SITUATION NO. 2

INFLUENTIAL MEMBERS HAVE BECOME DISSATISFIED WITH YOUR LEADERSHIP AND ARE INSISTING YOU RESIGN. SOME ARE THREATENING TO LEAVE IF YOU DO NOT. OTHERS ARE SUPPORTING YOU PRIVATELY, BUT ARE TAKING NO PUBLIC STAND.

You would: (Circle one)

A. Inform the group you have no intention of resigning, and you want an open airing of the grievances in order that some middle ground may be reached.

B. Assume the public silence of some members indicates consent and, not wanting the group to lose any member, you would resign.

C. Determine the number demanding your resignation, and of your silent supporters. Having decided the majority was not calling for your resignation, you would announce your intention to stay.

D. Go to those opposing you to tell them you still care about them, and do whatever you could to restore good relationships.

E. Arrange a meeting with your opponents and supporters to discuss and search for ways to reduce the tensions and restore working relationships.



Reprinted with permission from *How To Manage Conflict in the Church* (Volume 1) by Norman Shawchuck. The full Conflict Styles Survey and information on interpreting this survey can be ordered from Spiritual Growth Resources, 1-800-359-7363.

Allow free and informed choice

In a free society citizens have free choice. In most congregational conflict, pastors and members have free choice — no one can forbid the choices of others. However, choices freely made are not always informed choices. Often people do not have enough valid and useful information to make good choices. Much of the information generated in a conflict — even in religious organizations — is useless and damaging.

A litmus test of leaders is whether they will generate valid and useful information for the people and help them understand what the information means for the congregation and leadership. Many leaders, even in the church, do not want informed followers, so they deny or hide the truth from their people.

Motivate internal commitment to the choices that are made

Church members should have freedom to decide the ministries and roles of the church within its environs and within

the denomination. However, many congregants in American churches do not feel they have the valid and useful information needed to determine their legitimate roles and responsibilities within the life of the congregation. In brief, members have free choice in the affairs of the church but often do not know how they might best do the work of God in their place, or beyond.

Congregants who are informed are more likely to care about the socio/theological concerns of the church. It is the responsibility of the leaders to provide members with valid and useful information regarding the goals, life, and ministry of the congregation. When the pastor provides people with the valid and useful information they need to decide their roles and goals for the church, they tend to go beyond the expectations ecclesiastical officials hold for them.

There are an almost infinite number of ways to accomplish each of the three steps to conflict management. (*See sidebar "Successful Conflict-Management Principles."*) Regardless

SUCCESSFUL CONFLICT-MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Conflict interventions may take many forms and utilize a variety of approaches and tools. Whatever the approach taken, conflict intervention must foster a certain set of essential conditions for bringing the conflict parties to the place where they are willing to work together to break the destructive behaviors in their relationship. Successful conflict intervention must:

1. Help people develop their own personal, psychological power-base

A person who is insecure or threatened in a given relationship or situation cannot think creatively about ways to resolve the conflict. A person who feels weak or trapped can only think of survival. Successful intervention depends on strengthening your opponents and helping them feel better about themselves so they can help define the conflict issues and reach a solution.

2. Develop a relational base

An essential step to constructive conflict management is building a relationship of acceptance and trust. When the trust level is high, almost any effort to communicate is successful. When the trust level is low, communication tends to get distorted and misunderstood.

It is better to build trust before conflict erupts, but essential levels of trust can be created in conflict if valid information is provided and people know they will be allowed to make a free and informed choice.

3. Filter the assumptions, rumors, and charges

A vital aspect of generating valid and useful information

is to flush out all of the assumptions, rumors, and charges surrounding the conflict — and to separate fact from fiction, truth from error. Until these assumptions are identified and tested to see whether they are valid or invalid, persons will tend to fear and believe the worst.

4. Establish joint collaboration for problem solving and decisionmaking

Conflict divides people over issues; problem solving draws them together around a common task. Identifying the areas of agreement brings immediate hope, releases energy for searching ways to cooperate around these areas of agreement, and makes the areas of disagreement seem less threatening.

5. Establish a covenant

After the problem solving/decisionmaking is completed, it is vital that all parties establish a covenant to carry out the agreements. At the simplest level this may mean rehearsing the agreements, verbally or in writing, and allowing each party to pledge its commitment to carry them out. In more complex agreements, the covenant may contain specific times, events, or responsibilities with a check-up plan to see how well the agreements are working and to make necessary adjustments to avoid future conflict.



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of the methods you use, your own behavior in carrying out your plan is absolutely essential to its success.

The pastor's spirit in conflict

The most important element a pastor brings to a conflict situation is his own spirit. Scripture declares "deep calls unto deep." Spirit communicates with spirit at the deepest level of our beings. I have found this to be especially true in my own work as a mediator in church conflict.

If a pastor is experiencing unresolved conflict, the conflict in which he is trying to help will hook his own conflicted spirit. He will soon be experiencing inner tensions as though the conflict of others were his own. He will no longer be able to remain objective.

The most important preparation a pastor can make in preparing to function as a conflict manager is to prepare his own spirit. I make it a point to spend a day or more in fasting and prayer as a part of my own preparation to work in a serious church conflict. I use these hours to review my own relationships, desires, and motives. When I discover conflictual desires and motives, I surrender them to God. When I discover ill feelings toward another, I write a letter or make a call confessing my feelings, asking forgiveness. I pray the Psalms and ask God to assist me in the conflict.

I do this because I realize that unless Christ shares His peace with me, I will have none to share with others. When I get in touch with the Prince of Peace, I find myself filled with hope — not only for myself, but also for the church. If Jesus can convict me, show me a way out of my own conflicts, and bring His peace to my troubled spirit, surely He can do likewise with those to whom I go. We are ambassadors of Christ. That means we stand in His stead in the middle of conflict to bring peace to His people.

PREPARING FOR CONFLICT

The pastor's demeanor and responses to those who oppose him are important. His goals in the conflict will either influence or determine the outcome of the conflict-management process. However, in congregational conflict, the pastor is often not the only party involved — the church board usually has a measure of responsibility.

When a congregation is in conflict, there is often a board member who is autocratic or laissez-faire in his interpersonal relationships. Either condition can paralyze the church board for months or years as the autocrat seeks to dominate every matter of the church board and congregation. The behavior of one autocratic board member can strangle the entire board, especially if the board has not received training to oversee the affairs of the congregation.

Every church needs to require its leadership to attend a conflict-management training program before they are placed

in leadership positions, and to attend one or more workshops each year to keep fresh, current, and motivated. If they are not trained before being installed, many will feel they do not need any training. They become leaders who have been elected to keep the pastor in line and have no time to study a manual.

What I convey here is especially poignant for me. The congregation in which I worship is a small, faithful community. Now, however, the community is experiencing interpersonal conflict. A family in the congregation decided the pastor is not good enough, not able to lead, and too involved in the community. Yet, the people in the community believe the pastor is doing outstanding work. They extol his efforts on behalf of the community, and because of this the congregation is slowly, but steadily growing.

When these complaints are expressed in a large congregation, church board members dispatch with the petty antagonisms as matter-of-course. They do not bring the matter before the congregation. In a small congregation, however, complaints are more obvious.

Any conflict can either energize or destroy a congregation. It is imperative, therefore, that the lay people and the pastor of a congregation are trained each year, not only in conflict management, but also in the management of religious organizations. If some demur, then it is best that they not serve in positions of regard.

Finally, the time to deal with conflict is when there is none. People are then open to learning and exploration. When a group is in conflict and emotions are running high, people are not open to learning; they only want to run or fight. In personnel management of volunteers, it is often difficult and damaging to discipline or remove someone from his position.

CONCLUSION

The Christian faith provides some of the finest conflict-management resources available: Scripture, prayer, preaching, the Lord's Supper, Communion, and people's common commitment to Christ and His church. As pastors and people use these resources in a noncohesive manner — along with proven conflict-management methods — those involved in conflict can experience the peace that only God can give, and will discover the higher values that make them one, in spite of the differences that tend to divide them. ■



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ILLUSTRATION: SONNY CARDER

FIGHT

OR

FLIGHT

SHOULD I GO OR STAY?

BY TERRY RABURN



T

he natural world is a complex and fascinating mixture of joy and pain, health and sickness, life and death. Our sun provides the basic foundation for life; yet, its rays can cause painful burns to our skin, and even cancer.

Pastoral transitions are like that. They are necessary, even common events in the lives of ministers and congregations. A good transition can advance the will of God for a pastor and church. A bad one can cause damage that might take years from which to recover.

Challenge and conflict are also normal. Dogs and cats face-off in our backyards and little boys discuss whose father can prevail over the other.

Life in a church can be like that. The work of the Lord can

be running smoothly, but threats, accusations, criticisms, misunderstandings, and suspicions can suddenly turn a ministry into a nightmare.

In nature, an animal that is challenged by another animal has two instinctual choices: fight or flight. Within moments each will decide to stand and fight or turn and run. Those decisions define the moment and determine the future of the participants.

A pastoral transition can be like that. As the challenge grows and the conflict consumes more time, energy, resources, and faith, those involved decide what they will do and — consciously or unconsciously — affirm or alter their future course.

As pastors, it is to our advantage to know what action to take at such times. As God's children, we have an advantage over the natural world; we have access to the supernatural. In addition to fight and flight, we also have flux (a state of change).

A bear will always be a bear. A lion cannot be anything other than a lion. But people are made in the image of God and have a third alternative. We can alter our attitudes and actions. We can change. And, often, that is the difference between going and staying.

HOW DO WE ARRIVE AT THE DECISION?

We cannot know the answer to the fight — flight — flux question until we know the truth about our situation.

How did we arrive at this point?

Every major conflict I have encountered started as a simple misunderstanding, insensitivity, or stubbornness that was perceived as dictatorial, insulting, or somehow ungodly. Then, step-by-step over time, the original seed of conflict grew into layers of hurt, action, and reaction. Each layer must be peeled back through careful investigation, in reverse order, until the origin is revealed.



CAN WE FIGHT NOW?

There is a time when the sword of the Lord needs to be used, but it must be the absolute last resort and should only be used with pure motives. Before conflict can be righteous, the fighter must be pure. Before a pastor can look at his place in a conflict, he must look at the conflict in his place. He must honestly answer these questions:

- Is my prayer life consistent and in good order?
- Am I ignoring a heartfelt check from the Holy Spirit?
- Is my Bible reading and study regular and up-to-date?
- Am I being sincere in applying Scripture to my life, judging the present circumstances by biblical standards and not personal ones?
- Am I supporting my position on the Word as a whole and not on selected individual, unconnected verses?
- Am I fasting and praying for God's solution and preferring other Christians before myself?
- Am I willing to humble myself to facilitate a just and holy peace?

We cannot know the answer to the fight — flight — flux question until we know the truth about our situation.

If the answer to any of these questions — and a host of others known only to the minister — is no, the man of God is not ready or justified to fight.

Why was the original grievance important?

Conflict usually rises out of one's fear of loss. Someone, or a group, is afraid they will lose authority, position, reputation, finance, friendship, or faith. Often, one side does not understand the other's value structure when the original offense is committed. Until all understand why that first act had value, it cannot be resolved.

What will it take to resolve this situation?

Accomplishing reconciliation is difficult. Opposing sides usually cannot say, "I'm sorry," shake hands, and make up. Most of the time balancing truths surface that mandate balancing actions from each party before reconciliation is complete. For instance, the same God who demands that spiritual authority be observed and respected (a fact pastors are anxious to establish) also demands that His people be loved, led, and served (a fact lay leaders acknowledge). When these positions are established, then safeguards need to be made to ensure equal respect for all sides.

Is that the end of the matter?

Unfortunately, it is not. When the issues are identified, their value is understood, and a formula is created for resolution, the end has not come. However, it is a beginning.

He will do more damage than good by plunging into battle. Instead, he needs to withdraw. He should schedule a prayer retreat and withdraw for as long as is necessary to read the Bible, spend time with his wife, and fellowship with the Lord.

Did I do something to start this?

During this retreat, the pastor needs to ask if it was his action that started the conflict. Did he force a decision, make a criticism, overreact, or show insensitivity toward an individual or group? If so, right or wrong, there is a good chance he will be able to make considerable progress toward restoring peace through unilateral action.

If the pastor's action was wrong, or a mistake, he should humble himself, confess the infraction, ask for forgiveness, and seek reconciliation. If the hearts and motives of the others involved are pure, this will end the conflict. If the spirits and intentions of the others are filled with sin, the trouble may continue. Either way, the minister will be free of guilt and restored to a right relationship with the Holy Spirit.

If the pastor's action was neither right nor wrong in terms of fact, but a matter of an opposing opinion or a violation of cultural norms, he should negotiate an honorable truce. If the hearts of the others are right, they will respond with contributions of their own and work with him to restore calm.

If the pastor was right and was taking a position against sin or unrighteousness, he must stand his ground. Peace is never won by surrendering to evil.

Remember, if the pastor started the battle alone he can often end it alone. He should do his best.

Did someone else start this?

This is more complicated. A pastor can never control the actions of others. If the conflict started with an unwarranted attack, a manipulation, a frame-up, a lie, or a power play, there may be little to do but make the decision to fight or flee.

What did they do? Attempt to identify the action and find if it can be reversed.

Why did they do it? Again, this is important. Insignificant words or deeds sometimes grow into major wars. The perceived wrong cannot be righted if its meaning is unknown. Many times, the why will explain the what. Don't stop at the action. Learn the reason.

What can be done to fix this? Ask questions designed to reveal hidden agendas. Then work on a strategy that will address the actions and their meanings in a constructive, scriptural way.

Can someone help me? Trouble is embarrassing. A leader may try to hide the conflict from his authorities, but that attempt is usually futile and always a mistake.

If you can handle the matter by yourself, by all means do so. If you need help, be wise and strong enough to seek it. Older, more experienced ministers are available to help. Their knowledge and expertise can be of tremendous benefit. In addition, the sectional or district leaders are also available. They deal with church problems regularly and are familiar with the dynamics and techniques of conflict resolution. Call them and put their resources to work for you.

Now?

You may be thinking there is something wrong and you cannot fix it by yourself. You may be wondering if it is time to fight. Maybe, and maybe not. To make that decision, you must consider the alternative.

WHEN IS IT TIME TO LEAVE?

Usually, long-term leadership is better for the church. Therefore reasons to stay outnumber reasons to leave. The trick is in knowing when to stay and when to go, and following that knowledge with appropriate action.

It is time to leave when it is God's will to go.

In John 16:7, Jesus said: "I tell you the truth: it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you." There are

times in the plan of God when an individual must move so the overall strategy of the Father can be accomplished.

For the pastor, the Lord will take care of his family, open the next ministry, and provide leadership for the church he leaves behind. God will move His kingdom forward through the changes. Pray it through. Get personal assurance and guidance from the Holy Spirit through Scripture and godly comrades. Give the final decision as much time as the situation allows. Then, when it is indeed God's will, move.

It is time to leave when *you* need to go.

Jesus explained to His disciples: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. ... I am going there to prepare a place for you" (John 14:1,2). Jesus needed to return to the right hand of the Father so He could claim His place as the Son, the Savior, and the Sovereign of all eternity. Jesus had to move to fulfill His destiny.

There are times when this is true in the life of a pastor. A move is necessary to facilitate personal growth, professional development, service to the Great Commission, or to expand personal discipleship. Such a move may have little to do with your present location, but everything to do with your life-long call of God. This may prove to be the next step in God's life plan for you — such as moving from a staff position to a senior pastorate, from a small community to an urban center, or to answer a call to world missions. The point of this is that the move originates within your heart and call as pastor. Pray it through. Make sure it is God. Get good advice from dependable counselors, and then move. As Roger Brumbalow, superintendent of the Georgia District Council of the Assemblies of God, says: "When you move with God, you don't step up and you don't step down. You just step *out*."

It is time to leave when you cannot win where you are.

Jesus said: "I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. ... Come now; let us leave" (John 14:30,31).

Almost every pastor faces a difficult, even impossible, situation at least once. It may be a power structure in the church, a declining economic environment threatening the survival of the church or community, a personal mistake or failure, an unwarranted attack, a betrayal, or an overwhelming manifestation of the work of Satan. Whatever the circumstance, the moment the pastor realizes victory is impossible, he should leave. To stay is to be a meaningless martyr.

God's call is without repentance and irreversible. A pastor will survive the devastation of a total loss if he keeps his focus



on the Lord, God's new direction, and the future. Even if the loss is his fault, God can restore the pastor, his family, and his ministry. If the loss is not his fault, the Lord will not allow the righteous to suffer.

When the loss is the fault of the pastor, it is imperative that realization, confession, and accountability take place immediately. That may mean securing help for yourself and your family. You must be committed to caring for your family. Spouses and children can be hurt and confused. Satan will attack their feelings and faith, trying to convince them there is no benefit in serving God. Your family may possibly need professional help. Do not hesitate to secure help from the Christian community to which you belong.

I hold a powerful memory from my childhood. Our family had been voted out of a church through a surprise move of the power structure. Over the next weeks, Dad and Mom took my sister and me into their arms and explained that this was the action of men, not the Lord. They told us how ungodly men had driven King David from the palace, but the Lord had a plan for his future and ultimately took care of him. Those explanations kept us from becoming bitter. We went to our next church with faith and confidence in God and His call on our family. Today, both my sister and I are in full-time ministry. Our parents weathered the storm, kept their ministry, and saved our futures.

When you cannot win, leave. But, minister on your way out.

It is time to leave when you can win but the cost of victory is too high.

Jesus could have called 10,000 angels to His rescue at Calvary. He could have leveled the temple with the Sanhedrin, priests, and scribes inside. He could have destroyed Pontius Pilate

and Rome in a flash. He could have stepped down from the cross and incinerated every enemy with a word. And, in so doing, He would have failed the Father, lost His mission, and cancelled our salvation.

If the victory has the potential to devastate the church, damage individuals, and send a hurtful testimony into the community, it is not worth winning. If the victory will leave a pastor with nothing to work with and nothing to build on, it is not worth winning. It is pointless to stay in a devastated church, especially if the pastor played a part in the devastation.

Count the cost. If the price of victory is more than the value of the victory, leave. Trust the Lord to open a new place of ministry with a profitable future and a plentiful harvest of people brought into the Kingdom.

There are rare times when the Lord will ask a pastor to fight a war and win a victory to move an ungodly factor out of a church. Then, after the triumph, God will lead the pastor to resign. Though victorious, the minister is so damaged and tarnished by the fight that he can no longer lead the congregation or hold a positive testimony in the community. In that case, the Lord will take the faithful but wounded minister to a place where a fresh start and new environment can restore effectiveness to his ministry. Pastors need to be extremely careful to keep their carnal nature under control in these situations. However, when the Lord asks His servant to conquer sin, the man of God must answer, "Not my will but thine be done."

IS THERE EVER A TIME TO FIGHT AND STAY?

In most cases the Lord will direct His leaders to fight a good fight and stay with the assignment.

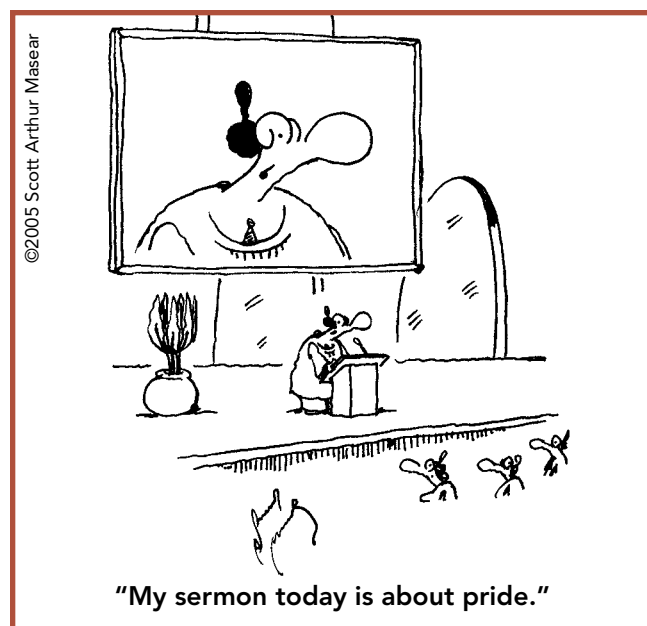
Fight when it is God's will for the pastor to stay.

The will of God is a cage. It is a golden cage, but a cage all the same. Only God can put a minister in a ministry and only God can tell him to leave. Until He opens the door of the cage, the minister must stay put.

The Holy Spirit constantly admonishes servants of the Lord to stand firm. Interestingly, the whole armor of God is introduced with the words, "Stand firm" (Ephesians 6:14). Until God changes our lives within His will, we must not leave.

We cannot leave because we are unhappy, weary, discouraged, have a better opportunity, or want to get out of town. We cannot leave because the sacrifice is taxing. A minister can only please the Lord through faithfulness. Most of the time faithfulness can be reduced to staying and being productive in the current field of labor.

In times of question over God's will: pray and fast, read Scripture, get counsel from trusted advisors, but do not move unless, and until, there is a clear and undeniable direction



from the Lord to do so. Being faithful to God's will is worth any fight, every sacrifice, and all hardships. When it is God's will to stay, stay.

Fight and stay when it is the good and right thing to do.

Fight for godly changes in the church and stay to see them through. Fight for new outreaches to win the lost to Christ and lead the implementation of those evangelistic ventures. Fight for good and stand against wickedness in the church

lesson twice. Preserve what was learned so it will inoculate the church from recurring problems.

Fight and stay when the victory will glorify God.

Every church has trouble. Every minister has faced challenges and conflict. After the battles, some have prospered and some have failed. The difference is the glory of God revealed in love, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

Few things are more damaging to the claims of the good news than the inability of church leaders to resolve conflict,

We cannot leave because we are unhappy, or weary, or discouraged, or have a better opportunity, or want to get out of town.

and community. Fight for growth and stay to pastor the larger congregation.

Fight for personal development. Never stop reading, studying, and learning. Keep up with current events, the Middle East, and the advancement of the good news. Be aware of what the Lord is blessing in other churches, communities, and countries. Know what the Lord wants to do in your own life and ministry.

Fight when failing to do combat will give the devil a victory. Do not leave and surrender the ministry to faithless leaders or give Satan a new advantage. Stand and fight when an attack comes that will stop the progress of the good news. Never leave the flock unprotected. Never desert your call. Stay when it is the right thing to do.

Stay and fight when the victory will give a new impetus to the church and ministry.

The Holy Spirit will array a battle when it is time to move forward. To refuse that combat is to reject the work of God. After a righteous victory there will be a new liberty to grow the church. When those who do not want growth are exposed and defeated, the loyal servants of the Lord will find a powerful freedom in which to serve the Lord. The battle may be intense, but the victory will be worth the clash.

Stay and fight when the lessons learned in the battle can be applied to prevent future conflict.

Satan wants the house of God in constant turmoil. In every battle there is a secret that can be used to protect against further conflict. Study the dynamics of the war, pray for revelation, understanding, and wisdom from the Holy Spirit. Then build that discovered truth into the fabric of the ministry so the confrontation will not repeat itself. My dad taught me that one of the secrets of life is never learning the same

forgive one another, and continue to work together. On the other hand, a leadership group that resolves conflict, truly forgives each other, and enthusiastically works toward new victories for God is a living illustration of Jesus at work. Every time the congregation sees those reconciled men and women, the good news is affirmed. The leaders become testimonies of the gospel's success. That gives great glory to God and opens opportunity for tremendous blessings in the future.

FINALLY, BROTHERS AND SISTERS

Whether you leave or stay, your family can suffer lasting damage. According to Scripture, your family is your first and most important congregation. Make sure *you* survive the battles with your faith, health, and sanity intact. Then, focus on the needs of your spouse and children. Make sure they get the attention they need to continue in health and happiness. If you can supply that support, do it. If you need help, do not be ashamed or hesitant to get it. There are many Christian counselors and therapists available. Their guidance, coupled with your love and prayer, can make the difference between long-term spiritual sickness and health.

FIGHT, FLIGHT, OR FLUX

Whether you go or stay, change is unavoidable. Therefore, get something positive in return for the changes. Do not waste the pain involved. In the end, change makes the difference for good or bad. Change for the better. Grow in grace and knowledge. Take care of your family. Advance the Kingdom. Then, whether you go or stay, you will be a winner. ■



Terry Raburn, superintendent, Peninsular Florida District of the Assemblies of God, Lakeland, Florida.



PREVENTING

A SENIOR PASTOR'S VIEW

BY WAYDE I. GOODALL

One of the most important decisions senior pastors make is who to bring onto their leadership team. A pastor who impulsively chooses his staff walks on dangerous ground. The larger the congregation the more important it is to build a staff that complements and supports the senior pastor's biblical priorities.

WHAT CAUSES STAFF INFECTION?

When a new senior pastor arrives, there can be hidden or direct conflict among the staff he inherits. This difficulty accompanies transitions in leadership in almost every church. Conflict can be created in a variety of ways. It can arise during the search process when the church has a leadership void. This may stem from the competitiveness of the staff members. It can also be created when one of the staff ministers wants to be senior pastor but was not considered or chosen.

Conflict can come because the new senior pastor did not have the privilege of interviewing his new staff before they were hired. In many cases, he might not have selected some of the people he inherited.

Another factor is personality issues. The associates might not like the new pastor, so they do not immediately support him. This creates a loyalty problem. One pastor overheard a



ALL ABOUT CONFLICT: AN ASSOCIATE PASTOR'S VIEW

BY CARL L. MILLER

The church is the world's greatest agent for peace. This also makes it a target for conflict, even between the senior pastor and his staff.

The New Testament provides a window through which we can view conflict experienced by ministry leaders. Differences concerning direction for ministry produced conflict (Acts 10:9 through 11:18). Conflict occurred because of personal differences (Acts 15:36–41). Sinful motives also produced conflict (Matthew 21:12–16).¹

Conflict does not need to weaken ministry. Well-managed conflict can strengthen the church (Acts 6:1–7). By facing

conflict head-on, the Early Church brought disagreeing parties together, clarified issues, resolved conflict, and accomplished God's will. The same can happen in the church today.

Conflict is the No. 1 reason pastors leave a church or the ministry. Pastoral staff conflict also damages relationships and the church. Many staff pastors have left churches and the ministry because of unresolved conflict with the senior pastor or other staff pastors. As a staff pastor, I would like to share my perspective concerning what senior pastors can do to prevent or effectively manage staff conflict.

PASTOR/STAFF RELATIONSHIPS — A SOURCE OF CONFLICT

While many senior pastors and their staffs work together and have harmonious relationships, ministry issues can cause disagreements and misunderstandings that create conflict

A SENIOR PASTOR'S VIEW

conversation between two staff pastors: “He will catch on to how we do things here. Until then, let’s pretend to agree with him.” These conflicts cause immediate tension, undermine the pastor, and usually last 3 to 12 months. Congregations and pastoral staff need to understand this delicate time of adjustment.

Significant staff turnover is common within the first 2 to 4 years following the selection of a new senior pastor. Job descriptions may change that affect staff pastors as ministry positions are reorganized or replaced. It is important that the pastor, a consultant, or a coach explain to church leadership that this is a normal process.

When I ask someone to join the team, I hire spirit before I hire talent.

Pastoral transition is challenging because senior and associate pastors have built loyal relationships in the congregation. Staff pastors who leave during this time need to do so with extreme care and impeccable ethics. They can leave in an ethical manner and help the church’s future, or they can leave in an unethical manner and hurt the church’s future. When inherited staff members leave, it does not reflect a weakness in the senior pastor’s ability to get along with people. Lay leadership and key congregational people need to understand that:

- It is normal and predictable institutional behavior for staff to change positions or to find other employment during leadership transitions and the subsequent adjustments.
- This is a product of the unique characteristics of larger congregations — the dominance of relational values over functional concerns.
- Most senior pastors feel more comfortable if they have seniority over the other pastors.
- It is the new pastor’s responsibility and privilege to build a staff/team he feels comfortable with, and one he believes is favorable for the health of the church.

PREVENTING STAFF INFECTION

Do your homework

I am often surprised when I hear of a pastor hiring a staff member because he has a decent résumé. When a senior pastor does little research, does not call a perspective staff pastor’s references, and conducts a short interview, it is no wonder many staff relationships fail. In the 14 years I have been a senior pastor, I lost only one associate that I hired.

My wife and I do our homework and pray about each staff person we hire. We spend at least a weekend with the candidate, usually in our home, during the interview process. This gives the candidate and us enough information to decide whether or not it will work.

I always ask, “Is there anything you have done or are doing that would injure the witness of this church?” This question immediately brings to mind pornography issues, moral problems, marital difficulties, and ethical concerns. Settle these issues before you hire anyone.

Build rapport

It is important that the pastor and staff members have good rapport with each other. Though there will be difficult times, pastor-staff relationships must be built on trust and mutual cooperation.

The well-adjusted two-pastor or multiple-staff team requires the senior pastor to do 80 percent of the getting along with the associate and the associate to do 80 percent of the getting along with the senior pastor. The result is a surplus of getting along. In dysfunctional arrangements, each contributes 10 to 20 percent to the process, and the resulting deficit causes unhappiness.¹

Communicate

Communicate, communicate, communicate! Talk about personal issues: “How’s your family?”; their dreams, “Are you feeling fulfilled and happy in your job?”; their development, “Is there anything I can do to help you meet your goals?”; your expectations, “How can I help you reach the goals we have set for your department? Do you see any barriers keeping you from getting there?” Staff meetings, luncheons, visiting staff offices, and leaving your office door open all go a long way in facilitating open communication.

Build trust

It takes time to build trust, but trust between staff members is critical. If the team does not trust the leader, or vice versa, it will eventually damage the team.

Instill loyalty

The staff pastor needs to be loyal to the senior pastor, and the senior pastor must be loyal to the associate. Remember, the associate works for the pastor, not for the board or anyone else in the church. People can say, “Get rid of that staff pastor” for whatever reason.

The pastor’s response is, “He works for me, and I trust him and will help him grow in what he does.” The staff pastor needs to feel that the senior pastor supports him.

Tell the truth

When there are difficulties, we should always tell the truth. People grow with the truth. If the associate feels the pastor shoots straight with him and tries to help him with what he needs to do, then correction is often accepted. If the associate

AN ASSOCIATE PASTOR'S VIEW

among staff. Conflict among pastoral staff may come from how the senior pastor and his staff define the purpose of their particular ministries and the competition for power between staff pastors. When this takes place, staff cannot achieve unity and common vision and goals. Also, church members will soon notice staff conflict that is not resolved.

Poor communication between senior pastor and staff, ineffective management styles, weak leadership, dishonesty, and disloyalty are other sources of conflict. A pastor's internal conflict or unmet needs or wants can create dissatisfaction with others. When one staff pastor questions the values and perceptions of other staff, or a staff member tries to force his unrealistic expectations on others, these cause strains in relationships that must be addressed.

Conflict between the senior pastor and staff can also result from changes in leadership style due to pastoral transition, resistance to changes in leadership style, rumormongering, or retaliatory behavior. Vague job descriptions and expectations also enhance the potential for conflict.

Symptoms of conflict may be manifested through body language, a disagreeable spirit or negative attitude, or a lack of respect for one another. Being aware of these factors can help a senior pastor address conflict issues before they escalate.

DEVELOPING HEALTHY PASTOR-STAFF RELATIONSHIPS

When conflict arises, some pastors and staff react negatively rather than in ways that honor God and resolve conflict effectively. When pastors recognize conflict indicators, they need to deal with them. Unresolved conflict will hinder the church's progress.

Conflict becomes destructive when it diverts attention from the church's vision and undermines the senior pastor's leadership. It also weakens staff morale, causes separation and polarization, reduced cooperation, and collapsed communication.

Pastors need to set the stage for building strong staff relationships. They can do this by communicating, demonstrating trust and loyalty, and by being transparent in all relationships with staff. Pastors must also be truthful in dealing with conflict that sabotages pastoral leadership. Glossing over conflict and strained relationships by pretending everything is fine will create more tension and conflict.

Healthy senior pastor and staff pastor communication is nurtured by honest and constructive feedback in the safety of openness. This comes when the senior pastor builds an atmosphere for open communication. Staff loyalty is

fostered through honesty and team building.

Senior pastors who allow for an open and honest exchange of ideas and constructive objections are more likely to see the same behavior expressed between staff pastors. Confronting and resolving conflict occurs more readily in an atmosphere where openness and honesty are practiced. Senior pastors who provide this atmosphere in staff meetings are less likely to see staff withdraw into silence or subversion.

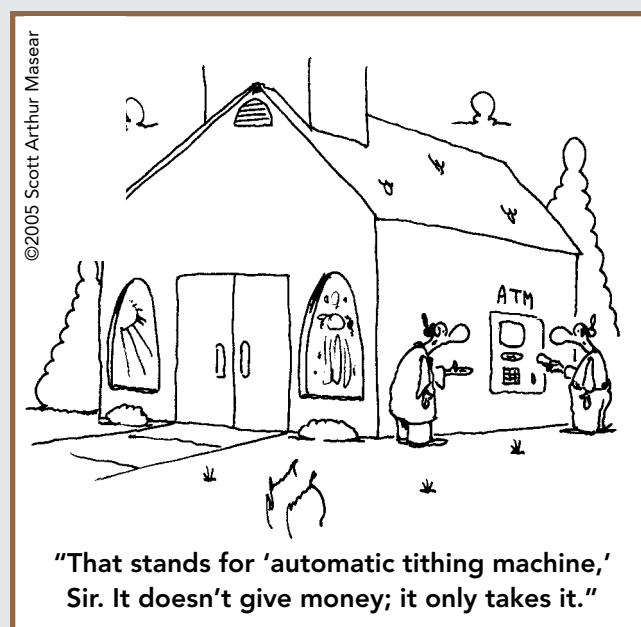
Viable conflict management thrives when there is mutual confidence and willing submissiveness between staff. Mutual respect and constructive dialogue contribute to a healthy sensitivity to issues, each other, and promotes healthy

**Those who concede their
personal interests for the broader interests
of the ministry prefer
appeasement at the expense of principle.**

discussion. Questions regarding vision, program direction, and ministry projects can then be addressed in an atmosphere of trust and respect.

It is inevitable that the pastor will need to address painful issues with a staff member. When these issues affect pastor and staff relationships, both parties need to be honest in addressing the issues. When the relationship between the senior pastor and staff member is marked by love, humility, and transparency, constructive conflict management is more easily accomplished.

When correction is needed, two-way communication between the senior pastor and staff, undergirded with



A SENIOR PASTOR'S VIEW

does not get along with someone else on staff, then the pastor needs to explain that the high road is to work it out, or the team will be compromised.

Major issues pastors can improve on to cure staff conflict

- *Coherence (harmony)*: Build personal and professional compatibility among the staff team.
- *Endurance*: Long-term relationships and long pastorates are important. Most rapidly growing congregations that sustain their growth have long-term pastors and associates.

Significant staff turnover is common within the first 2 to 4 years following the selection of a new senior pastor.

- *Compatibility*: When I ask someone to join the team, I hire spirit before I hire talent. A teachable spirit is critical. I have met too many associates just out of college or seminary who think they are going to fix the church or the pastor. The rule I go by is: are they humble (Do they trust God for their ability?), hard working (Do they have a good work ethic or are they lazy?), are they smart? (Do they get it? Do they understand the position they have and the personal and professional priorities of ministry?)
- *Trust*: Build trust in other staff and from the members of the congregation. Trust is not automatic; it grows over time as we make one good decision after another.
- *Agreement and adhesion*: Is there consistency among staff members in professional relationships? Are their programs and ministries based on priorities that fulfill the role to

which God has called that congregation? In other words, does the team stick together and agree with the pastor's goals?

- *Team*: The staff members complement one another and make a well-rounded team. Team members are not carbon copies of the senior pastor. They understand their unique roles and gifts and work together to promote church health.
- *Understanding*: Is there agreement on vision, goals, strategies, purposes, or are staff members competing with each other?

When there is staff conflict, how should it be handled? When the senior pastor adds a staff pastor or multiple staff pastors, there will be disagreement and conflict. Everyone comes from different backgrounds, perspectives, and birth orders. Everyone has opinions. We want their opinions, but we also need their cooperation and desire to get along with other staff members.

Disagreements are normal

Paul and Barnabas "had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company" (Acts 15:39). However, we see their maturity in that they were "commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord" and Paul "went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches" (Acts 15:40,41). A disagreement and a disagreeable person are two different things. As the leader, we must try to understand and talk through disagreements with all involved.

Let staff pastors lead

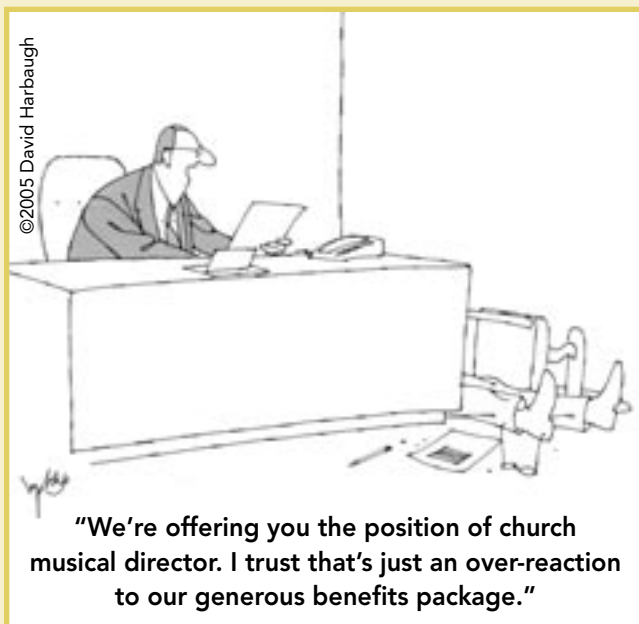
Associates are not just yes people; they are leaders who have ideas. Permit the staff to discuss their various ideas with the goal of finding a balanced, healthy opinion. This is a skill into which we grow. The church will enjoy a variety of strong ministries when staff pastors are permitted to lead while being loyal.

Let them disagree, debate, discuss, but not divide

I remember hearing of a large staff that yelled at one another in staff meetings. On one occasion an associate became so angry he threw his glass of water at the senior pastor. This is not healthy disagreement, but reason for dismissal. I have also seen associate pastors try to one-up each other to get next to the senior pastor. I have heard divisive comments from associates who were competing over ministry or personal goals. This is not healthy and will harm the church. It is the senior pastor's responsibility to permit healthy debate and to let staff disagree, but he must never let them become divided. Meetings must end with everyone on the team.

Find out where conflict is coming from and who is the primary leader of the conflict

Sit down with each person individually (both sides) and sort it out. Once the pastor understands the situation, he can



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gentleness and love, facilitates godly discipline. Practicing corrective discipline can promote healthy senior pastor-pastoral staff relationships.

STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING CONFLICT

When conflict between the pastor and staff or between staff members occurs, the senior pastor needs to see that the conflict is resolved. Pastors can do several things to increase conflict management among staff.

Framing is the process where the problem and participants are clearly defined. At this point the senior pastor and staff need to discover the real issue that is causing the conflict. Some involved in the conflict may have become overly sensitive to something they perceived to have happened. In this stage those perceptions need to be addressed.²

The senior pastor and staff need to provide opportunities for clear, constructive communication. Each person needs to be able to freely express himself without fear of retribution.

As a preventative measure, the senior pastor needs to establish conflict-solving procedures by developing a process for conflict resolution and decisionmaking. This includes minimizing conflict by preventing the *recreational complaint syndrome* — gossip with other staff and church members.

THE SENIOR PASTOR AND CONFLICT-MANAGEMENT STYLES

Conflict-management styles are basic assumptions coupled with specific behavioral patterns. How pastors use or abuse these styles can help or hinder effective conflict resolution.³

Avoiding

Conflict avoiders protect themselves by staying out of conflict. Senior pastors who use avoidance are generally hesitant to confront problems. When they acquiesce because of the pressure of conflict, it reinforces their frustration and weakness, pushes deep-seated hostility underground, and inevitably weakens or forestalls the solution needed to resolve conflict.

Some conflicts involving pastoral staff may not warrant involvement by the senior pastor. Evaluating conflict on a 1-to-5 scale can be helpful. A 5 warrants the senior pastor's intervention. A 1 would be a misuse of his time and energy. Some hills are not worth climbing. The senior pastor's involvement may cloud the boundaries of staff responsibility and diminish the opportunity for growth and maturity.

On the other hand, to avoid intervention can forestall the inevitable. The pain of doing something, and doing it swiftly, can be far less costly than the pain of avoiding or forestalling.

Accommodating

Accommodators either preserve relationships at any cost or concede their personal interests for the broader interests of the organization. Those who preserve relationships at any cost, even at the risk of hurting others, tend to deny or avoid

The competing philosophy holds that conflict has only two possible outcomes — winning and losing — and winning is preferred over losing.

dealing with conflict too long and finally succumb to quick-fix solutions. Their tendency is to sweep conflict under the rug, and by pacifying or accommodating, sacrifice the better and greater interest and effectiveness of the ministry.

Those who concede their personal interests for the broader interests of the ministry prefer appeasement at the expense of principle. When Paul confronted Cephas in Antioch for perceived hypocrisy (Galatians 2:11–21), he was not accommodating. Paul did not withdraw or hide behind false cooperation or cheerfulness to accommodate because he was willing to defend the truth.

Accommodation can cause confusion. Strength comes when staff members are willing to confront and ask difficult questions. “What am I doing to cause tension?” “What is happening?” “What is at stake?” “Who is in charge?” Points of tension may need to be identified. Threatening issues may need to be avoided to prevent further deterioration of communication. Accommodation through appeasement is not acceptable. Accommodation through selfless conciliation works.

Collaborating

Collaborators want all parties involved to define the cause of conflict. Collaborators desire to manage conflict effectively. Collaborating includes open communication. Pastors who use this style emphasize achieving the higher goals of ministry, safeguarding the ministry, and striving to maintain healthy relationships. They believe relationships will endure when people exercise patience and perseverance in upholding what is right.

Despite the pain of expressed differences, collaborators exercise flexibility, keep the differing parties communicating, and are committed to the premise that conflict can be managed in a way that strengthens the ministry and relationships.

STEPS IN STAFF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

The following steps promote church conflict-resolution in Christ-honoring and healthy ways.

1. Do not ignore conflict, but pray about it, confront it, talk it out, and face the problem.
2. Pray for divine wisdom and self-control. God wants His will to be accomplished.
3. Choose the right time and place to discuss the conflict.
4. Be open and honest.
5. Be willing to initiate the conflict-resolution process.
6. Do not be defensive.
7. Be slow to speak, think before speaking, and do not interrupt.
8. Speak the truth in love.
9. Attack the problem, not the person.
10. Listen, understand, and respond to what is said. Do not react.

11. Summarize and restate what you hear.
12. Try to understand the other person's point of view.
13. Mutually agree to explain further when misunderstood.
14. Stick to the topic.
15. Look for areas of agreement.
16. Withdraw and regain your self-control if needed.
17. Be willing to stop.
18. Be willing to assume responsibility and take ownership.
19. Mutually identify a biblical plan of action to resolve and restore unity.
20. Recommit to resolve if necessary.

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determine the best direction to go.

Understand if the conflict is a personal issue or a professional opinion

Personal issues on how to do church are different than opinions. Personal opinions should be handled in the way God prescribed (especially leaders), "as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (Romans 12:18). "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you" (Matthew 18:15). "How many times shall I forgive my brother? ... not seven times, but seventy-seven times" (Matthew 18:21,22).

The staff needs to understand that a congregation has elephant-size ears. They hear and see a great deal of what happens. As ministers of the gospel, we are responsible to work out our differences.

Encourage dialogue

It is sometimes profitable to bring together those in conflict and let them air it out. If the senior pastor can serve as a coach without personal bias, then he can assist these valuable leaders in finding middle ground, or he can help them agree to disagree. But pray for each other and demonstrate loyalty to each other for the sake of the church and the team.

See the big picture

Sometimes staff members forget the big picture. We are part of an incredible Kingdom, and the church is the most powerful organization on earth. We are honored to be leaders in

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Collaborators proactively turn conflict into a problem-solving situation. They are synergistic and have a win-win philosophy.

Collaborative senior pastors are more likely to develop collaborative protégés. They are less likely to be ego-driven and more likely to be people focused and team builders. They are confident and emphasize cooperation, communication, positive compromise, and consensus with conviction.

Consistent collaboration increases trust, strengthens relationships, energizes implementation of agreed-upon solutions, and increases goal achievement.

Compromising

Compromisers provide each side with some winning to minimize loss. They believe if everyone cannot be satisfied, people should seek the common good to preserve relationships, but not necessarily protect them. They attempt to spread the winning and losing as evenly as possible. Persuasion and manipulation may need to be used to satisfy both sides. This style presupposes that conflicting parties are willing to submit personal desires to serve the common good of both parties and the ministry as a whole.

Caution has to be exercised with this style to avoid the possibility of greater harm to the ministry; limiting search time for more creative, mutually satisfying solutions; or spending needless time and energy working on issues when the conflicting parties are of mutual strength and are firmly committed to different goals.

A senior pastor might see compromise as more effective in resolving conflict in the short run if greater harm can be

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God's church, and our hearts and opinions need to reflect that perspective. When we do not work out the issues we have with others, we hurt God's kingdom.

Act like Christians

Before we are leaders, we are Christians. When the disciples were arguing about who was the greatest (Mark 9:33–37), they were competing with each other. Jesus said, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all" (Mark 9:35). Helping the associate team understand Kingdom leadership rules is part of a pastor's responsibility.

Remember, the world is watching

The congregation, community, Christians, and non-Christians know whether or not the team is getting along. Our goal is to win our city for Christ. We cannot do it alone, but we can develop a team that prays, dreams, and develops strategy together about how to reach the community. It always amazes me when I receive a phone call from the newspaper or television station, or I receive a letter from a neighbor saying, "We heard that your church is planning an activity." How did they know? They are always watching us. The church lives in a fishbowl.

Get involved

I allow team members to discuss, debate, and disagree, but when I feel they could injure themselves, the team, or the congregation, I get involved.

CONCLUSION

I often watch the Wake Forest University basketball team. They are often rated in the top 10 in the country. Their goal is to win. The coach determines the strategy used to win the game, but to win he must let each player be his best while working together as a team. If one member isn't a team player, the coach has a problem. He could lose the game because this one person is arrogant and does not see the big picture. The coach needs to correct this person's approach while appreciating his zeal. Talking, following through, and being sensitive to the challenges of multiple-staff leadership is part of what we do. Conflict among the staff is normal, but the senior pastor must be a conflict manager and peacemaker. ■



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ENDNOTE

1. Lyle E. Schaller. *The Multiple Staff and the Larger Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1980), 102.

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avoided. A strained relationship with a pastoral staff member could be given a cooling off period. A mutual agreement for a temporary consensus may give the time needed to achieve a more satisfying solution.

However, compromise in a strained relationship can also produce a halfhearted commitment to agreed-on solutions, limited goal attainment, and recurring conflict under the guise of new issues.

Competing

The competing philosophy holds that conflict has only two possible outcomes — winning and losing — and winning is preferred over losing. While the competitor does not desire to intentionally hurt others or damage relationships, he places prime importance on personal goals and his interpretation of what is best for the ministry. Relationships may be sacrificed to accomplish this. Aggression and control drive this style of conflict management that attempts to prove the point of the conflict competitor. He believes he knows what is best for all parties concerned. His sense of self-esteem may be on the line; therefore he must win at any cost.

This style does not presuppose that the person be perceived as ruthless, but it tends to reinforce the need for power and coercion as legitimate methods in conflict management. Long-term use of the competing style can produce forced acquiescence, covert hostility, halfhearted implementation of solutions, and decreased goal achievement.

RESOLVING CONFLICT IS ESSENTIAL

The senior pastor is responsible to ensure relationships between staff are harmonious. Not only must he have a healthy theology of conflict, he must teach and practice that theology with his staff. When he proactively promotes good relationships between himself and his staff and between staff members, church ministry will be more effective. And they will be an example to the church concerning what it means to live in harmony with one another. ■



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ENDNOTES

1. Norman Shawchuck, *How To Manage Conflict in the Church: Understanding and Managing Conflict*, vol. 1 (Leith, N.D.: Spiritual Growth Resources, 1998), 37.
2. Guy Burgess and Heidi Burgess, codirectors, University of Colorado's Conflict Research Consortium. "Conflict Management and Constructive Confrontation: A Guide to the Theory and Practice." International Online Training Program on Intractable Conflict. Colorado.edu/conflict/peace/
3. Shawchuck, 22–27.



DAVID HARMS



STANTON WILLIAMS

NAVIGATING A MINEFIELD —

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU INHERIT A DYSFUNCTIONAL CHURCH

A large percentage of pastors who become embroiled in conflict leave their churches without proper resolution. Another group of ministers discover after they have taken a church that the church has underlying issues that cause division. Some of these pastors leave, but others stay to bring the church to wholeness. Richard L. Schoonover, *Enrichment* journal associate editor, visited with two pastors

who each took a church embroiled in conflict and turned it into a healthy, thriving congregation.

Stanton Williams has pastored New Life Assembly of God, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, for approximately 4 years. He has pastored nearly 36 years in four churches. In each church he encountered preexisting issues that needed to be resolved.

David Harms pastors Milaca Assembly of God, Milaca, Minnesota. He has pastored Milaca Assembly nearly 2 years. The Minnesota District invited him to take the church because he had pastored churches with similar issues and had brought resolution to each of them. He has nearly 38 years of pastoral experience.

These two pastors share their experiences, insights, and the path to victory in bringing unity and wholeness to their churches.

DESCRIBE THE CONFLICT THAT BROUGHT ABOUT THE CHURCH SPLIT.

HARMS: The conflict was two-headed. Most church difficulties involve more than a single issue. Some people in the church were affluent, highly gifted, musical, able teachers, and had strong personalities who could do anything that needed to be done. They were very influential. They were evangelizing, discipling, and heavily involved in ministry.

The previous pastor was struggling to guide the church in the direction he felt it should go. He met resistance from some in the congregation, and he struggled because of the strong influence of some members. When people began to leave the church

because of the conflict, those with strong influence blamed the pastor. He tried to work with them, but could not. In the end, it was unclear who was in charge.

Milaca, Minnesota, has a population of 2,500. Church attendance had been 230 or 240, which is significant in a town this size. Church attendance, however, had declined to 130. As the church continued to decline, it held a business meeting and voted to come under district supervision.

The district dissolved the membership and church board. Some of the influential people had been on the board. They left the church. Because they had influenced many people and had been responsible for bringing some of them to Christ, others left too. This placed the church in a leadership and financial vacuum.

The combination of these issues left a bigger mountain than those who were left felt they could climb. The further it went, the worse it became. The district asked me to help stabilize the church. Ninety people remained when we arrived.

WILLIAMS: The pastoral leadership I followed at New Life served for about 10 months. The pastor was a strong leader and was motivated by a desire to bless the church and lead the

New leadership coming into a situation where impressive growth has taken place may feel a greater obligation to produce results quickly. In this case, rapid change polarized the various groups in the church and created a volatile atmosphere that resulted in a split.

The last is vision. Several different visions existed among the people in the church. Traditionally, strong groups in the church had distinct preferences and ideas concerning how the church should operate, as did those with more contemporary preferences. A number of unresolved issues had also developed over time. These issues surfaced during the conflict.

WHAT CHANGES OCCURRED AS A RESULT OF THE INCIDENT?

HARMS: Several major changes affected a number of key areas of the church. These changes also affected the morale of the congregation. The attitude of the people when I arrived was, "We do not know if we can do this anymore." They were struggling to put the church back together.

The first major change was how people related to one another. Most of the people who were left had no previous



New leadership coming into a situation where impressive growth has taken place may feel a greater obligation to produce results quickly.
—Williams

congregation to the next level. There are several reasons why his tenure was short lived.

First, there were cultural differences. Coming from the southern Midwest is not an easy transition when you are moving to Lancaster County. Strong traditional conservative roots exist in this community that require a different approach to leadership. These are issues that must be seriously considered both by pastor and church when considering change.

Second, making a number of changes without first gaining influence and the trust of the congregation started a number of little fires. I believe the pastor's motivation was to step up to the plate and implement changes that would grow the church and impact the community. New Life had enjoyed strong leadership in the past and had grown to just under 1,000 people. The congregation wanted to see continued growth, so they chose a different style of leadership believing that would help them accomplish their goals.

leadership responsibilities. They were trying to figure out where they fit in and who was going to lead. We needed to identify new leaders.

The second major change was financial. The church's budget was cut in half, but it had the same financial obligations. We had to work through financial issues.

The third major change was working through blame. Those who were left looked for someone to blame. Assigning blame in church conflict is common and often is the result of pre-existing behaviors. It is easy to say, "They did this," or, "He said that." But there is usually no single person or group who is entirely at fault. Church conflict involves a whole series of issues, and one event often affects another.

WILLIAMS: The major changes that affected New Life were with leadership (the resignation of the pastor and staff), attendance (people leaving the church), finances, and the

traumatic impact of the situation. The general feeling was that everything was falling apart.

When the senior pastor was asked to resign, the remaining staff resigned as well. New Life had five full-time staff members and now they were left with none.

The former associate pastor started a new church with a number of former members from New Life. He was loved at New Life and had a very effective ministry. I believe his motive was not to further damage the church but to provide ministry to those who had decided to leave, and to do what he had determined was the will of God for his ministry.



Church conflict involves a whole series of issues, and one event often affects another.—Harms

Many people questioned his motives, but looking back I see that the hand of God was in the planting of this new church. The enemy does not set out to develop new congregations. He has not come to expand the Kingdom but to destroy it.

New Life fell below 400 in attendance. The church had always enjoyed significant financial stability. But now there was reason for concern. The church had a mortgage of more than \$1.2 million, and the significant cost of maintaining and operating a large facility. Though the church has not returned financially to where it once was, it is moving in the right direction. We have continually operated in the black, and God has consistently demonstrated His faithfulness in meeting every need.

The split was a traumatic experience for those who remained. New Life had good men on the board who continued to serve through the conflict. But they were not experienced or trained in dealing with church trauma. They were shaken by it, and the impact affected them deeply.

Sobriety comes after a church split. A split provides an opportunity to learn and grow. We see circumstances with 20-20 vision when we look back. We have taken advantage of this to teach principles of how to deal with conflict.

After hearing their story and looking back on the situation, I believe the motives of the board were good, even though they did not do everything perfectly. These men worked with me when I came and continue to be an encouragement. I believe the former pastor was motivated to bless New Life not to hurt it. It was important for the congregation and me to understand that his motives were every bit as pure as my own.

To me, motives are important, and almost impossible to judge. I have never felt my job was to assign blame for everything that took place, but rather to lead in reconciliation.

HOW DO AMBIGUITY IN LEADERSHIP AND DIFFERENCES IN VISION CONTRIBUTE TO CONFLICT?

HARMS: I appreciate Stan's comment about the good motives of the pastor and board. That also fits my situation. The people who were trying to effect change had good motives, but their methods were wrong. The pastor and board did not have the same vision. A major reason the conflict occurred was the board's strong leadership; they were stronger than the pastor. People can have good vision and good motives and conflict still occur.

Even now I am continually analyzing the situation.

It seems the principle issue was that the board — the policy-making body — did not allow the pastor to lead the church with his vision. They were the visionaries. They tried to fit him into their vision for the church. This is backward. Nevertheless, both the board and the pastor had integrity, both wanted to act in the best interests of the church, and both wanted to be a blessing. Their motivation was good, but the situation was not handled correctly.

WILLIAMS: Ambiguity in leadership roles was definitely a factor at New Life. The same number of people left because of the bylaws as did over personality or relational issues.

The bylaws that had been in place since the founding of the church 20 years ago were ambiguous and contradictory. The pastor was not the chairman of the board, and the roles of the council, the pastor, and the congregation were not clearly identified. It was difficult to know who had leadership. When these issues exist in a church's bylaws — the document that dictates how it operates — the bylaws can be used as a means of control, a way to manipulate or undermine authority.

We have changed the bylaws since the split. I invited Dr. Don Tucker from Valley Forge Christian College to lead us through the process. He did so with grace and wisdom. Including him in the process created a comfort level and confidence within the congregation. I had no personal agenda except that we end up with a good biblical document that would serve the church for years to come. The new bylaws were unanimously adopted in a 15-minute segment at our annual business

meeting. Without the trauma of the split, changing the bylaws probably would not have happened as easily as it did. The people clearly understood the need for change.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE PASTORS WHO ARE BEGINNING A NEW PASTORATE ABOUT MAKING MAJOR CHANGES?

HARMS: Pastors need to learn to be expendable. Providing for the future of their ministry is not as important as providing for the future of the congregation. Many pastors lose sight of this. They try to defend what they have said or what they have done. If the problem is doctrinal, then obviously a pastor must take a stand. But if the problem is the pastor, and he sees the church being destroyed

and is only worried about his position, there is something wrong with his calling. He needs to move out of the way. Ministry is not about me; it is about God and His kingdom.

A new pastor cannot demand respect; he must earn it. If he starts making changes without earning the people's



I have never felt my job was to assign blame for everything that took place, but rather to lead in reconciliation.—Williams

WILLIAMS: The kingdom of God is larger than one individual. The focus cannot be on the pastor, and his plan should not have overwhelming consideration.

It takes at least 3 years to get fully established as the pastor of a congregation. Someone once said, "If you know you are going to make change, you better have enough change in your pocket." In other words, you better have the trust and support of the people. This takes time to establish.

I spent the first 2 1/2 years at New Life Assembly establishing

trust with the congregation. Accomplishing what God desires and has placed in our heart is worth waiting for. We do not need to rush ahead of the Lord. The idea that being a decisive leader is of greater value than using wisdom or understanding human nature is wrong. Many people want to be perceived as being decisive in decisionmaking and moving forward.

Granted there is a time for decisive action, but there is also a time for patience. If a pastor cannot practice patience, he should consider other employment.

As David said, pastors need to understand the necessity of establishing trust. We must care enough about the congregation to establish it.

We must also be careful that

the focus is not on us. It is important that the desire of our heart is for the church to flourish with or without us.

WHAT STEPS DID YOU TAKE TO HELP PEOPLE WORK THROUGH THE GRIEVING PROCESS CAUSED BY THE CHURCH SPLIT?

WILLIAMS: An important step that brought healing and resolution to the church occurred 6 months before I arrived. The church brought in an interim pastor who provided excellent leadership. Some in the church knew him from previous churches. He did not get involved in the conflict, but simply ministered to the church. His teaching and pastoral care brought significant healing and set the stage for future



It is better to be supportive of the people who have left and allow the issues to eventually drop and go away.—Harms

respect, he will get into trouble. A new pastor needs to learn the community's culture, decide what the church needs to do, and then sell the congregation on his vision. Otherwise, he will not have the support he needs.

When I go to a new congregation, I do not make immediate changes. I want to understand the culture and history of the church. A pastor may make changes and then discover that prominent people in the church have done the opposite of what he is trying to do. This creates immediate opposition because some in the church have different views. The pastor needs time to build credibility with the people who are influential in the congregation before selling them on his ideas. When they get on board, he will be in good shape.



My relationship with the former associate has helped to restore relationships between the people who left the church and the ones who stayed.—Williams

ministry. Without his leadership, I would have faced a much more difficult situation. The decision to bring a mature interim pastor when there is a church split has great merit and ought to be considered often.

The Holy Spirit placed in my heart a desire to develop a friendship with the former associate pastor. The first week of my pastorate a 40-year-old woman in the congregation passed away. Her mother mentioned that the associate pastor and her daughter had a close ministry relationship. I invited him to participate in the funeral.

Since then we have developed a wonderful friendship. The people who left New Life are wonderful people. My friendship with this associate has helped us as a church focus on the biblical mandate of forgiveness. My relationship with the former associate has helped to restore relationships between the people who left the church and the ones who stayed.

As you can imagine, many close friendships in the congregation had been disrupted. The people were experiencing grief and significant loss and wondered if they could be friends with those who left and still maintain loyalty to the church and the leadership. I emphasized that loyalty to a church is not as important as loyalty to the body of Christ. I demonstrated this truth through the relationship I had with the former associate pastor. As a result, many friendships have been restored. This is the result of grace.

HARMS: I agree. It is important to develop a relationship with the former pastor. The former pastor of Milaca Assembly is at another church not far away. I know and respect him. I speak highly of him to the church. That helps the process.

It is important to not be judgmental. Stan's statement about objectivity is true. The new pastor did not go through the conflict, but can handle issues objectively because of that. Many conflict issues are worked through or lose importance over time. It is better to be supportive of the people who have left and allow the issues to eventually drop and go away.

We had to build credibility. First, I talked with one or two well-respected individuals to get a better understanding of past circumstances and what needed to be done. I did not make many changes. I tried to hear what everyone was thinking. Everyone had something to say. Everyone had a vision.

Everyone had an idea or an opinion. I listened and worked my way through everyone's concerns. Once you allow people to express their feelings, then you can begin rebuilding.

Part of the rebuilding process involves reestablishing the core group. To do this, you must know who are the influential people, their talents, and then find places of ministry for them.

Our ministry involves training and placing people in positions of ministry and showing them they can succeed in ministry. The first thing I did to develop leadership was to meet with people who previously held a leadership position. I listened to what was on their heart. I told them, "What we are going to do is begin from here. We are not going to talk about the past. We cannot live in the past."

Second, I temporarily canceled some programs where there was insufficient staff to successfully maintain them.

Third, the district appointed five men from the church to serve on an advisory committee. They work with me and help keep the church going. Together we address the church's day-to-day needs. I also have younger men I am mentoring in different aspects of ministry.

Fourth, I sat down with different departments and evaluated what they were doing. I showed them ways to provide leadership. The church is also taking advantage of district training opportunities that help facilitate what departments are doing.

After we helped them find their place and trained them, they began thinking, *We can do this*.

We also had significant financial obligations. We raised funds from the congregation to meet our obligations. People began to think, *We may have lost a significant amount of our strength, but we can do this*. I started by bringing the people to a common understanding. Progress is being made.

I am also working to resolve past issues between individuals. Several have asked me to mediate for them. I told them, "I do not want these meetings to be only discussion oriented. Come prepared to do what needs to be done to bring resolution."

I asked each side, "Are you willing to work toward a resolution, or do you just want to make your point?" Both sides assured me that they wanted resolution. That is one of many steps required to rebuild the church. Bringing resolution to past issues will also bring unity in the church.

WHAT DIFFICULTIES DID YOU FACE IN BRINGING RESOLUTION TO THE CONFLICT?

HARMS: I have not had much difficulty in bringing healing to the congregation. The people are closer knit because of what has happened. They realize they need to work together, and they are doing that. It seems like a slow process, but we are getting there.

A minor difficulty has been the few issues between individuals with whom I am mediating. Our major difficulty is identifying who the leadership is and getting the people to accept new leadership.

Conversions have helped. More than 60 people have been added to the church; many are first-time converts. When new people attend, it tempers the influence of any unresolved issues. The church is building a new identity, and it has benefited the church.

WILLIAMS: I cannot say that the process has been without problems, but problems have been minimal. My confidence in God's people has been lifted by the willingness and humility that I have witnessed here.

Some fellowships in Lancaster County have a tradition of shunning those who disagree. Though it may be easy at times to find justification for rejecting people, at New Life the congregation is responding positively to reconciliation. God has given us a clear vision for the future of this ministry. We are not living in the past, but moving forward with expectation for the new opportunities that God has planned for us.



WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR THE PASTOR NOW EMBROILED IN CONFLICT OR FOR THE PASTOR COMING INTO A CHURCH WHERE THERE IS CONFLICT?

HARMS: The way you view your position affects how you handle circumstances. If you are protecting your interests, trying to promote yourself, or are worried about your position, you are hurting yourself. The body of Christ is the important issue.

Too often the issues are about the pastor. If the pastor is the issue, it is important that he change or resign.

If a situation develops in the church while you are the pastor, you need to get involved and work to settle the issues. You need to take the appropriate steps and deal with the

issues as they come. Be honest and open. Let people know what is going on. There are times when you need to deal with issues publicly. Some situations need to be dealt with privately. The pastor must ask the Lord for wisdom to know the difference.

My advice is this: Make sure the issues are not about you. If you can determine that, then you can begin to work on the problems that exist in your church.

WILLIAMS: Pastors should not take themselves too seriously, while at the same time not diminishing their role as the senior pastor. God wants to work through you. He has placed you in your church to lead and often times to bring about needed change. Accomplishing that will involve maintaining a delicate balance.

Pastors must resist labeling people. Difficult people are usually not born difficult. A common mistake is assuming you are easy to get along with. We must have a realistic view of ourselves. Many difficult people in the church have become difficult because of the disappointing actions of leadership. Bad experiences from the past can impact a congregation's response to decisions that are being made now. They may not

The Holy Spirit placed in my heart a desire to develop a friendship with the former associate pastor.—Williams

be able to see things as clearly as they should, making them suspicious of your motives.

Do not insist that you are always right. If you are wrong, admit it. Those you lead will gain respect for you, and you will develop their trust. Facing your mistakes and weaknesses is a vital part of strong leadership.

Be bold in leading people toward reconciliation. Follow the biblical principles of reconciliation. Following a biblical course of action will bring the approval and blessing of God. Forgiveness is not optional but mandated in Scripture. Everyone involved must understand that.

Remember the body of Christ is bigger than the pastor or congregation. It is not about any one individual; it is about the health and growth of the Lord's church.

It is also important that a pastor find another pastor who has experience in managing conflict. You should be candid with him concerning what you are dealing with, and ask for his advice. ■

Growing Thro





ugh Conflict

BY WILLIAM PRATHER

ILLUSTRATION: GARY LOCKE

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Can't we all just get along?" Eloquent in its simplicity, this plaintive appeal by Rodney King, who was viciously beaten by Los Angeles, California, policemen in March 1991, seems somehow rhetorical. An honest answer to King's question is: probably not, at least, not all the time.

Conflict is a normal part of life. People who try to avoid conflict create increased stress for themselves and others. For that reason, it is imperative that we learn to manage and grow through conflict.

I grew up in the rugged terrain of Wyoming where people must fight to survive. Even though I won most of the battles, I was left with a multitude of negative emotions: hurt, fright, confusion, and feelings of isolation and abandonment. I felt disliked, put down, misjudged, and ignored. These destructive emotions triggered screams inside my head, *Stay away from conflict at any cost.*

The antiwar movement of the '60s and the hippie way of life aligned with my attempt to keep the peace. Watching the flower children hold hands and sing protest songs agreed with my irrational approach to conflict. I believed nothing positive came from conflict. I embraced the church's version of a peace gathering where people sit around the campfire, hold hands, and sing "Kumbaya."

When my rugged individualism reared its head in Bible school, I heard confrontational phrases such as, "If you throw me another curve ball, you're out of here." I resisted conforming to another's idea of who I should be. This created enormous conflict in me. A song sung by Pete Seeger in 1963 expressed some of my frustration:

"Little boxes on the hillside, little boxes made of ticky-tacky,

Little boxes on the hillside, little boxes all the same."

Being different is part of the beauty of God's creation, but He wants us to live together in unity. Part of growing is learning to resolve, not avoid, conflict.

My wife, Betty Ann, was born in Philadelphia and brought up on a stoop in the inner city. She has a more realistic approach to handling conflict. In our early married life, I quickly realized that dealing with conflict was an undeniable fact of life, and it would benefit me to learn positive techniques to resolve my differences with others. Betty Ann thought a relaxing evening should be spent sitting on the porch holding hands, talking, and laughing; I thought we needed to



I embraced the church's version of a peace gathering where people sit around the campfire, hold hands, and sing "Kumbaya."

be at the corral feeding hay to the cattle. Something needed to be worked out. I must admit, however, that it was a slow process. Growing through conflict takes time.

As a young pastor in my first church I encountered conflict. Ninety-five percent of ministry involves relationships. Every relationship experiences conflict because no two people think alike. It seemed that I, and nearly everyone in the congregation, had different opinions about how the work of God should be accomplished. I had many negative emotions during those days. It was important for me to seek God and ask Him to control my thoughts and actions.

Through these experiences I learned that conflict is often necessary to produce personal, pastoral, and professional growth. I also learned I needed to recognize, analyze, and utilize the opinions and ideas of others.

INTERNAL GROWTH

Harville Hendrix, a noted marriage counselor, believes "conflict is growth wanting to happen." This is not how I viewed conflict. I believed there was only one winner — the one with

the most dynamic personality who could persuasively articulate his case. As long as I continued to think irrationally about conflict I could not grow.

Learning who I am

The key to handling conflict is to recognize and accept who I am. This takes honesty and reflection. Each year I take a personal retreat. I believe it is important to spend time away from others and spend time with the One who created me. I bring back into focus who I am as a man, a child of God, a husband, father, grandfather, father-in-law, friend, chaplain, and member of society.

During my retreat I am brutally honest about how I present myself to others. Do my attitude and actions cause conflict? I repent for not being the person God created me to be. When I return, I ask forgiveness from those whom I have been less than honest and cordial in my relationships. Someone once said, "We are who we *really* are, who we *think* we are, who others *think* we are, and who others *know* we are."

Pastors attend conflict-management seminars that focus on strategies and techniques for conflict resolution. They gain valuable insights and leave ready to make needed change. Once home, however, they are surprised to find that even though they apply these techniques, nothing changes. One vital element has been overlooked — they have not acknowledged and worked through their own character issues. Richard Minnich, pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Ogden, Utah, says: "The way to handle the most dangerous aspects of conflict is from the inside out."

Admitting to others who we really are is often difficult. Six years ago God used a clinical pastoral education course to expose me to the freeing aspect of admitting to others who I really am. Personal conflict occurs because ministers do not want people to see them for who they really are deep down. When we become authentic, transparent, and vulnerable to our spouse, children, colleagues, and members of our congregation, we become more successful in working through conflict. By being genuine, we can reduce the sparks of conflict and model a godly, transparent lifestyle.

Being transparent, however, is difficult for most of us because we desire to be liked. We want others to think we have all the answers. We maintain a façade, secretly knowing that not everyone likes us. We also know we have only a small percentage of the answers.

Is it rational to think everyone is going to like us? Will putting on a façade cause people to like us more? Can we not admit we have limited insight into life's questions? Those who continually think irrationally and promote their own agenda are more likely to have greater conflict with others. Authentic persons know who they are, are honest, and have no reason to promote themselves.

Emotional and mental growth

Most of us are willing to acknowledge the role our personal feelings play in developing conflict. Feelings or emotions are indicators of what we are thinking. For example, how often do you become angry with someone who agrees with you? Probably never. You think: *This guy is on my side. He agrees with me. He is my friend.* You take him to lunch and tell him how much you appreciate him. You test the waters by asking for his opinion on other issues. You increasingly feel better about your relationship. You feel more at ease having him around.

What we think often indicates how we will respond to conflict. Preceding every negative emotion is a negative thought. Preceding every positive emotion is a positive thought. When we control our thoughts, we control our emotions and the actions that are a direct result of our feelings.

People who are told they will never do anything right battle with uncertainty and inferiority. People who are deeply hurt after reaching out to someone find it difficult to trust others again. We do think about stimuli we perceive through our five senses. The stimulus that causes positive thoughts in one person may produce negative thoughts in someone else and, therefore, conflict.

Since we have no control over the thoughts of other people, we need to focus on our negative and destructive emotions that lead to actions that produce conflict.

How many people do you know who are no longer in full-time ministry because of emotional pain? Have you ever left a ministry position because you were hurt? Has your spouse experienced depression due to a ministry situation that turned negative because of conflict? Have you ever had flashbacks of bitterness



and pulled back from something spiritually significant because of a certain personality? Gracious, godly people carry hurt, bitterness, anger, and other emotional pain. But they often do not know how to release these emotions and experience the freedom that comes from knowing the truth and letting it set them free.

Three myths that hinder emotional growth

To overcome the destructive effects of negative emotions, we must stop believing the prominent myths propagated by well-meaning Christians.

Myth No. 1: Christians should not experience negative emotions or feelings. Many sincere people find themselves

If I choose to react in a painful manner by screaming and raising my voice, I will begin to wither physically, psychologically, and spiritually.

struggling with guilt because they have feelings they were told they should not have.

Every person has feelings. In themselves, feelings are neither good nor bad. Feelings are the products of our thoughts. We all experience anger, resentment, envy, jealousy, defensiveness, lust, and strife. These are part of the temptations in 1 Corinthians 10:13. We must recognize these feelings originate in our thinking. A Christian should not be controlled by his feelings, but must practice self-control (Proverbs 25:28). Once I control my thoughts, my emotions and actions are also controlled.

Myth No. 2: Prayer rids us of negative emotions. Prayer does not automatically trigger a mystical process that causes attitudes to change.

People repeatedly struggle in vain for results. They pray and ask for help, but no change of attitude or feelings occurs. They battle with the same emotions in conflict. A pattern of defeat soon develops. This is an issue we will continually encounter in our relationships as leaders. Our negative emotions may even affect how long we remain in a pastorate.

I do not adhere to do-it-yourself Christianity. We do not have the ability to make the needed changes in our lives. God is the only One who has the power to make deep inner changes in our thought lives.

Proverbs 4:23 says, "Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life" (NASB). To overcome negative thoughts and emotions, we must saturate our hearts and minds with the Word of God. The longer saturation takes place, the more our thinking will be affected.

Myth No. 3: Other people or situations cause me to have certain feelings or emotions. For example, to say, "She made

me angry," or, "He hurt my feelings," is to prevaricate. No one can make you think, feel, or do anything.

New mind in Christ

Ministers must take responsibility for how they manage their thinking. Many of us bottle up our negative feelings and do not address our thought life until we explode from the pressure. I have learned not to suppress my feelings, make excuses, or reason away negative comments.

We need to evaluate our mental and spiritual maturity by analyzing our thoughts to determine if they are rational or irrational. We may discover when we explore our thoughts and feel-

ings that certain words or actions trigger emotional responses, such as physical tension or even a verbal retaliation. We are more likely to control our reactions when

we consciously identify these triggers and recognize God's presence and quietly pray for His peace. We may not be able to do this simultaneously, but our response to negative emotions does not need to be a knee-jerk reaction. Taking time to respond rationally may help us avoid conflict.

Paul commands believers to develop healthy spiritual ways of thinking. He admonishes us to "put on" positive thoughts as we "put off" others (Colossians 3:1-14).

Paul also deals with our thought life in Romans. *Struggle* is a key word in Romans 7. We often struggle with our thinking. Romans 7:25 confirms it, but also confirms that Jesus Christ is the final answer. We believe this, we preach sermons on it, and we teach it, but too often we do not practice it.

Romans 8:5-7 tells us how. The idea is to *set our mind*. "For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace" (Romans 8:6, NASB).

Philippians 4:8 says, "Fix your thoughts on what is true and good and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely, and dwell on the fine, good things in others. Think about all you can praise God for and be glad about" (The Living Bible). Fixing our thoughts (setting our minds) is a command that requires a response of the will.

If I have just experienced a painful emotion, I must choose how I will react. If I choose to react in a painful manner by screaming and raising my voice, I will begin to wither physically, psychologically, and spiritually. To react in this manner is disobedience and sin (James 4:17).

The mature choice is to recognize my negative or irrational feelings, heed the evaluation of my thinking, and admit it to God and the person with whom I am having conflict. Then, by an act of my will, determine with God's help to demonstrate

biblical love, understanding, and patience. When I respond in a biblical manner, God energizes me.

Analyzing perceptions

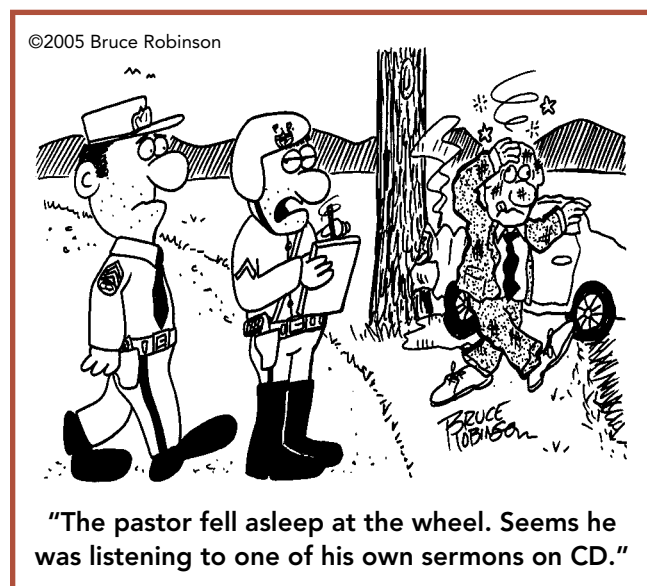
It is important to analyze how we handle conflict. Our perceptions affect our judgments. My perception of an incompatible situation or person is often skewed. A spouse or close friend can help in such cases. Betty Ann knows my character and can objectively help me better than anyone else can. A friend helped me realize that I have trouble saying difficult things in a constructive way. I doubt if I would have realized this without some assistance.

We must be careful not to make wrong assumptions. At times, there is more than one solution to a problem. If someone differs with or objects to my idea, it does not make him a bad person or his opinion wrong.

Some leaders believe that by virtue of their position their opinion is always right. This is irrational thinking. Leaders do play an important role in decisionmaking. However, we need to respect other people's ideas and opinions. We must listen attentively to their points of view without thinking up a rebuttal.

A bumper sticker displayed by contractors in Florida says, "I don't care how it's done up North." Different points of view can create conflict, but growth starts with respectful listening. Growth cannot occur if we believe our opinions or value judgments are the only correct ones. Leaders and pastors are not infallible. There is a time to listen to what others have to say. This approach is always Christ-honoring.

My pastoral and professional growth is challenged and nourished more by the constructive criticisms I receive than by the compliments. If I am observant, thoughtful, and attentive to other people, I usually learn something constructive. This opens the way for relationships to develop and for cooperation on current or future projects.



GROWING THROUGH CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Several conflict-management styles are used in dealing with conflict. How we choose to use these styles says something about our personal growth.

Avoidance

Avoidance means ignoring a comment or situation, or allowing it to be placed on the back burner until you can arrange a more suitable place and time to respond. Avoidance can be a valuable technique.

A few years ago I was a candidate for a pastoral position. After the service my family and I went out for dinner. A man from the church approached our table and bluntly told me I could not count on his vote because no preacher in 35 years had been worthy of his vote. You can imagine what I wanted to say to him. But a restaurant is not the proper place for such a confrontation. My response had to show consideration for my wife and teenage daughters, which it did. Any conversation within earshot of my family would only have created tension for everyone.

We derive an important principle from avoidance: we are not responsible for another person's thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, and actions. Each person is in complete ownership of these, as we are of our own. When someone is involved in an irrational conflict, it is best for others to avoid the situation. Just as light has no fellowship with darkness, rationality and irrationality are diametrically opposed.

Accommodation

Accommodation means we recognize differences exist, but choose to focus on similarities. Paul said, "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). Paul did struggle at times. Remember his conflict with Barnabas about Mark?

If I want to honor God and further His kingdom, I will sometimes agree to disagree and press on through God's grace and mercy. Accommodation is often necessary because of our childishness and selfishness. Our sinful hearts escalate our desires and preferences into the realm of authority where our desires control our decisions. Many leaders take their authority too far.

It is wise at the outset of any conflict to determine how far you will advance into the conflict and then set boundaries. Boundaries are not determined by the strength or weakness of your opponent, but rather the point where God ceases to be honored. After the conflict, we often see God's plan being verified, as with Paul and Barnabas when Mark became vital to Paul's ministry (Colossians 4:10). I have grown because I am learning to agree to disagree and let God work out His will.

Compromise

Compromise means both parties give a little. Flexibility is key. Many Christians believe their options in conflict are either conquer or be conquered. Others believe the word *compromise* is another definition of defeat. But meeting halfway is more rational than mutual annihilation. There will always be people who choose to confront based on their principles. But if they are honest, they will admit that their principles are only preferences.

A vast difference of definition exists between a principle and a preference. Ask yourself: *Do I prefer an environment where people feel uncomfortable during singing? Or, do I prefer an environment where 'we all sing the same thing, and have no divisions among us, because we are perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment'?* (my paraphrase of 1 Corinthians 1:10).

Many leaders struggle with tolerance. We tolerate diverse ages, ethnicity, language, and backgrounds. But it is difficult to tolerate another's preferences. Many people leave one church to attend another because of their preferences. Compromise is a gift of grace. If you receive that gift, practice it to the fullest extent possible. As you do, you will mature in Christ.

Competition

Competition usually conjures up visions of a contest — a foot race. Too many instances exist in the church where the pastor believes the success of his ministry depends on him being the victor in the race (conflict). Some pastors do not even care how the race is won. They believe they should win by virtue of their position.

Those on the opposing side of the conflict do not want to sign up for the race. They think it is better to move on than to

engage in a conflict where both parties are not winners. They think: *Others in the church have more power, greater influence, and better connections; therefore, I will never win, so I won't even try.* Is it any wonder people move from congregation to congregation? They move because of these irrational thoughts. This is why many churches have been unhealthy for years. Pastors come and go, and the congregation dies in immaturity.

Has God called us to enter this race because of our power, strength, or ability? Who is the organizer of this competition? Who gets the glory when the race is finished? The kingdom of God will be enhanced if ministers live out the answers to these questions before the people and teach by example.

Competition in the church is won by running with godly principles and by allowing every person to retain his dignity. Unlike worldly competition, church competition is guided by love and support for each competitor, facilitating a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ.

Someone said, "You may win the battle, but lose the war." Many individuals lose a conflict but begin to stockpile weapons so they will not lose the final battle and, with it, the war. This process is diminished greatly if there is underlying support and love. We must never forget that this is Christ's race we are running and the other competitors are His church, which He bought with His own life. So run with integrity the race set before you.

Collaboration

Collaboration means working through a conflict together. It is being open and fair with no hidden agendas. There is an honest attempt to explore how each person's needs might be met. This takes integrity and mutual respect.

CONCLUSION

The late Leo Buscaglia, professor, lecturer, and author, wrote *The Fall of Freddie the Leaf: A Story of Life for All Ages*. In this book he includes a quote from his 5-year-old niece. He asked her, "What is a bridge?"

She responded, "A bridge is when the ground falls out from under you, and you build something to connect the cracks."

This is what the Word of God tells us to endeavor to do in resolving conflict. Build a bridge ... and keep the peace. "Be of good comfort, be of one mind, *live in peace*; and the God of love and peace will be with you" (2 Corinthians 13:11, NKJV). ■



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CONFLICT MANAGEMENT RESOURCE LIST

ENRICHMENT RESOURCES

<http://empower.ag.org>

<http://enrichment.ag.org>

Managing Church Conflict Creatively: Part One
http://ag.org/enrichmentjournal/199802/086_managing_conflict_1.cfm

Managing Church Conflict Creatively: Part Two
http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/199803/098_managingconflict_2.cfm

Managing Church Conflict Creatively: Part Three
http://ag.org/enrichmentjournal/199804/086_managing_conflict.cfm

Managing Church Conflict Creatively: Part Four
http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/199901/102_managing_conflict_4.cfm

Spiritual Leadership Series Part 2:
Challenges To Spiritual Leadership
http://ag.org/enrichmentjournal/200101/0101_112_mcmannus.cfm

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Treatment of Subordinate Staff Members: Principles of Spiritual Leadership from the Salutations of Paul

BY JAMES D. HERNANDO

Sam¹ sat staring into his coffee cup. The look on his face told me his ministry experience had proven painful. His hurt was caused by a promising youth pastorate that had gone sour. At first, not even a 60- or 70-hour work-week could dampen his enthusiasm. He could not believe he was doing the work of the ministry and was getting paid for it. Although his primary responsibility was youth ministry, the senior pastor gradually shifted more and more responsibility onto his shoulders. He dove into each new task with joyful diligence. Sam especially enjoyed the few times he preached on Sunday nights when the pastor was on ministry engagements outside the church. The people seemed to enjoy his preaching and were most affirming.

After a year Sam sensed coldness and stiffness in his conversations with the

senior pastor. The senior pastor had become critical of the smallest details in Sam's ministry performance. Sam intensified his efforts to please the pastor, but to no

Paul ... goes out of his way to affirm his subordinates and acknowledge their praiseworthy contributions.

avail. After less than 2 years, the pastor informed Sam that due to staff restructuring and budgetary constraints, he was being let go. The inflection of his words betrayed the dubious nature of those reasons. With watery eyes, Sam left the pastor's office.

I cannot count how often I have heard similar stories during my 20 years of college and seminary teaching. Sam's story is obviously one-sided. However, it raises the serious problem of pastor-staff relations and their incredibly complex dynamics.

A few years ago I began studying the principles of spiritual leadership in the New Testament and was drawn to the example and writings of Paul. In particular, my interest first landed on Paul's treatment of his fellow workers. The launching pad for my study came from a most unlikely portion of Scripture — the closing salutations in Romans.

Oddly, in Romans, Paul is writing to a church he had neither founded nor visited. In Romans 16:1–16, however, he greets or mentions 27 individuals by name. It is likely Paul had met these people in his missionary travels, and they had moved to Rome.

Some were probably converts whom he had personally disciplined and trained for ministry. As apostle, Paul was a spiritual leader to the churches he founded and the people he trained. Upon closer scrutiny, this passage provides insight into Paul's treatment of and relationship with subordinates — believers who were not his apostolic peers.

PAUL'S USE OF COMMENDATION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Paul was quick to commend and free with his praise. Look how often this is the case. Phoebe has been a helper or "servant"² not only to Paul, but also to many in the church (Romans 16:2).³ Priscilla and Aquila "risked their own necks" for Paul (Romans 16:3,4). Tryphaena and Tryphosa are called "workers in the Lord"

Public commendation and personal affirmation that is sincerely given promotes the good will, edification, and motivation of subordinate staff members.

(Romans 16:12). Mary was singled out as a hard worker (Romans 16:6), as was Persis (Romans 16:12). Paul, it seems, goes out of his way to affirm his subordinates and acknowledge their praiseworthy contributions.⁴

PAUL PUT THE EMPHASIS ON EQUALITY

Paul often regarded his subordinates as equals. He did this by attaching the Greek preposition *sun* (*together with*) to a noun. They were "fellow workers" in Christ (Romans 16:3,9, compare 21). Andronicus and Julius were "fellow prisoners" with Paul for the cause of the gospel (Romans 16:7). What we observe here is the perspective Paul retained throughout his writings. Titus is Paul's "partner" (*koinon*, meaning sharer or partaker) in the work of the gospel (2 Corinthians 8:23). Epaphroditus was not only Paul's "brother" but a "fellow worker and fellow soldier" with Paul (Philippians 2:25). While Timothy was Paul's spiritual "child in the faith" (1 Timothy 1:2) and his "beloved son" (2 Timothy 1:2), Paul nevertheless regarded him as an equal and a "fellow worker in the gospel of Christ" (1 Thessalonians 3:2).

Careful scrutiny of Paul's epistles yields a remarkable discovery. Paul did not regard his subordinates as subordinates. They were collaborators or fellow servants of the Lord. Paul did not emphasize his apostolic calling, position, or authority when relating to those he served⁵ as an apostle. Paul understood his authority as an apostle, but he did not mention it except when he needed to deal with churches or groups that were opposing or threatening the work of the Lord.⁶ Paul was even reluctant to use his apostolic authority for purposes of discipline. Even when rebuking the troublesome Corinthians⁷ Paul reminded them: "For this reason I am writing these things while absent, so that when present I need not use severity, in accordance with the authority which the Lord gave me for building up and not tearing down" (2 Corinthians 13:10).

PAUL KNEW HIS SUBORDINATES

The salutations of Romans 16 clearly indicate that Paul knew

these people personally. To recall an old saying, "There is no sweeter sound to a man's ear than the sound of his own name." Paul not only called them by name, but many were also intimate acquaintances. Paul could call Epaenetus, Ampliatus, and Persis "my beloved"⁸ (Romans 16:5,8,12). He also knew them well enough to commend them individually.

Elsewhere Paul could say that no one bore the same spirit of concern for the Philippians like Timothy (Philippians 2:20). Tychicus was called a "beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord" (Ephesians 6:21). He noted the constant prayer life of Epaphras (Colossians 4:12) and that Titus was "earnest" (2 Corinthians 8:17), "tested and found diligent in many things" (2 Corinthians 8:22). Paul had witnessed their faithful service and was able to tailor his commendations to highlight their strengths and contributions to the work of the Lord.

PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

The above analysis yields no new ground-breaking theology, only some practical counsel regarding the treatment of subordinate staff members



drawn from Pauline principles of spiritual leadership — principles often lost sight of and in need of remembrance.

The wise spiritual leader nurtures his subordinates and works to build close relationships with them

Leading is most effective when it is done in a relationship of love and trust. While Paul acknowledged his right to use his apostolic authority to exhort the Thessalonians, he preferred to remind them of his parental love and concern for them as his spiritual children (1 Thessalonians 2:7,8; compare 1 Corinthians 4:15). The senior pastor is called to lead, but if he does not personally know the people his leadership will be impaired. Pauline leadership requires a deep commitment to relationship building and personal mentoring.

The wise spiritual leader affirms and publicly commends his subordinates

Public commendation and personal affirmation that is sincerely given⁹ promotes the good will, edification, and motivation of subordinate staff members. It not only builds the confidence of subordinates, it also helps them build credibility with the congregation. In addition, public commendation communicates an important value to the church — members of the Body are needed and appreciated *within* the Body for their gifts to the Body.

The wise spiritual leader works to promote a team concept of leadership that emphasizes equality among team members

Paul's perspective of spiritual authority and his perspective of the church as the body of Christ shaped his understanding of spiritual leadership. Paul's perception of spiritual authority reminds

one of Jesus' teachings that authority in the Kingdom was given for the purpose of serving others (Mark 10:42–45). Great responsibility requires greater authority. Authority does not derive from the office, but from the functional responsibility entrusted to the office.

Paul's perspective on the church as the body of Christ was developed from his own teachings on the organic unity and interdependence of members within the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12–27). God's design makes every member of the Body important and necessary to the overall purpose and function of the Body. Thus, there is no place for attitudes of inferiority or superiority (1 Corinthians 12:15–25). This explains why Paul takes issue with the Corinthian exaltation of apostolic

Leading is most effective when it is done in a relationship of love and trust.

leaders such as himself, Apollos, and Cephas (1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:4–6,22; 4:6). Such distinctions and attempts to elevate one person above another do not take into account that members may differ in function, but each person has a singular purpose and is God's fellow worker toward that end (1 Corinthians 3:8,9).

An inherent dialectic exists between authoritarian structures and the egalitarian design of the Body that Paul teaches. Hierarchy left untended undermines collegiality. Ecclesiastical structure or polity that communicates a hierarchy of status, position, and authority works against building a ministry team of equal, collaborators in Christ. Those who have inherited that structure may want to consider altering or modifying it by implementing policies, procedures, and practices that mitigate the tensions of hierarchy and promote a cooperative team spirit and collegiality.

These are noteworthy principles of spiritual leadership extracted from the apostle Paul. Exactly how they are implemented is best left for pastoral practitioners to decide. Nevertheless, for those who seek to respond to the instruction of Scripture,

they are principles that should not be ignored. ■



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ENDNOTES

1. This ministry situation is based on a true story. Names and details have been changed to protect the people involved.
2. The Greek word used is *diakonan*. Although it can have the meaning of *servant* or *minister*, it can also refer to a *deacon* in the church. Paul uses it in this sense five times: Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8,10,12,13.
3. Scriptures are NASB.
4. This is a common practice of Paul as his epistles amply attest. For examples, see 2 Corinthians 8:16–23 (Titus); Philippians 2:19–21 (Timothy); Philippians 2:25 (Epaphroditus); Ephesians 6:21 (Tychicus); Colossians 4:9 (Onesimus); Colossians 4:10 (Aristarchus); Colossians 4:12 (Epaphras); and Colossians 4:14 (Luke).
5. Paul has imbibed the spirit of Kingdom greatness taught by the Lord himself. “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:25–28).
6. See 1 Corinthians 4:15; 2 Corinthians 10:8; 1 Thessalonians 2:6; 4:1; Titus 2:15.
7. See 2 Corinthians 2:3,4,9; 7:12. This so-called “tearful letter” is not 1 Corinthians, but one of the “missing” epistles of Paul written to Corinth. See also 1 Corinthians 5:9. Paul would much rather appeal to them as a spiritual *father* or *parent* (1 Corinthians 4:15; 1 Thessalonians 2:7,8).
8. Another legitimate rendering could be “beloved of (or ‘by’) me.”
9. Some senior pastors gushingly praise staff and church members in a way that is out of proportion with reality. When that occurs, the praise appears insincere and loses credibility and its positive effect. Note that Paul in his salutations mentions several people without comment or commendation. (Romans 16:15,16; compare Demas in Colossians 4:17). Paul does not feel compelled to praise everyone, only those he knows well enough to truthfully praise or commend.



What Does It Really Mean To Be

POSTMODERN?

BY STANLEY J. GRENZ

Editor's Note: On March 12, 2005, Dr. Stanley Grenz went to be with the Lord. His untimely death comes as a deep loss to us and to those around the world who have been touched by his scholarship and life. Enrichment commissioned Dr. Grenz to write six essays on Postmodernism and the church. This essay represents the third in the series. The fourth and fifth essays were completed just prior to his death. These will appear in the fall 2005 and winter 2006 issues.

How quaint, I thought as I spotted the bright blue letters on the white banner on the Bay Community Baptist Church in Birch Bay, Washington: "Missions Conference, September 5–10, 2004." I had not seen a banner like this in years.

I am familiar with missions conferences. After harvest each year the First Baptist Church of Underwood, North Dakota, where my father pastored in the late 1950s, held such an event. During a weekend the church would have a banquet

and hold extra services. As the pastor's family we would host one or two visiting missionaries who were on furlough from far-off places like Cameroon, Japan, or the San Luis Valley of Colorado. During the service we would view a slide presentation that would invariably conclude with a slide showing the sun setting over the ocean in some exotic place. We were told that we held the answer to the grave question posed by the picture. Whether this day marked the sunrise or the sunset of the missionary endeavor depended on our commitment to pray, give, and even go.

The people of Underwood needed to

hear the glowing reports of people who were converted from sin or cleansed from leprosy. It reminded them that even in their little congregation in North Dakota they were participants in spreading the gospel around the globe.

Missions conferences with sunrise/sunset slides may seem out of place in our 21st-century world. But we still need the reminder these events provided. In fact, postmodernism has increased, rather than decreased, the need to keep the missional character of the church in the spotlight. This third essay in our series explains how postmodernism offers an opportune moment to recover the age-old understanding of the church as a missional body. By treating postmodernism as an opportunity,

One mistaken assumption is that being postmodern requires adopting a universal formula imported from a successful church somewhere else.

I am enabled to set forth what I think it might mean to be a postmodern church. I will follow an indirect approach because this approach clearly shows being a postmodern church is the key to being a missional church in the postmodern context.

MISTAKEN UNDERSTANDINGS OF BEING POSTMODERN

Before I define a postmodern church, I must remove some clutter. Today, many values and impulses are seen as postmodern, but are clearly modern.

One mistaken assumption is that being postmodern requires adopting a universal formula imported from a successful church somewhere else. Many practitioners are under the illusion that finding the right program — a postmodern church tool kit — will help them have a successful postmodern church. During recent decades, North American Christians have gravitated to prepackaged programs, seminars, and conferences in a quest to catch the crest of the wave. A few years ago the Vineyard Movement was the way into the postmodern culture. But the cutting edge soon shifted and churches determined that the new missional context required being *seeker sensitive*. The *purpose-driven* model followed this trend. Since then, other

buzzwords such as *ancient-future* and *natural church development* have come to the forefront. The most recent approach is to become part of the *emergent church*.

A second mistaken idea is that a particular outward form is definitive of postmodernism. "If we could get the form right," many church leaders opine, "then we could be a successful postmodern church." But what is the requisite form? Perhaps the most widely touted idea is that a church is postmodern if it features the right music, the right instruments, and the right leaders. To be postmodern, churches have replaced the song leader with the worship team, traded the organ for drums, and axed the choir.

Another popular idea is that a church is postmodern if it has the right worship format. Consequently, some churches have adopted the worship and Word formula; others, the new eclectic worship style; the hip have multisensory worship.

Perhaps another key factor is location. A few years ago we were told a church is postmodern if it is located in a shopping mall. But soon the action shifted to the warehouse, which was followed by the coffee house. Today it seems postmodernism requires that we meet in a bar.

Don't get me wrong. These matters are important and every church must give careful consideration to each of them. Yet, these widely held proposals do not make a church postmodern. In fact, any suggestion based on the assumption that postmodernism is connected to a universally applicable, program-oriented, one-size-fits-all approach to church is not postmodern. Instead, it reflects a modern outlook that is antithetical to a central postmodern sensitivity — the focus on the local rather than the universal.

THE TRULY POSTMODERN CHURCH

Being postmodern, then, has little to do with today's faddish conceptions. Instead, the postmodern church is genuinely postmodern, genuinely Christian, and as a result, genuinely missional. The postmodern church is a community of faith that views postmodernism as a context in which biblical Christianity can occur. It allows the shaking of the foundations in our society to occasion an earnest listening to the Spirit speaking through Scripture as He leads the church to rediscover dimensions of the gospel that have been forgotten in the modern era. Above all, the postmodern church desires to be led by the Spirit so it might be effective in the context in which God has placed it.

Five values are endemic to postmodernism that the postmodern church takes seriously in its quest to embody biblical Christianity.

First, the postmodern church values holism and seeks to minister to the whole person. To this end, saving souls, a crucial hallmark of the evangelical church in the modern era, is coupled with a genuine concern for social involvement. Instead of focusing solely on reason and the cognitive aspect in worship, teaching, and preaching, the postmodern church finds ways to engage the whole person. It realizes that a person's rational, emotional, and intuitive or imaginative aspects are inseparably intertwined.

Second, the postmodern church values diversity and celebrates it in various ways. Rather than cater to the preferences of one group, it seeks to reflect multiculturalism in its community. It desires to honor a variety of cultural expressions. The postmodern church is not multicultural because it

strives to be postmodern, but because it strives to be biblical. It desires to attain the biblical ideal for the church. This ideal is evident in the grand vision that concludes the Book of Revelation. In this vision, a great host from every nation is praising the triune God and is bringing the treasures of the nations into the New Jerusalem. By emulating that vision, the postmodern church seeks to be a foretaste of what God will bring to pass. The church's desire to be a multicultural people is evidenced by its intergenerational and multiethnic communal life, worship, and leadership.

Valuing diversity also means celebrating the giftedness and ministries of its members while promoting the unity of the Body. The triune God models this aspect of church life. The God we serve is three distinct persons and yet is truly one. In this vision for the church, leaders are examples, empowerers, and visionaries for the community. The church discourages dictatorial leadership that stifles the people's input and participation. Furthermore, acknowledging diversity leads the church away from the modern idea that the entire congregation must participate in any prepackaged program the pastor might choose. The church is free to allow the Spirit to work in any



way He desires to accomplish God's will among and through His people.

Third, the postmodern church values relationships. It acknowledges the biblical truth that people are not self-sufficient, but find their identity through participation in God-honoring relationships. Valuing relationships affects the life of the congregation. It discourages the tendency to become an ecclesiastical enclave — a godly ghetto — and encourages fellowship with other congregations and with the surrounding community.

Fourth, the postmodern church values spirituality. It realizes that the goal of its ministries is not merely to impart knowledge, but also to instill wisdom. Wisdom is the ability to apply genuine knowledge to the situations of life to promote better living. The postmodern church realizes that its mission is to facilitate an encounter between God and people who are on a quest for God.

The greatest ministry opportunity it has with contemporary society is not providing answers to life's questions, but in its willingness to help others discover and live the abundant life that only God can give.

Finally, the postmodern church values community. This characteristic will be discussed next quarter.

THE BOTTOM LINE: THE MISSIONAL POSTMODERN CHURCH

The banner on the Bay Community Baptist Church was promoting what the congregation in North Dakota discussed each fall: the missional responsibility of the church. The postmodern church realizes that it is a people entrusted with a mandate to glorify God through worship, edification, and outreach. A genuinely postmodern church is inherently missional. In fact, it is less concerned about being postmodern than it is about being faithful to its calling. What makes it postmodern is its call to serve the present generation, which is a postmodern generation. A missional church, in submission to Christ and empowered by the Spirit, will accomplish its call as it seeks to understand the times and embody the gospel in the postmodern context in which God has placed it.

Because it seeks to fulfill its calling to be a missional church in the postmodern context under the lordship of Christ and by the power of the Spirit, the postmodern church can boldly go where no one has gone before. ■



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The Macedonian Model GIVING BY EXAMPLE

BY RANDAL K. BARTON

When we consider biblical models for church stewardship, the church at Macedonia might be our last choice. The churches in Macedonia were reputed to be persecuted and extremely poor. Yet, Paul in his epistle to the Corinthian church used the Macedonian churches as an example of stewardship (2 Corinthians 8). These churches also serve as a model for us today.

Much can be learned using the Macedonian churches as a model for biblical stewardship. One great lesson is to encourage giving *by example*. The example you choose can profoundly impact the response to the need. The world's philanthropy model honors those who make large gifts — the bigger the gift, the more recognition is given. Thanking a major donor is not wrong, but the Macedonian model gives different criteria by which to evaluate giving.

Paul shared with the Corinthian church what the churches in Macedonia had done: "For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints" (2 Corinthians 8:3,4). The Macedonian churches were not only poor, but they also had pressing needs. The financial sacrifice they made, despite their extreme poverty, was compelling. Paul knew the stewardship they modeled would have great impact on the giving of others.

Several years ago, we conducted a capital campaign in a wealthy church.

Several in leadership made substantial financial pledges. On commitment Sunday, some of the leadership's gifts were shared with the congregation. The most influential example chosen was not a six-figure pledge, however, but a high school student from a single-parent home who had worked and saved for 3 years to purchase a car when he turned 16. For his 16th birthday, he donated 100 percent of his savings to the capital campaign and personally shared his testimony of giving with the congregation. The capital campaign was an enormous success.

Model stewardship in your church or ministry by sharing examples from the pulpit, through newsletters, via the Web, or in your bulletin of people who found joy in giving in the midst of want. Jesus announced that the widow who gave a few mites gave more than all the others (Luke 21:1-4).

Thanking a major donor is not wrong, but the Macedonian model gives different criteria by which to evaluate giving.

Why are we reluctant to follow the Macedonian model? A major hindrance is the welfare myth that the "haves" give to support the "have nots." An example of this mentality is a progressive income tax where the poor pay little or no taxes and the rich pay a substantially higher percentage of their income. The principle of tithing exposes this as an unbiblical economic model. Paul understood that.

Pastors should ask people to give sacrificially. A heavenly principle is put into motion when people give sacrificially — something that can make a phenomenal difference in their lives. Adopting the Macedonian model provides not only an example for those who can afford to give generously, but it also places God's laws of multiplication into motion so those who find themselves in need can receive a much greater blessing. The widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:7-24) shared out of her poverty, and both her and her son's lives were spared.

May we intentionally follow the pattern of Paul in utilizing the Macedonian church as a model to encourage giving, the example of Jesus to publicly declare the stewardship of the widow with a few mites, and the widow of Zarephath whose example should embolden us to make sacrificial giving a priority in our lives. ■



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PRAYING PAYSON of Portland, Maine

BY WILLIAM P. FARLEY



A couple of years ago I attended a conference designed to help pastors deepen their preaching skills. The keynote speaker was a national authority on preaching. Throughout his lectures he quoted Edward Payson (1783–1827) of Portland, Maine. I had also read Payson's works and had been deeply blessed.

Although Edward Payson is largely forgotten today, he was well-known in the first half of the 19th century. According to Iain Murray, Payson's biography by Asa Cummings "was probably the most influential ministerial biography to appear in the United States in the first half of the 19th century."¹ His popularity was so great that thousands of 19th-century parents named their children after him.²

Who was Edward Payson; why was he important; and what can we learn from his life and the times in which he lived?

SHORT BIOGRAPHY

In 1783, Edward Payson was born to Seth Payson, a congregational pastor in Rindge, New Hampshire. From an early age, his unusual intelligence was evident. By age 4, he was a proficient reader. Like most great preachers, Payson's "thirst for knowledge was the ruling passion of his soul."³ This thirst was evident in his childhood.

When he was 17, his father enrolled him at Harvard as a sophomore (he skipped his freshman year). He graduated in 1803 at age 20. His classmates

ridiculed him for his voracious reading. They said in jest he had read every book in the Harvard library.

The death of his brother in 1804 ignited his conversion. It was a decisive change for the 21-year-old. Payson wrote his mother about his new relationship with Christ, "I am so happy, that I cannot possibly think nor write of anything else."⁴

Convinced that God had called him to the ministry, he began the rigorous spiritual disciplines that would eventually produce such a great harvest. He started the discipline of rising early for prayer and Scripture reading. He immersed himself in books like Jonathan Edwards' treatise on *Original Sin* and *The Freedom of the Will*, preparing himself single-mindedly for the calling that he so keenly felt.

He also began the prayer life that later made him famous. "He prayed without ceasing," wrote his biographer.⁵ He "studied theology on his knees. Much of his time he spent literally prostrated, with the Bible open before him, pleading the promises."⁶

Payson began to perceive his sinfulness at this point in his life. A typical diary entry reads: "Never appeared so exceedingly vile and loathsome to myself as I did this day. ... I felt like sinking into the dust, in the idea that His pure eye was fixed upon me, and that saints and angels saw how vile I was."⁷

In 1807, he began a pastoral relationship with the Congregational Church in Portland, Maine, where he served until his death in 1827. Such grace and power attended his preaching that three Congregational societies asked this 24-year-old to become their pastor. A typical entry in Payson's diary during this time reads: "Was not much assisted myself, but what was said seemed to come with power. Many were in tears, and all seemed stirred up; so that, though I went crushed down under discouragement, I came back rejoicing."⁸

In 1811, he married Ann Louisa Shipman, who bore him eight children. Their family was a model of Christian godliness and was admired throughout New England.

Payson was an effective soul-winner. His congregation did not grow primarily by disgruntled Christians transferring from across town. He also did not consider a person to be converted on the basis of his testimony alone. Rather, Payson waited until the novice began to show signs of spiritual fruit. Only then did they consider a person converted and admit him to the Communion table.

With these strict guidelines in mind, in September of 1809, he wrote his mother, "Last Communion, we admitted 11 to the church, and next Sabbath we shall admit 12 more." He went on, "The appetite for hearing seems insatiable, and our assemblies are more crowded than ever. Many have lately joined us."⁹ This was typical of his experience. During the 20 years of his ministry, his church received more than 700 new converts.

What was the secret of Payson's success? The first reason for his success was prayer. At 26, he notes in his diary, "Was enabled to agonize in prayer for myself and [my] people, and to make intercession with unutterable groanings."¹⁰ He was nicknamed "Praying Payson." It has been said that the wooden floor at his bedside was worn by his knees from his often prevailing.¹¹

The second reason for his success was his emphasis on preaching. Payson believed the proclamation of God's Word was his primary job. To this end, he labored in God's Word and prayer many hours each day. Administration and counseling did not distract him until his time with God was satisfied.

The third reason why he became a successful evangelist was he preached with great passion. Although he preached with great love and affection, he always sought, like Charles Simeon, "to rouse and humble, rather than to comfort them; for, if they can be kept humble, comfort will follow."¹²

As his preaching reputation grew, he received numerous invitations to preach in neighboring New England churches. Then offers began to come from larger, more prestigious churches in cities like New York, but Payson refused them all. Ambitious for God, not money or prestige, he remained loyal to the flock God had entrusted to his care.

After his death, many tried to explain the power behind his preaching. "It was the eloquence of truth spoken in love," noted his biographer. "The words seemed to come from his mouth encompassed by that glowing atmosphere in which they left the heart, and to brand their very impression in every heart on which they fell."¹³ The *Christian Spectator* wrote that he spoke "as if from actual observation ... as if [he] had seen with his own eyes the spiritual objects he described — that he had heard from Christ."¹⁴ Every preacher who has been greatly used by God has had a similar reputation. Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones noted that great preachers speak as witnesses. They testify to what they have seen and heard, not to what others have told them.

God did not favor Payson with a long life. In his early 40s his health began to fail. He suffered in great pain for several months. As his suffering grew so did his joy in God. He lost the use of his limbs. Although he was confined to bed and in great pain, the joy of the Holy Spirit inundated him. "I can find no words to express my happiness," he wrote a friend. "I seem to be swimming in a river of pleasure, which is carrying me on to the great fountain."¹⁵ He died in the spring of 1827.

APPLICATION

Today's Christian leader can learn many lessons from Edward Payson. The first lesson is the need for the power of a deep experiential union with Christ. Payson enjoyed great pulpit power because he spent much time in prayer and Bible study. Through these disciplines God spoke, and to the degree that God spoke Payson's preaching was infused with spiritual power.

Payson's humility enhanced his relationship with God. He was well acquainted with his sin and therefore, by extension, God's love. Because Payson was so weak in his own eyes, God's power was safe in his hands (2 Corinthians 13:4). A fellow minister, who knew Payson well, wrote: "In all my conversation with this wonderful man, I never heard him utter a word that bordered on boasting, or savored of pride; but he seemed to have a surprising sense of his own unworthiness, and of the amazing love of God in making himself known to him. And giving him a hope in his mercy."¹⁶

The second lesson we learn from Payson is the importance of spiritual reading.

Great leaders are usually great readers. We will impact our generation to the degree we cultivate our mind, by immersing ourselves in solid Christian books that provoke our love for God and our sense of personal need.

The third lesson we learn from Payson is the proper role of a pastor. Payson would be uncomfortable with the contemporary CEO pastoral model. Although he faithfully administered his church, it was a necessary burden. He gave precedence to the real work — prayer and the ministry of God's Word (Acts 6:4). His biographer claims that Payson spent 12 hours a day in study and 2 hours in prayer.¹⁷ Payson believed this was the pastoral work that brought the results he longed for.

Finally, Payson's life reminds us of the importance of prayer. His reputation as a man of prayer earned him the appellation of "Praying Payson of Portland" given him

Payson's humility enhanced his relationship with God. He was well acquainted with his sin and therefore, by extension, God's love.

by his peers. Payson's advice to his fellow ministers was: "Prayer is the first thing, the second thing, and the third thing. ... Pray, then, my dear brother, pray, pray," he told a friend.

Comparing the spiritual fervor of Payson's era with that of today, Iain Murray writes, "what marked them [Payson and his peers] most was their low views of themselves."¹⁸ Murray then notes how this great sense of poverty propelled them into prayer. He quotes Payson as an example, "Earnestness in prayer ... requires a true view of oneself: You cannot make a rich man beg like a poor man; you cannot make a man that is full cry for food like one that is hungry."¹⁹ Needy people pray. Humility motivates prayer: self-sufficiency hinders it. Payson's great sense of need and personal bankruptcy led him to the prolonged prayer that was the source of his spiritual power.

Of Payson, E.M. Bounds wrote, “His continuing instant in prayer, be his circumstances what they might, is the most noticeable fact in his history, and points out the duty of all who would rival his eminency. To his ardent and persevering prayers must no doubt be ascribed in a great measure his distinguished and almost uninterrupted success.”

The Complete Works of Edward Payson are available in three volumes.²⁰ His biography and sermons are rich and illuminating. The clarity and quality of his prose is comparable to that of Charles Spurgeon, and his theology is rich and deep. One admirer has written, “His sermons are easy to read and the reader comes away with a clearer view of our Lord and God. After reading one sermon, you will have a hard time finding an equal who can communicate God’s truths in such a gentle method, yet so powerfully.”²¹

I encourage you to find out more about Edward Payson. His life and

spirituality are a tonic for today’s busy spiritual leader. You will not be disappointed — History is His Story. ■



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ENDNOTES

1. Iain Murray, *Revival and Revivalism* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1994), 194.
2. A Google search for “Edward Payson” is convincing. Many 19th-century Americans had Edward Payson as their first and middle names.
3. Edward Payson, *The Complete Works of Edward Payson*, Vol. 1, (Harrisonburg, Va.: Sprinkle, 1846. Reprint, 1987), 20.
4. *Ibid.*, 51.
5. *Ibid.*, 79.
6. *Ibid.*, 79.
7. *Ibid.*, 91.
8. *Ibid.*, 132.
9. *Ibid.*, 186.
10. *Ibid.*, 189.
11. See <http://www.watchword.org/smithers/ww36a.html>
12. Edward, *Works*, 250.
13. *Ibid.*, 446.
14. *Ibid.*, 447.
15. *Ibid.*, 409.
16. *Ibid.*, 297.
17. Asa Cummings, *A Memoir of the Rev. Edward Payson* (New York: American Tract Society, 1830), 75.
18. Murray, 218–220.
19. *Ibid.*, 219.
20. See the edition by Sprinkle Press, Harrisonburg, Pa.
21. See <http://www.intercom.net/~hisalone>



A Famous Psychology Professor **FINDS FAITH**

BY RUSTY WRIGHT

He was a famous professor at a major university, and the author of widely used textbooks. Would he have any interest in Christ?

What feelings might the words *secular university professor* engender in you? Maybe you recall skeptical professors from your past and feel fear or shame that you lacked the knowledge — or courage — to answer their objections to Christianity. Perhaps you raised concerns in class and remember the pain of public disrespect. Did a friend's faith falter in the classroom? Do you feel anger or sorrow? Maybe your kind, but unbelieving neighbor is a professor and you wonder how to communicate your faith to him.

Secular university faculty can significantly influence generations of students. Campus ministers can experience faith-stretching adventure in communicating Christ to secular faculty members. Here is a story that might encourage you.

ANXIOUS FOR NOTHING

As a young believer, during my junior year at Duke, I wrote a paper for an abnormal psychology course discussing a biblical therapy for anxiety. My own experience of God's peace plus understanding anxiety's role in many

psychological disorders fueled my personal and academic interest in this topic.

I mailed a copy of the paper to the author of our textbook, Dr. James C. Coleman, a prominent UCLA psychologist. He liked the paper, said he would read it to his students, and asked permission to quote from it in his textbook revision.

I said, "By all means." I sent a copy of his letter to my parents so they would see their son had not totally flipped out with campus Christian involvement. (They were beginning to wonder.)

That summer, during a California conference, I called Dr. Coleman to ask if I could meet with him briefly. He was busy, but asked me to call back before I

Rarely will you argue anyone into the Kingdom, but evidence for faith — tactfully presented — may help remove barriers.

returned home. My last day in California, Betty, a friend, and I had an afternoon free in Los Angeles while another friend attended a wedding. Should we visit Dr. Coleman or go to the beach? I voted for the beach. Betty suggested we visit Dr. Coleman.

As we drove to his lovely Malibu home overlooking the Pacific, I reviewed evidences for faith. I expected many questions.

He was a warm and gracious host. As we sat in his backyard, he did not ask much about evidences. Rather he confided, "I do not have the peace of mind that you do. I do not have a relationship with Christ."

I told him briefly how I had come to faith in Christ and gave a short presentation of Jesus' message based on John 3:16.

GLUED TO THE GOSPEL

A college student was reading this famous professor a little booklet about Christ, and he was glued to it. Hearing Revelation 3:20, he noted, "That is powerful." He said he felt that it did not matter what you believed as long as you were sincere. I noted that roach tablets taken mistakenly in sincere faith that they were aspirin would not cure a headache; they would probably make you sick. The object of faith

was important, and Jesus was a trustworthy object. He responded that he now realized one could be sincere, but be sincerely wrong.

Soon, Dr. Coleman bowed his head and asked Christ to be his personal Savior. He had heard this message many times — his father was a minister — but he had never understood how to place his faith in Christ. We discussed assurance and growth. He took some literature to share with his students. A month later, he told me by telephone, “Now, as I look out over the ocean and see the setting sun, I believe that I am a part of all this. Before I did not, but now I do.”

The next edition of his textbook contained a short portion about “Religion and Psychotherapy” and included part of my faith story. I began telling psychology professors I was a case in their abnormal psychology textbook. Many invited me to speak in their classes. This helped launch a ministry that has taken me around the world presenting Christ in academia and the media.

I have asked Dr. Coleman several times how he would feel about me telling others what he has told me. He encourages me to freely communicate our conversations since academics need to understand there is something beyond the

physical realm. His adult life had been devoted to helping others’ psychological problems, yet he felt a need to link with the greatest Psychologist.

LESSONS FOR ETERNITY

God can use you as a campus pastor or volunteer to influence secular universities for eternity. What lessons might this encounter have for university outreach among both students and professors? Consider a few.

Scratch where they itch

Dr. Coleman’s text indicated his professional interest in anxiety. When we met, I discovered he also had personal interest. Everyone has felt needs — perhaps for

Campus ministers can experience faith-stretching adventure in communicating Christ to secular faculty members.

peace, love, friendship, or security — that can become bridges to real needs, such as the need to accept Jesus. Learn where those whom you seek to reach are itching; then scratch there.

Transcend differences in background, status, and philosophy

You may feel awkward relating to others whose education or social status differs from yours. Yet Jesus transcended social and cultural barriers with the Samaritan woman (John 4). Paul did with the Greek philosophers at Mars Hill (Acts 17). Learn about those you seek to reach and use the skills you have to establish common ground. Realize that friendliness, sincerity, and authenticity go a long way. I could not match Dr. Coleman’s academic credentials or reputation. But we connected through common interests and similar desires for personal peace.

Be intellectually credible

Dr. Coleman’s main concerns seemed personal. However, the academic paper I wrote had kindled his interest, and reasonable logic answered his sincere faith ques-

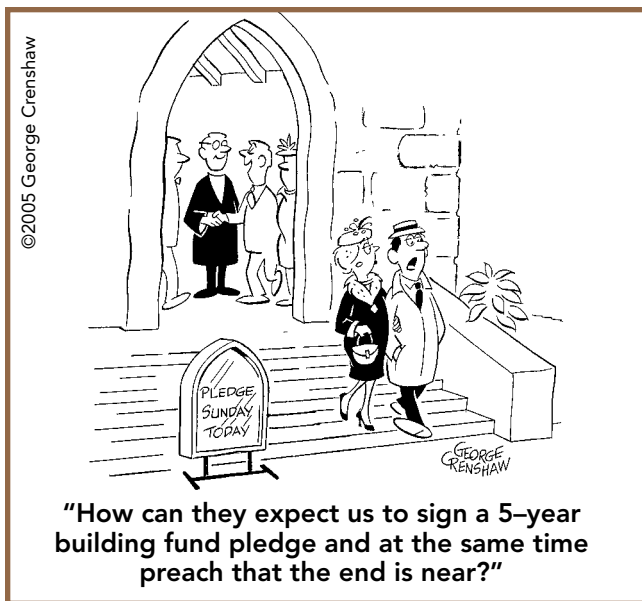
tion. Chi Alpha West Coast Field Representative Curt Harlow stresses that effective campus ministry includes intellectual and moral credibility along with communication and service. Do your homework, if necessary, to learn how to answer common questions and objections. Rarely will you argue anyone into the Kingdom, but evidence for faith — tactfully presented — may help remove barriers. The resurrected Jesus showed His wounds — evidence of who He was — to doubting Thomas.

Take appropriate risks

One friend (whom I dearly love) advised against writing a biblically themed paper. I could not foresee the paper’s broad eventual impact, but I sensed God was in it and that it could be a witness to my professor. If God is in it, do it anyway.

Follow wise counsel

I wanted to relax at the beach that afternoon. Betty thought we should visit Dr. Coleman. I am glad I listened to her. What



multiplied opportunities might have evaporated had I caught rays instead of spreading the faith? Discerning wise from unwise counsel is not always simple. (After all, we all need relaxation.) Listen to others' advice and use biblical criteria to ascertain its wisdom.

Pray

I prayed when I sent Dr. Coleman the paper and as we drove to his home. I pray for his continued spiritual growth. "Devote yourselves to prayer," wrote Paul (Colossians 4:2, NASB).

Meet on their turf

In Dr. Coleman's home, we could talk privately and visit as friends. Similarly, conducting campus outreach on the unbelievers' own turf — the dormitory, Greek house, athletic facility, classroom, office, or cafeteria — can create comfort that facilitates clear reflection. This principle is not inviolate: your coffee house or ministry house may provide a warm, friendly setting, but be willing to go to those you seek to reach.

Answer questions using Spirit-led wisdom

Some objections to faith are smokescreens. Once I privately asked a skeptical Georgia Tech philosophy professor who had me speak to his class if he would place his faith in Christ if I could answer all his questions to his satisfaction. His reply: "(Expletive deleted) No!" Other questions are genuine, as was Dr. Coleman's about sincere faith. Ask God for wisdom and sensitivity as you decide which questions

to spend time on and how to answer them.

Draw the net as appropriate

Not everyone on campus with whom you share the gospel will be ready to take the plunge into faith. But if the setting in a group meeting or private discussion is appropriate, tactfully invite others to receive Jesus' free gift of forgiveness and eternal life. Angels rejoice when people pass from death to life. You never know how your faithfulness might open doors for the truth. ■



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What Every Pastor Should Know About Affairs

BY RUTH HETZENDORFER

While it is difficult to pinpoint the exact percentage of Christians or non-Christians who participate in affairs, here are some estimates:

“Conservative estimates are that 60 percent of men and 40 percent of women will have an extramarital affair (Peggy Vaughan, *The Monogamy Myth*, reissued 1998).

The Washington Post estimates that 25-to-75 percent of males and 15-to-60 percent of females will have an affair.

According to William Mitchell, Jr. (president, Mitchell Reports Investigations, 2002), 10 percent of adultery victims claim to be Christians, and the cheating spouse attends church or religious activities. One-to-5 percent of adulterers are pastors or clergy.

There are some who understand the pain and devastation of an extramarital affair and can see the downward spiral the unfaithful take. How should we as leaders in the church guide our church to keep these statistics from being a part of our own church?

THE DESCENT TOWARD ADULTERY

Having an affair is not something a true Bible-believing Christian sets out to accomplish. We must, however, be aware that none of us are above temptation or the possibility of having an affair.

1. The first problem is thinking that we are above succumbing into temptation. First Corinthians 10:12 admonishes us to take heed lest we fall into temptation.

2. Satan’s strategy is to wear out the saints (Daniel 7:25). Satan does this by setting up the perfect circumstance to promote failure. He then adds stress, fatigue, and frustration, giving a person clouded judgment and a weakened will.

3. The gradual descent toward an affair always includes the eye gate (seeing someone and being tempted) and then goes to the mind. For a person to consummate the affair he has allowed the thought processes to become part of his spirit.

4. There is a decline in one’s spiritual life. The desire to commit adultery has been entertained and has gone from the mind into the heart. What was wrong before is now excused. What was forbidden is now a possibility. With this change in thinking, the person makes statements like, “Well, that’s not the worst sin.” This refers to almost anything that is clearly wrong, particularly the sin of adultery. It almost seems as if saying it out loud makes it true.

5. In the descent of an affair there is always some blame placed on the adulterer’s spouse. The blame starts long before the actual affair. The adulterer has inner frustrations and begins seeing his spouse in a different light — a tainted light that focuses on what is wrong, not what is right.

Frustration is also apparent in the one having the affair by the inner turmoil and guilt produced by going against what he knows is right. This frustration grows into anger and soon irrational thoughts are used as leverage to prove that the marriage is failing. “You cause me so much anger, I have to leave.” This type of irrational

thinking can culminate to this scenario: One man who desired an affair told his wife he would “fast to see if it was God’s will to leave her for another woman.”

6. When a person has gotten to the point of praying about leaving, he has been deceived and has rationalized any behavior to the point he will believe there is a justification for adulterous actions. That descent in thinking seems to mark a place of no return, a place where the affair will be culminated.

Gary Collins speaks of the reasons for affairs in *Family Shock*. “A large group of people who had been involved in affairs replied that they were unfaithful because of their sexual frustration, curiosity, desire for revenge, boredom, need for acceptance and recognition, depression, urges for sex without intimacy, and escape. Affairs also come because some people are addicted to compulsive sex, to romance, or even to relationships. Even Christians get hooked on sex. Some people get so caught up in adulterous behavior that they become like drug addicts, powerless to stop without help.”¹

TAKING ACTION AS A PASTOR

1. Stay daily in the Word and prayer. Be alert to your own sexual issues and needs. Clarity in your own life will give you greater insight into the needs of others.

2. Know you are not beyond temptation. Be an example of sexual purity. One of the best ways to guide your church is to demonstrate your love for your wife in your actions and speech. People need hope that their marriage can be good.

3. Be alert to your congregation’s needs. Tune into body language, dynamics of relationships. Hear with your heart what people say. Do we miss what people are really saying and feeling because we are too busy?

4. Teach on the downward spiral and consequences of sexual sin. Speak gently but firmly in regard to the tug the world puts in our hearts to stray. Jack Hayford says in his sermon, “Why Sex Sins Are Worse Than Others,” that sexual immorality by a believer prostitutes the body of Jesus. The pain and devastation brought about through an adulterous act doesn’t just affect those immediately involved; it affects the entire body of Christ. It wounds us all.²

An adulterer must be confronted quickly to bring healing to the entire church. Silence will not bring healing. When sin such as this is ignored, it can pollute the hearts and minds of those in the church.

Jesus cared for and ministered to the sick, the lame, and the brokenhearted. He spoke judgment to those who sat in judgment over others. If we are to be effective in the church, we must provide a place of healing for the wounded, the brokenhearted, and the guilty.

5. Be ready to, without judgment, help bring healing to those marriages that have been wounded and to those who have been the victim of betrayal. Patriarchal custom has often reasoned that a man has an affair because of his wife’s deficiencies. Many people also believe that having an affair is a normal response to an imperfect marriage and is, by definition, the marriage partner’s fault. Friends often encourage the unfaithful one to put the blame on his spouse.³ However, we must not abuse the victim by placing such unwarranted blame on that person.

6. Bring restoration to those who have fallen. Christ always spoke to sin and gave opportunity for repentance and forgiveness. Forgiveness can occur quickly if there is an immediate forsaking of the third party by the adulterer.

Although there is also hurt on the part of the adulterer, the adulterer must be willing to repent and take full responsibility for his actions. The adulterer must recognize the progression of decisions that brought him to the adulterous act. It is possible that there has been so much devastation from continual affair(s), the wounds may be so deep, and lack of trust so compounded that healing of the marriage may be almost impossible. We can, however, bring hope that life in Christ can begin anew.

Jesus cared for and ministered to the sick, the lame, and the brokenhearted. He spoke judgment to those who sat in judgment over others. If we are to be effective in the church, we must provide a place of healing for the wounded, the brokenhearted, and the guilty. ■

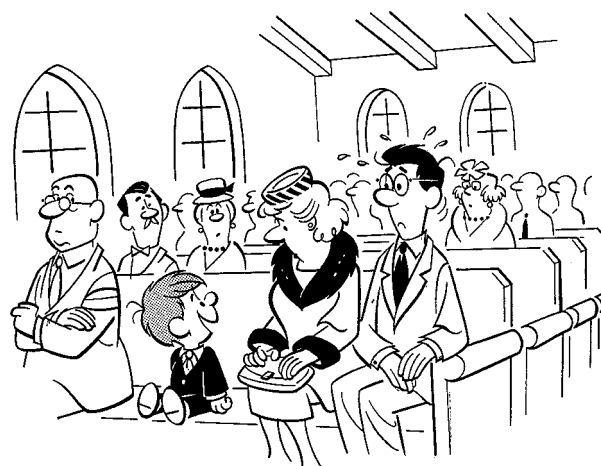


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ENDNOTES

1. Gary Collins, *Family Shock* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.), 1995.
2. Jack Hayford, “Why Sex Sins Are Worse Than Others” (audio tape #CO179&180) Living Way Ministries, Van Nuys, Calif.
3. Frank Pittman III, M.D., “Beyond Betrayal: Life After Infidelity,” *Psychology Today* May/June 1993, 32–38.

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“He’s talking about Daddy.”

Pentecostal Preaching (Part 3): Preaching and the Gifts of the Spirit

BY CRAIG BRIAN LARSON

In one essential model of preaching, preachers proclaim the Word and urge hearers to respond specifically to the claim of the message. If they succeed in those two crucial areas, they have accomplished their mission. The Holy Spirit uses this model, for it is the foundation of biblical preaching.

In another important model, preachers also proclaim the Word and urge hearers to respond to the message, but they make a significant addition. They call hearers forward (or to another location) not only for decision, but also to receive personal ministry. The preacher's goal in appealing for a response is to impart further grace as the Lord chooses. The preacher ministers to hearers through personal intercession, the laying on of hands, and the manifestation of other gifts of the Spirit such as healing and inspired counsel — all in complete dependence on the power of the Spirit. In this model the preacher ministers to the whole person — body, soul, and spirit — often to a wider variety of needs and desires than those specifically addressed in the message. The mission is accomplished when the Lord touches those who desire it.

Although these two models have many varieties, there is a key distinction: the second model links preaching to a vital wide-ranging ministry to needy people. Ministry is done in the power of the Holy Spirit, and the gifts of the Spirit described in the Books of Acts and 1 Corinthians are present. The basic concept of this model is preaching

accomplishes more when it works in concert with the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

This model follows the pattern of Jesus and the apostles. At the start of His ministry Jesus came to His hometown of Nazareth and gave His missions statement, reading from Isaiah 61: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on Him, and He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:18–21).

The Gospels clearly explain how Jesus fulfilled this mission. Wherever Jesus went He preached the Word and ministered supernaturally to people’s needs in the power of the Spirit.

“Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matthew 9:35,36). In Jesus’ ministry, the coming of the Kingdom included not only the coming of the Word, but also the coming of power to set people free from what oppressed them.

Jesus commissioned His disciples and the 72 to follow the same pattern: “As you go, preach this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven is near.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:7,8).

It was not by accident that Jesus coupled personal ministry in the power of the Spirit with preaching, for they complement one another perfectly. The Word of God creates faith, and faith is the climate of power, answered prayer, healings, breakthroughs, and miracles. “Everything is possible for him who believes” (Mark 9:23).

What is more, the preaching of the Word of God is an act of worship, for God is glorified as preachers declare His ways, promises, and the good news. The church has observed for millennia that sincere worship can invoke the presence of the Holy Spirit as surely as the prayer, “Come, Holy Spirit.”

In addition, preaching leads to repentance. This opens the door to healing and restoration. James 5:16 says: “Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.”

According to the Scriptures, the works of God testify to the truth of the Word of God. The Lord “confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders” (Acts 14:3).

This model of preaching puts enormous demands on the preacher. We must not only bring a message to proclaim, but we must also bring spiritual resources such

as faith and acute spiritual perception to the personal ministry that follows. James says, “The prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well” (5:15). Aside from the spiritual preparation needed to minister in the power of the Holy Spirit, preachers need to shape messages that prepare for the personal ministry that follows. Ministry that is Kingdom empowered usually follows a sermon with these characteristics:

- The message does more than lay out the obligations of discipleship; it emphasizes God’s promises, which inspire faith.
- The message stresses the mighty power and great compassion of God. God is not only able to work in power, but is also willing.
- The message conveys that God answers prayer and “the prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective” (James 5:16).
- The message has a tone of faith, joy, confidence, and boldness. Tone is important because it affects the heart, and fruitful personal ministry depends much on the heart.
- The message has profound simplicity. There is a place for nuance, qualifications, and cautions, but messages that erect many fences around God’s promises (“God heals, but. . . .”) generally do not create an environment of faith.
- There is a sense of liberty and emotional freedom in the preacher. The more restrained the preacher is, the more restrained the hearer will be.
- The message often includes testimonies of what God is currently doing, inspiring faith and hope.
- With regularity, the preacher teaches on the gifts and works of the Holy Spirit. Understanding raises a person’s expectations of what God can and will do.

This preaching model need not be locked into any cultural form or style of music.

The point is to follow preaching with personal ministry in whatever way suits the culture of the hearers.

Depending on our gifts, we may not use this model every time we preach. The special leading of the Spirit, the necessity of preaching the whole counsel of God, and the benefits of sequential expository preaching may make this model less suited for some occasions. But this model has an essential place for preachers who believe that all the gifts of the Spirit are valid until Jesus returns in glory. ■



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Fulfilling the Great Commission Through Discipleship

BY ANDREW D. TEMPLETON



According to a recent study by the National Coalition of Men's Ministry, there are over 98 million men in America and only 35 million of them know Christ. Of these 35 million men, only 8 million are involved in some form of Christian discipleship. This means approximately 1 in every 12 men in America is active in discipleship. That would be the equivalent of only one man on a football team ever reading the playbook.

Jesus said in Matthew 28:19, "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations." But somewhere between the first century and present day the Church lost the vision and passion for making disciples. According to studies conducted by George Barna, less than 18 percent of Christians surveyed said their effort to grow spiritually is the single most intense commitment in their life today. Half of the believers said that even though they work at spiritual growth consistently, they are not as committed to growing in spiritual maturity as they would like to be.¹

The overwhelming problem is a lack of interest in discipleship. For the church to function as a biblical community of believers the Holy Spirit can use to reach the world, it must examine the necessity and means of true discipleship. Patrick Morley, founder and president of Man in the Mirror, states, "How can we change the nation, unless we first change the church? Then, how

can we change the church unless we first change the family? Even further, how can we change families unless we first change marriages? Finally, how can we change marriages unless we first change men?"

Men are the thread to the fabric of life. It has been proven that when a man comes to know Christ, 93 percent of the time he will reach his family for the Lord.

What is true discipleship? The answer is simply to model the formula Christ gives the Church. Throughout the Gospels we read of Christ's involvement with His disciples. He invested nearly 3 years of His life into 12 men who were as ordinary as you and me. The process He used was first to call them, then to equip them, and finally to send them out. Growing godly men who changed their world summarized His ministry. It should summarize ours as well.

CALLED TO FOLLOW CHRIST

"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). The first calling of the disciples was a call to follow Jesus and get to know Him. Discipleship is not an event or an occurrence that is accomplished overnight. True discipleship takes time and interaction.

The realization that men are called to follow Christ is the key to understanding discipleship. Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). Without a call to follow Christ, discipleship will not take place. Repeatedly in Scripture we read stories of God calling men to follow Him. It happened to Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Paul. Jesus called the Twelve to follow Him. He then spent the next 3 years with them in close personal relationship. An enormous amount of time and energy was attached to these relationships. Saul of Tarsus was out to destroy the church, but God found him and called him, launching one of the most powerful evangelistic ministries in Church history. True discipleship, then, begins with the call to follow Christ.

EQUIPPED TO BE LIKE CHRIST

For 3 years Jesus taught His disciples. He showed them how to live. He modeled life for them. They witnessed Jesus in every circumstance. They saw how He taught and how He responded. They witnessed His approach and His style. They saw how He handled conflict and how He cared for others. Discipleship is not a sermon series nor is it a 45-minute Sunday School class. Discipleship is modeling in real time how we should live.

One of the greatest benefits to being a disciple of Christ is the opportunity to ask questions of the disciplinemaker. The equipping stage of discipleship is one of the most critical stages. For 3 years I was involved in a discipleship group with my senior pastor. Eight men met with him to hear what was on his heart. We asked questions on a variety of subjects. He trained us out of his personal knowledge of Scripture, his life experiences, his wisdom and understanding, and his traditions. I learned more about the heartbeat of God and pastoral ministry through these sessions than I did during my entire seminary and Bible school education.

Equipping others to be like Jesus is a matter of exemplifying Christ to one another. As ministers, our calling is to equip others to be like Jesus. While only Christ can change a man's heart, we need to be available to bring about His redemptive purposes within this world. Modeling Christ is an essential element to the discipleship process.

SENT TO DO THE WORK OF CHRIST

The Church was built on the ministry of the 12 disciples. They were called by Christ to follow Him, they were equipped and taught by Christ to be like Him, and finally they were sent out to do the work of Christ throughout the world. Discipleship is circular in nature. The discipleship process includes a multiplying factor.

John 14:12 says, "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father." The first time I read this I thought, *What can I do that is greater than what Christ did?* He taught marvelously; He did great miracles. How could I top that?

The nature of this verse carries a numerical meaning to it. While on earth Jesus was limited to His own present location. After He ascended to heaven, He sent His Spirit to empower men to do His work. This Scripture suggests quantity rather than quality. The ministry impact of the Twelve together was far greater than had Christ continued alone.

CALLED TO MAKE DISCIPLES

The process of making disciples is not restricted to one set pattern or method. A multitude of discipleship models exist. Discipleship takes place through preaching and teaching, personal study, seminars, conferences, leadership training, informal discussions, counseling, and small groups.

John Wesley, whose ministry was grounded in small groups, gave eight major concepts for making disciples:

1. Human nature is perfectible by God's grace.
2. Learning comes by doing the will of God.
3. Mankind's nature is perfected by participation in groups, not by acting as isolated individuals.
4. The spirit and practice of primitive Christianity can and must be recaptured.
5. Human progress will occur if people will participate in the means of grace.
6. The gospel must be presented to the poor.
7. Social evil is not to be resisted, but overcome with good.
8. The primary function of spiritual/educational leadership is to equip others to lead and minister, not to perform the ministry personally.

These eight concepts comprise the key components for making disciples.

Furthermore, the wise leader understands that effective discipleship takes

place in small groups. In small groups, the pastor can interact, teach, and exemplify Christ in ways not possible in the larger setting. In time, men who have matured in Christ are released in ministry and stand alongside you in helping to fulfill the mission of the church — to make more disciples.

When a man comes to know Christ, 93 percent of the time he will reach his family for the Lord.

CONCLUSION

Jesus' top priority in ministry was to call and equip men to be His disciples. Discipleship was the foundation of His ministry. Even before the Holy Spirit came and empowered the Twelve, they had to mature in the faith.

Discipleship is an essential element lacking in most churches today. Through discipleship not only are lives changed, but communities, churches, and ultimately nations are changed.

The process Jesus used to disciple men is clear and simple: call, equip, and send. This practice and philosophy changes a man, his family, and his church. The mission set before pastors is clear: grow godly men. Men are the foundation and the bedrock of the family and the nation. Investing in men is a clear venue for changing society. Discipleship is a tradition begun by Jesus and one we must continue until His return. ■



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ENDNOTE

1. George Barna, *Growing True Disciples* (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook Press, 2001), 42.

SECOND PETER: AN INTRODUCTION TEXT: 2 Peter

NOTE: This series from 2 Peter was presented in the Joint Heirs Sunday School class at Central Assembly of God, Springfield, Missouri. The presenters used various resources in preparing their presentations.

INTRODUCTION

Second Peter reminds us of Paul's farewell letter, 2 Timothy. Peter seems to indicate that his death is near (2 Peter 1:14,15) and writes his own farewell.

MESSAGE

1. Author

"Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:1).

- a. He includes "Simon" which is not present in the first letter.
- b. There is a "second" letter which leads one to think of 1 Peter, but the connection is not certain (2 Peter 3:1).
- c. There is familiarity with Paul's letters (2 Peter 3:15,16). Note that several/all of Paul's letters have been collected and Paul is probably dead.
- d. Peter's last will and testament (2 Peter 1:14,15).

2. Destination

There is no certain identification of the recipients.

- a. "To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours" (2 Peter 1:1).
- b. Peter *does* seem to have worked among the recipients of 2 Peter in the past:

"We did not follow cleverly invented stories *when we told you* (italics mine) about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:16). He does not seem to have worked among the recipients of 1 Peter.

3. Date

Presumably it would have been written just before Peter's death under Nero in Rome, about A.D. 68.

4. Highlights

- a. "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him" (2 Peter 1:3).
- b. "Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall" (2 Peter 1:10).
- c. Peter's memories of Jesus (2 Peter 1:16–18).
- d. Peter's major concerns:
 - (1) False prophets (2 Peter 2:1).
 - (2) Scoffers (2 Peter 3:3).
- e. Eschatology (Last Things):
 - (1) Delay means God's patience (2 Peter 3:9,15).
 - (2) God's time: (2 Peter 3:8).
 - (3) The Day of the Lord (2 Peter 3:10).
 - (4) New heaven (2 Peter 3:13).

f. Appeal based on eschatology:

- (1) "Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be?" (2 Peter 3:11).
- (2) "So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him" (2 Peter 3:14).

5. Interesting Details

- a. "Most of Jude is included in 2 Peter, no less than 19 of his 25 verses being represented in the longer writing ... but the reasons for preferring either as the original source or both as using a common source are largely subjective" (Carson, INT, 437,438).
- b. Second Peter was among the last books to be accepted into the canon.
- c. Among nonevangelicals, Petrine authorship is usually denied and the book is held to be pseudonymous (for good defense of Petrine authorship see D.A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* and Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*).

—Edgar Lee
Springfield, Missouri

MAKING YOUR CALLING AND ELECTION SURE

TEXT: 2 Peter 1:1–11

INTRODUCTION

Peter's life is an example of how God enables us to grow in Him. We have the knowledge of God, but we must put forth effort to grow in godliness to gain eternity with Him.

MESSAGE

1. What God has done (2 Peter 1:1–4).

- a. The foundation for growth: God has given us a faith and "everything we need for life and godliness" through our knowledge of Him.
 - (1) Source: Christ's divine power has granted us these gifts.
 - (2) Godliness: God-pleasing daily conduct/conversation in business, family, and community.

- (3) Process: a God-centered life develops (progressive sanctification); it is not automatically received (2 Peter 3:18).

- b. A personal calling: We have been called by Christ's glory and goodness, that is, the excellence of His attributes and His deeds (being and doing). His sovereign call and mercy are extended to everyone; all are "elected" (Ephesians 1:4).
- c. Great promises: We share that divine "being and doing" not only in eternity, but now. The outworking of the Holy Spirit within us is holiness, loving concern for others, and signs and wonders that follow believers.
- d. Escape from corruption of the

world: We have fled from evil desires and thus escaped their corruption (Ephesians 4:22–24; 2 Peter 2:20). Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are transformed and "participate in the divine nature."

2. What we are to do (2 Peter 1:5–11).

- a. Make every effort to further change our lives: What we believe and the One we trust in should be evident in our actions. Spiritual fruit takes diligent care, obedience to God's Word, and the exercise of faith. Once the gift of grace is received, there are imperatives to be heeded.
- b. Demonstrate the character of God in our lives. The list begins with

faith and ends with love. (See Romans 5:1–5; 1 Corinthians 13:13.)

- (1) Support your faith with goodness — moral and spiritual power to live in victory over sin and grow in holiness; right conduct based on self-discipline. Sometimes translated “virtue,” it is not the same word used to refer to power going out of Jesus in Mark 5:30.
- (2) Your goodness with knowledge — knowledge that is lived out. If Peter were combating false teaching (Gnostic heresy), one of the best antidotes would have been truth, that is, Christian teaching.
- (3) Your knowledge with self-control — inner strength to control one’s desires/cravings (temperance). We cooperate with the Holy Spirit’s enabling power.
- (4) Your self-control with perseverance — knowing God’s purpose, making a determined effort to move through trials; holding up under persecution while awaiting Christ’s coming.

- (5) Your perseverance with godliness — everyday living that extends grace to others and reflects absolute trust in God in all circumstances; reverence toward God and obedience.
 - (6) Your godliness with brotherly kindness — (*philadelphia*) mutual affection, reciprocal love to those in the church, “bearing one another’s burdens,” guarding the unity of the Body.
 - (7) Your brotherly kindness with love — (*agape*) self-sacrificing love extended even toward people who do not deserve it; does not require reciprocity, desires the highest good of the person loved.
- c. “Possess these qualities in increasing measure” — an ongoing transformation. The foundational knowledge of God will not fail to produce fruit. Not having these virtues shows that a person is spiritually sick, shortsighted, blind; refusing to see or remember past forgiveness/blessings, present

disobedience, and future punishment. To avoid such a condition, Peter urges diligence.

- d. Confirm what God has already done when He invited us and received us by grace to be part of His kingdom. We must “make sure” — ratify — by continuing to participate in salvation and by doing what we know to do. Paul says, “I keep striving toward the goal of perfection and maturity” (Philippians 3:12–14). Salvation is the gift of God (Ephesians 2:8), but faith should produce growth and development (James 2:20,26).

CONCLUSION

“If you do these things, you will never fall.” This is not a promise of sinlessness or avoidance of problems, but assurance that we will spend eternity with Christ. Sound Christian theology leads to Christian living that is effective and fruitful and leads eventually to a final reward.

—Barbara Cavaness
Springfield, Missouri

AND HERE IS WHY YOU SHOULD BELIEVE

TEXT: 2 Peter 1:12–21

INTRODUCTION

Peter has forcefully called on his hearers to pursue their relationship with Christ with great intensity. He has called them to make their calling and election sure and promised them a rich welcome into the eternal Kingdom. He now assures them with the reasons why they can believe him.

This addresses the difficult question that all of us face: Why can we believe what we believe? In this passage, Peter provides a valuable lesson why we can believe.

MESSAGE

1. The authority of reminders

(verses 12–15).

- a. Because we are firmly established in what we believe (verse 12).
 - (1) Peter is determined to remind his hearers.
 - (2) Being firmly established still requires being reminded.
- b. Because death faces the apostle and us (verses 13,14).
 - (1) Peter knew his death was soon.
 - (2) Death urges Peter to further activity.

- c. Because death will not stop his efforts to remind them (verse 15).

- (1) Peter will leave them the Book of Mark.
- (2) We are the beneficiaries of efforts that remind us.
- (3) What are we doing to provide reminders for those who come after us?

2. The authority of experience (verses 16–18).

- a. The danger of experience (verse 16).
 - (1) Could be merely cleverly invented stories.
 - (2) Could deny the truths of the gospel — that Jesus had the power to keep His followers as they pursue their faith and that He will come again.
- b. The power of experience (verses 16–18).
 - (1) Peter appealed to the Transfiguration story.
 - (2) They were eyewitnesses to the glory of Jesus.
 - (3) They heard the divine testimony about Jesus.

3. The authority of the Scriptures

(verses 19–21).

- a. We have the word of the prophets made more sure.
 - (1) The word of the prophets is sure.
 - (2) The experience we have with the truth is also sure.
 - (3) When the two are linked, with experience flowing out of the word of the prophet, we can be sure of what we believe.
- b. We have the assurance of the Second Coming (verse 19).
 - (1) The reality is that we do live in a dark place.
 - (2) The promise is the day dawning.
 - (3) The promise is the arrival of the Morning Star.
- c. We have the authoritative testimony of Scripture (verses 20,21).
 - (1) No prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation.
 - (2) Men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

—Jim Railey
Springfield, Missouri

FALSE TEACHERS

TEXT: 2 Peter 2

INTRODUCTION

In 2 Peter 1:20,21, Peter indicated that true Old Testament prophets spoke under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In chapter 2, Peter turned to discuss another kind of prophet — false teachers. The phrase “will be” seems to indicate these false teachers have not yet arrived. (See also Acts 20:29.)

MESSAGE

1. Characteristics of false teachers.

- a. Deceptive (verse 1).
 - (1) Their destructive teachings centered around the person of Christ. These false teachers had known the Lord (verses 20–22).
 - (2) Many will follow their shameful ways (verse 2).
 - (a) In the Gospels, the word “follow” describes the call to decisive and intimate discipleship with Jesus.
 - (b) “Shameful ways” includes vices and sexual debaucheries. This will cause “the way (an early name for the Christian faith, Acts 9:2) of truth” to be defamed.
- b. Greedy (verse 3). This word denotes an “immoral lust for power; to take advantage of, wrong, defraud, or cheat.”
 - (1) It is a mark of a life that lacks a knowledge of God (Romans 1:29; 1 Corinthians 6:10), faith and obedience (1 Corinthians 5:10; Ephesians 5:3).
 - (2) “Exploit you with false words” (NASB); stories (NIV). False words are the claims and teachings that are speculative and immoral.
- c. Arrogant (verse 10). They are presumptuous and self-willed. They respect no one, and nothing restrains them. They despise authority and have an unteachable spirit.
 - (1) “They are not afraid to slander celestial beings.” This word has been interpreted to mean:
 - (a) imperial and magisterial power,
 - (b) rulers of the church,
 - (c) good angels, or
 - (d) fallen angels.
 - (e) Most interpreters think it refers to celestial beings of

some kind. It seems best to think of “celestial beings” as fallen angels (verse 11).

- (2) Blaspheme where they have no knowledge (verse 12). They think they have a special knowledge, but they are really ignorant like “brute beasts.”
- d. Immoral (verses 13–16).
 - (1) They “carouse in broad daylight.” Normally a nighttime activity (1 Thessalonians 5:7).
 - (2) They feast together with the recipients of this letter and infiltrate the church but “they are blots and blemishes” in the church.
 - (3) They are “reveling in their pleasures”; “reveling in their deceptions.” This includes the enticement by sin or to sin.
 - (4) “With eyes full of adultery” (verse 14). Their eyes unceasingly look for sin.
 - (5) They seduce (“lure,” “bait,” “entice”) “unstable souls.” People who are grounded in the faith (1 Peter 1:12) are not targeted by these false teachers.
 - (6) “They are experts in greed.” The word “exercised” relates to athletic training. The thoughts of the false teachers are full of greed and covetousness.
 - (7) “An accursed brood!” (“children of a curse”). God’s curse is on them.
 - (a) This second mention of greed causes Peter to think about Balaam (Numbers 22:5 through 24:25; 31:16; Revelation 2:14).
 - (b) These false teachers have left the biblical way and have gone into Balaam’s error — mercenary greed and sexual impurity.
 - (c) In verse 17, Peter shows their instability and their unreliability.
 - (d) Instead of providing liberty, they appeal to lustful natures and bring people into bondage (verses 18,19).

2. False teachers will be judged (2 Peter 2:3–10).

- a. We need to view things from an eternal perspective.

b. Destruction (verses 1,3) is hanging over them (verse 1).

c. In verses 4–9 Peter uses three examples of divine judgment. The conclusion is delayed until verse 9.

- (1) Sinning angels (verse 4). The verb Peter used shows where the sinning angels were sent. The Greeks believed Tartarus was a subterranean place lower than Hades, the abode of the wicked dead, and reserved especially for superhuman beings who rebelled against the supreme god.
- (2) The Flood (verse 5). Noah and his family were protected by God during the Flood that wiped out the ungodly.
- (3) Sodom and Gomorrah (verses 6–9). This total destruction is an example to the ungodly of what will happen to them. Notice the description of Lot. Suffering Christians can find consolation in the fact God knows about our plight.

d. False teachers will not get away with their destructive teachings and ways (verse 13).

3. A warning to all (2 Peter 2:20–22).

- a. Those who follow the false prophets at one time had been free (verse 20).
- b. The knowledge of God’s truth is of equal importance with experiential profession of the Lord.
- c. They became entangled — woven and entrapped — by sin (verse 20). Then they are overcome (“to be conquered”) once again by their sinful lifestyle. They are now worse off. Apostasy is serious (verse 21).
- d. The “sacred commandment that was passed on to them” probably refers to the authoritative, apostolic message. It is an important New Testament term for the transmission of the Christian faith (1 Corinthians 15:3).
- e. Peter ends his discourse on false teachers with two proverbs: one biblical (Proverbs 26:11), one secular, both bringing the same point: they are like animals that revert to their natural instincts.

—Richard L. Schoonover
Springfield, Missouri

THE DAY OF THE LORD TEXT: 2 Peter 3

MESSAGE

1. Old Testament background.

- a. The earliest Old Testament usage (Amos 5:18–20).

This passage indicates the common usage of the “Day of the Lord” as a time in the future when Israel will be placed at the head of the nations, regardless of their faithfulness or lack of faithfulness. Amos clearly shows that the coming Day of the Lord will be marked by God’s judgment for Israel.

- b. Other Old Testament passages.

- (1) “The Lord Almighty has a day in store for all the proud and lofty” (Isaiah 2:12–22). This passage has an implication of coming judgment.
- (2) “You have not gone up to the breaks in the wall to repair it for the house of Israel so that it will stand firm in the battle on the day of the Lord” (Ezekiel 13:5). God sets His face against the sinful leaders of the people, promising judgment to come.
- (3) “Alas for that day! For the day of the Lord is near; it will come like a destruction from the Almighty” (Joel 1:15).
- (4) “The day of the Lord is coming when your plunder will be divided among you. I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it” (Zechariah 14:1,2).
- (5) “The great day of the Lord is near — near and coming quickly. Listen! The cry on the day of the Lord will be bitter, the shouting of the warrior there. That day will be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish” (Zephaniah 1:14,15).
- (6) “And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. ... And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Joel 2:28–32).

- c. Summary of Old Testament teaching about the Day of the Lord.

- (1) The time when God actively intervenes to punish sin.
- (2) All lesser punishments, such as an invasion of locusts or other natural disasters, will culminate with the coming of the Lord himself.

- (3) At that time, those who are truly repentant will be saved, and those who remain enemies of God, whether Jews or Gentiles, will be punished.

2. New Testament teaching regarding the Day of the Lord (the *Parousia*).

- a. It is associated with the second coming of Christ.

- (1) “Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. ... so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ” (Philippians 1:6,10).
- (2) “For you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night” (1 Thessalonians 5:2).
- (3) “Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come” (2 Thessalonians 2:1,2).
- (4) “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare” (2 Peter 3:10).

- b. The “Day of the Lord” in the New Testament.

The second coming of Christ is divided into two parts.

- (1) The rapture of the Church (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17). “For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.” Note: there do not appear to be any signs to be fulfilled prior to the rapture of the Church.

- (2) The revelation of Christ (Revelation 19:11–16). “I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war ... He will rule with an iron scepter. He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: King of Kings and Lord of Lords.” Note: the various signs of His coming are all related to the second phase of the Second Coming, the revelation of Christ.

- c. Principles derived from 2 Peter 3 regarding the Day of the Lord.

- (1) It will be sudden. No one knows the time (Mark 13:32; Acts 1:7).
- (2) It will be unexpected (2 Peter 3:8,9).
- (3) It will be disastrous for those who are unprepared. Note Peter’s reference to the Flood; sin will ultimately be punished (2 Peter 3:6).
- (4) The urgency of living in a state of readiness and expectation. “Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming” (2 Peter 3:11,12).

3. Questions for Thought.

- a. What implications are there in 2 Peter 3 for Spirit-filled believers today?
- b. We tend to focus attention on the delightful anticipation of the second coming of Christ for believers. Are there lessons about God’s judgment of sin for us here, as well? What about the judgment seat of Christ? See 1 Corinthians 3:11–15.
- c. What implications are there here for bearing witness to those about us who are not saved?

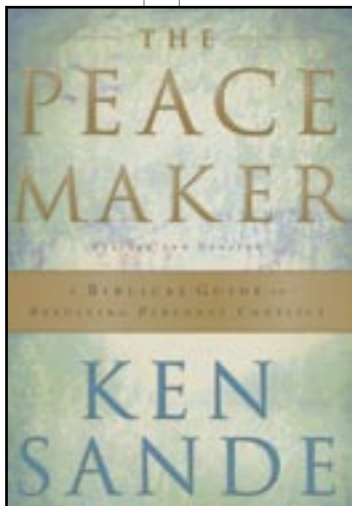
—William W. Menzies
Springfield, Missouri

THE PEACEMAKER

Ken Sande

(Baker Book House Co., 318 pp., paperback)

According to Ken Sande, "Peacemakers are people who breathe grace. They draw continually on the goodness and power of Jesus Christ, and then they bring his love, mercy, forgiveness, strength, and wisdom to the



conflicts of daily life. God delights to breathe his grace through peacemakers and use them to dissipate anger, improve understanding, promote justice, and encourage repentance and reconciliation."

The Peacemaker is structured around the four basic principles of conflict resolution (the four Gs) developed by Peacemaker Ministries to promote conflict resolution that brings glory to God. The four Gs are: glorify God; get the log out of your eye; gently restore; and go and be reconciled.

Within this structure, Sande introduces sound biblical principles to help prevent and resolve conflict. A strong emphasis is placed on the gospel as the basis of healthy peacemaking, and forgiveness is understood as an opportunity to witness for Christ. To facilitate learning, Sande has arranged important aspects of peacemaking in the slippery slope diagram; the seven As of confession; the four promises of

forgiveness; and the PAUSE principle of negotiating.

Conflict management is crucial to the health and enjoyment of relationships individually and accomplishing the call of God collectively. I encourage every minister to read this book. Then buy a copy for your

leadership and train them. After that, filter it down to your teachers and workers. Finally, be sure every family has a copy and understands how to biblically resolve personal conflict.

"Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness" (James 3:18). Reading *The Peacemaker* is a great place to begin.

—Reviewed by Kevin Wilson, assistant editor, *Enrichment journal*, Springfield, Missouri.

SPURGEON ON LEADERSHIP

Larry J. Michael

(Kregel Publications, 256 pp., paperback)

Can effective pastors be effective leaders? Yes. Charles Haddon Spurgeon is proof. Not only was he a prince of preachers and a compassionate pastor, but he was also a dynamic, skilled, and powerful leader.

The principles that established Spurgeon's effectiveness as a leader pour forth in every sermon. What is not established by sheer word power is set in place by spirit, temperament, illustration, humor, gesture, style,

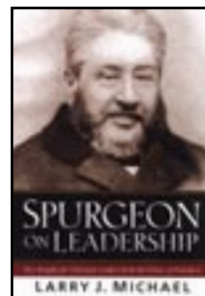
and unimaginable brilliance. You will be arrested by the irresistible magnetism of his person.

Michael also takes you on a tour of the many ministries given birth by and directed by this extraordinary spiritual leader. The dynamic leadership principles described in his preaching are demonstrated in the practical expressions of love for the poor, broken, and disenfranchised. You first read Spurgeon's words, observe his work, witness his devotion to the persons whom he served, and then you conclude without doubt that you are observing the life and ministry of a great leader. This is one of the great strengths of the book.

If you are looking for a leadership model that is biblical, timeless, void of fad, and proven to be masterfully effective, here is a practitioner you will want to study.

Here is a welcomed relief from the CEO style of pastoral leadership popular in our day. Spurgeon will not let you by. He will insist that you live in the trenches, bear the burdens of your people, preach from the pew, and pay the price for a ministry that is not compromised by the winds of the times.

—Richard L. Dresselhaus, D.Min., is an executive presbyter and former senior pastor, First Assembly of God, San Diego, California.



PLANNING YOUR PREACHING

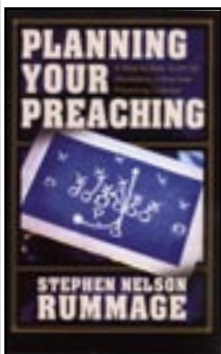
Stephen Nelson Rummage

(Kregel, 234 pp., paperback)

A common axiom among business leaders is: "By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail." This also applies to pastoral preaching. The

Holy Spirit can give a message to a preacher at the last minute and anoint him to deliver it, but that is the exception, not the norm. Rules are built from norms, not exceptions.

Most homiletics books focus on developing individual sermons.



Planning Your Preaching takes a broader view and explains how to develop a Spirit-led preaching strategy that is prepared monthly, quar-

terly, or annually. Rummage's view is to plan your work and then work your plan.

Early in the book the author lists the 10 benefits of planned preaching. Two of these are significant. First, it saves time. When a pastor knows where the Spirit is leading, he can meditate and gather material. The best sermons are normally simmered slowly, not zapped in a microwave.

Second, it helps keep a pastor balanced and presenting the whole counsel of God. It is easy to ride a hobbyhorse, but it does not strengthen Christians or build the church.

Although Rummage recommends it, he does not attempt to force preachers into series preaching. Rummage believes, however, that ministers who preach isolated messages can still profit from planning.

Planning Your Preaching is a careful book that will motivate the veteran preacher and help create good habits in the rookie preacher. We prepare for board meetings, revivals, Easter services, weddings,

and for Christmas celebrations. Let's also plan our preaching.

—Reviewed by Thomas Lindberg, D.Min., pastor of Memphis First Assembly, Cordova, Tennessee.

LEADING TALENTS, LEADING TEAMS

Lee Ellis

(Northfield Publishing, 317 pp., hardcover)

Ellis' book, *Leading Talents, Leading Teams*, explains how to put people, their passions, and the positions they hold in an alignment that leads to achieving maximum performance. This study is valuable for people in ministry because the tasks required to serve congregations and the understanding needed to mold "people to task" and "task to people" in congregations (or ministry organizations)



are clearly explained. The book also includes methods a church can incorporate to effectively deploy its mission through its members to its internal and external communities.

Ellis, senior vice president and cofounder of RightPath Resources, Inc., gives insights based on his current work of coaching senior executives, supervisors, team leaders, and team members. His organizational themes easily transfer to the church's organizational structure. The book also contains excellent examples of how to bring people's traits and individual differences together along side the needs of an organization. Ellis closes each chapter with his "Coach's Clipboard" where he gives the chapter's "Key Point" followed by "Action Items."

I appreciate Ellis' emphasis on integrity, his sense of moral duty to

work, and his regular references to building on God-centered foundations. For me, the book is a winner.

—Reviewed by T. Ray Rachels, superintendent, Southern California District of the Assemblies of God, Irvine, California.

THE ART OF PASTORING: MINISTRY WITHOUT ALL THE ANSWERS

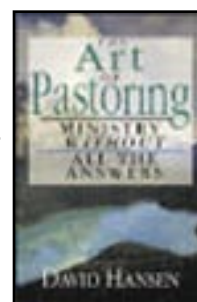
David Hansen

(InterVarsity Press, 180 pp., paperback)

The Art of Pastoring is an appropriate title for Hansen's book. This work is not a step-by-step manual on how to effectively pastor in our society/culture, nor does it merely provide insight into how to build a church through creative strategies and/or methodologies. Rather, this book endeavors to convey the heart of pastoring. Hansen shares diverse first-hand ministry experiences to provide insight into effective pastoral ministry.

The term *effectiveness* is defined with a pastoral focus, not on the pastor filling the pulpit, but on relationship development between ministers and the people in their lives and congregations. Hansen shows that effective churches come in many shapes and sizes and are built from the heart of a man of God.

This book provides insight into the pastorate and is applicable regardless of one's church location or demographics. Life experiences coupled with an understanding



of the pastor's role provide unique insights into the art of pastoring.

—Reviewed by Bradley T. Trask, pastor, Brighton Assembly of God, Brighton, Michigan.

TRANSFORMING CHILDREN INTO SPIRITUAL CHAMPIONS

George Barna

(Regal Books, 140 pp., hardcover)

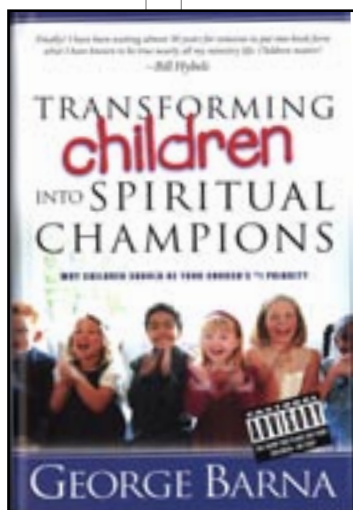
Transforming Children Into Spiritual Champions contains information that even surprised Barna. According to Barna, 3 years of research on ministry to children not only changed his perspective on the importance of ministering to children but also clarified why churches struggle to have significance in their culture. If

Barna can admit to an about-face in what he once believed, then pastors across our nation can do so as well.

This book challenges prevailing notions. Barna, utilizing research he once overlooked, coupled with new research, states he now believes children's ministries to be the most strategic ministry in God's kingdom.

Barna shows the importance of spiritual growth in children and challenges churches to reallocate their efforts, personnel, and resources to strategic ministry to boys and girls. He states: "Adults essentially carry out the beliefs they embraced when they were young." He adds, "Simply getting people to go to church regularly is not the key to becoming a mature Christian. Spiritual transformation requires a more extensive investment in one's ability to interpret all life situations in spiritual terms." His research shows this transformation happens during childhood.

This book will make you reevaluate your priorities. It does



not spend much time showing how reaching children will grow the church (although that is the end result). It spends a great deal of time explaining that today's Christian leaders were once reached as children. It explains that effective ministry that lasts and builds the

Kingdom is ministry to children.

—Reviewed by David Boyd, director, Children's Ministries Agency and BGMC, Springfield, Missouri.

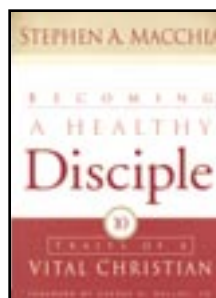
BECOMING A HEALTHY DISCIPLE: TEN TRAITS OF A VITAL CHRISTIAN

Stephen A. Macchia

(Baker Books, 256 pp., paperback)

While most believers recognize the value in living a healthy, balanced Christian life, many struggle to attain the discipline needed to do so. In *Becoming a Healthy Disciple*, Macchia discusses 10 traits required for a vital Christian life and presents the keys to desiring and maintaining this lifestyle.

Macchia does an excellent job of providing tools for personal character building and family life, as well



as for building relationships inside and outside church. Christians are encouraged to consider their reason for being and to examine why God has blessed them with the gifts and skills they possess. Macchia emphasizes the stewardship responsibilities that accompany the privilege of living in a land of abundance.

This book is a valuable resource for sharpening one's personal disciplines. Pastors and church leadership will find it an excellent tool for teaching and fostering Christian maturity.

—Reviewed by Clarence St. John, superintendent, Minnesota District of the Assemblies of God, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

THE CHURCH YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED

E. Glenn Wagner

(Zondervan, 254 pp., hardcover)

This captivating book challenges readers to contemplate the purpose of the church, which is to provide a place of safe pasture. Safe pasture is "a secure

place where you feel deep connections with others, where you are known and encouraged and challenged." In this pasture, people should be

able to find comfort and allow the Lord to work in their lives. Before Christians are encouraged to do for God, they should be encouraged to be what God wants them to be. Wagner strongly emphasizes being before doing.

The book has three main sections: "In Search of Safe Pasture," "What Happens in Safe Pasture?" "How Can We Create Safe Pasture?"



Wagner answers these questions with Scripture and many illustrations from his experiences as a pastor.

Before Wagner wrote this book, he implemented the ideas in his church and witnessed positive results. He admonishes the church to be the people of God. His premise is that church needs to be based on love for God and love for others. Love provides a safe pasture for those who come into the church. People will not only be challenged to work for God, but will also be challenged to place God first in their lives.

This book will be beneficial for any pastor regardless of church size or situation. I highly recommend this book.

—Reviewed by Mike Carl, senior pastor, Shores Fellowship Church, Ocean Shores, Washington.

FOUNDATIONS FOR PENTECOSTAL PREACHING

Compiled and edited by James K. Bridges

(Gospel Publishing House, 190 pp., paper)

Foundations For Pentecostal Preaching is a compilation of papers presented in a roundtable discussion at the 2005 Pentecostal Preachers Week, Central Assembly of God, Springfield, Missouri. According to James K. Bridges, "This book is about Pentecostal preachers and their preaching. It is about those who live with a calling, an anointing, and a mission."

The presenters, all noted for their excellence in biblical preaching, have provided pastors with a valuable tool to help them become more effective in preparing and preaching God's Word.

James Bradford challenges

pastors to prepare their hearts before they prepare their sermons. After reading this chapter, pastors will feel the urge to spend time before God as He searches their hearts, purifying them with the flame of His Holy Spirit.

Richard L. Dresselhaus, Byron Klaus, LeRoy Bartel present excellent instruction in biblical exegesis, hermeneutics, and homiletics that guide pastors in the practical aspect of studying the biblical text and making the bridge between the world of the biblical writers to proper application

for 21st-century Christians. Bypassing any of these steps mentioned in these chapters results in sermons that are neither biblically sound nor accurately applied to everyday living.

Carefully crafted sermons are of little value unless they are preached under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Robert Spence explains what it means to be anointed by the Holy Spirit and how pastors can preach with this anointing.

Pentecostal preaching must draw people to a decision. Bradley Trask focuses on the importance of persuasion in Pentecostal preaching and how pastors can become effective persuaders without becoming manipulators.

All pastors, not merely those who are just starting in the ministry, will benefit from this book.

—Reviewed by Richard L.

Schoonover, associate editor, *Enrichment journal*, Springfield, Missouri.



THRIVING YOUTH GROUPS: SECRETS FOR GROWING YOUR MINISTRY

Jeanne Mayo

(Group, 138 pp., paper)

We have all read a book and told ourselves, *I'm going to read this book again*. I have had *Thriving Youth Groups* for 6 weeks, and I am currently on my third read.

Mayo's book was written from 35 years of youth ministry experience and is one of the best, if not the best, books on youth ministry available. Having a thriving youth group is the dream of all youth pastors. Therefore, youth pastors will want to learn everything they can from this book.

I believe in finding someone who is doing youth ministry well, learning as much as you can from that person, and then take and do what is right for your ministry.

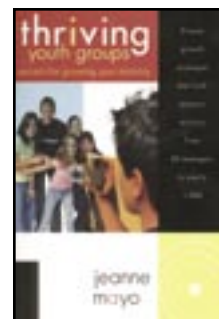
Mayo is a master at loving students and helping youth leaders. Her book contains strategies that every youth pastor can use

in his own ministry. I have ordered a copy for each person on my leadership team to use as a manual.

Thriving Youth Groups will challenge you to become the friendliest youth group in your town and to ignite a passion for God in every student.

My advice to pastors, youth pastors, and other youth workers: if you want a thriving youth group and "you're willing to work your guts out" (as Mayo would say), this is your book.

—Reviewed by Terry Staggs, youth pastor, First Assembly of God, Fort Wayne, Indiana



BENEVOLENCES CHRISTMAS SUNDAY, JULY 31

A Christmas without giving is like Independence Day with no fireworks. We enjoy exchanging gifts with family and friends, but many people in need at Christmas are unable to reciprocate.



The Bible says, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). The retired preachers on Aged Ministers

Assistance, the boys and girls at Hillcrest Children's Home, and the young women and children at Highlands provide an opportunity to prove the truth in this Scripture.

Your Benevolences Christmas offering will minister to them and be a blessing to you. Send your Christmas offering to: Benevolences Department, 1445 N. Boonville Ave., Springfield, MO 65802-1894.

Visit <http://www.benevolences.ag.org> for more information on the AMA Christmas CARE-A-VAN program and to view the Hillcrest and Highlands Christmas needs lists.

NEW FROM GPH — MEGA SPORTS CAMP

Mega Sports Camp has combined the best of sports camp and VBS with ideas for explosive growth to create community outreach unlike any other.



Churches have enjoyed a 50 percent increase in guests when they promote Mega Sports Camp in their communities.

"I probably won't ever do VBS again," states Jeri Kunc, children's pastor of Bonita Valley Community Church. "Sports Camp is different ... the kids are drawn to it, and their parents are drawn to it." Here is why:

- Children participate in high-action sessions of basketball, soccer, and cheerleading.
- Children gain confidence, self-esteem, and athletic skills in a friendly, nonthreatening environment.
- Children learn to "Go the Distance," a theme taken from the life of Paul, through music, interactive storytelling, and object lessons.
- Most important, children learn about Jesus — how He loves them and desires to have a relationship with them.

Mega Sports Camp is structured with flexibility that allows the group to concentrate on one, two, or all three sports — all you need is the location. The Mega Sports Camp kit contains a director's guide with step-by-step instructions to help one promote, recruit, set up, run, and follow up the event; play books for basketball, soccer, and cheerleading; Bible

curriculum; a music CD; and a DVD on staff training and promoting the event.

For information visit <http://www.MegaSportsCamp.com> or call 1-800-641-4310.

GLOBAL UNIVERSITY TO PRESENT PRECOUNCIL LEADERSHIP SEMINAR

Empowering Your Church Leaders is a one-day leadership-training seminar to be presented by Global University and Berean School of the Bible at the 51st General Council, in Denver, Colo., on Aug. 2, 2005.

"The goal of this seminar," says Dr. Ron Iwasko, president of Global University, "is to equip pastors and ministry leaders with skills necessary to train leadership teams in their local churches. God has a purpose for each church in its community, but effective ministry doesn't happen without a dynamic leadership team in place to mobilize the church into service."

Seminar registration is \$79 before July 4, 2005, \$99 after. Registration includes lunch, refreshments, seminar workbook, resource material, and networking opportunities. Seminar information and registration forms are available at <http://www.globaluniversity.edu>, by calling 1-800-443-1083, ext. 2716, or by e-mail at seminar@globaluniversity.edu.

Global University will launch the new Berean School of the Bible curriculum at General Council. Council participants are encouraged to visit the Global University booth for a demonstration.

In addition to ministry training through Berean School of the Bible, the school offers A.A., B.A., M.A., and M.Div. degrees through correspondence and online study programs.

GREENE TO HEAD LIGHT FOR THE LOST/HONORBOUND

On Nov. 23, 2004, Assemblies of God national Youth Ministries Director Tom Greene became the national director of HonorBound and Light for the Lost. "This was a difficult decision after almost 30 years of youth ministries, but my wife, Pam, and I are committed to the fact this is now God's will for our lives and our service to the Assemblies of God," says Greene.



Effective Jan. 1, 2005, Student Outreach Director Jay Mooney became the new national youth director.

"I am deeply humbled by the honor, privilege, and responsibility to serve as national youth director for the Assemblies of God," Mooney says.



As nym student outreach director Mooney oversaw Youth Alive campus ministries, The Seven Project, and discipleship.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES AGENCY PREPARES TO LAUNCH CHARACTER CONNEX

The national Children's Ministries Agency is launching a character-based school assembly program called Character Connex. Character Connex is a prepackaged program



children's leaders can use to build relationships with public schools. The affordable kit contains scripts, props, training, background DVDs, a back-

ground banner, and sound effects. One person or a team can operate the program.

Jason Noble, of the national Children's Ministries Agency, says: "We have used the latest technology and methods to design this great outreach. This program will allow any church to take an impacting and high-quality program to their schools.

Attendance at a regional training session is required to participate in the Character Connex program.

For more information or to preregister for training, call the Children's Ministries Agency, 1-417-862-2781, ext. 4089, or visit <http://www.4kids.ag.org>.

MISSIONETTES LUNCHEON SCHEDULED FOR DENVER GENERAL COUNCIL

National Missionettes

Coordinator Debbie Seler will host a Missionettes 50th Birthday Luncheon at General Council in Denver, Colo. Former national Missionettes coordinators and others who invested in

the lives of girls through Missionettes will be honored at the event.

Charles Crabtree, assistant general superintendent of the Assemblies of God, will narrate a multimedia/live presentation on Missionettes through the decades.

The luncheon will be Thursday, Aug. 4, at the Adam's Mark Hotel. Those with current or prior involvement in Missionettes, including girls who are participating, are invited to attend. Tickets are available through the General Council registration form or online at <http://www.missionettes.ag.org> and cost \$30.



A CALL TO PRAY

The National Prayer Center seeks Assemblies of God pastors and prayer coordinators who desire a greater focus on prayer in their church to partner with the National Prayer Center as a Satellite Prayer Center or as an International or National



Intercessory Prayer Network partner.

In 2004, the National Prayer Center received 800,000 prayer requests on its toll-free prayer line (1-800-4-PRAYER). We greatly need people who will answer calls and pray for the needs expressed by individual callers.

The National Prayer Center also needs people to answer the calls that will be received in the Upper Prayer Room and people to intercede for needs at the 2005 General Council in Denver, Colo.

For more information, contact Madonna Paulson at the National Prayer Center, 1445 N. Boonville Ave., Springfield, MO 65802, call 1-417-862-2781, ext. 1551, or visit <http://www.prayer.ag.org>.

EVANGELISM RESOURCES FOR ALL AGES

Here is some good news and some almost good news from George Barna. The good news? Recent research shows a significant increase in the number of Christians who believe evangelism is their personal responsibility. The bad news? Barna has not seen a corresponding increase in the number who witness.

"Barna's research has motivated our department," says Wes Bartel, director of the national Sunday School Department. "We want to help more Sunday School members take the final step to 'GO find others who need to know Jesus.' To meet that goal we are focusing on the evangelism portion of our new L.I.F.E. Vision. We are introducing a new theme: 'LIFE on the GO! Finding others who need to know.'"

The national Sunday School Department has developed simple, affordable evangelism reminders for Sunday School teachers to give students — a flashing magnetic star or a motion (lenticular) tag. Students who wear or carry these on their key rings will be reminded of three evangelism strategies:

1. to pray daily for friends and family who need to know Jesus.
2. that the Holy Spirit is with them and to stay alert for divine appointments.
3. to practice using the "high interest factor" of each evangelism resource.

"We believe friends and family who notice the flashing star or see the movement of the lenticular key tag will want to take a closer look," says Sharon Ellard, promotions coordinator. "Sunday School teachers can help students role play how

to use moments of interest to create natural opportunities to start conversations about what Jesus means to them."

Do you know members in your church who want to witness but do not know how to start a conversation about Jesus? These simple resources may give them the confidence they need. To request a free sample of the lenticular card, call 1-800-641-4310 and request the "GO Card." (Offer good while supplies last. Limits apply.)

These two resources are a small part of the new evangelism theme: "LIFE on the GO! Finding others who need to know" A free national Sunday School Day planner outlines how Sunday School teachers can equip and encourage their students to both pray more and to become more alert to witnessing opportunities during everyday events.

For more information about additional free evangelism ideas and resources visit <http://www.sundayschool.ag.org>.

THOM RAINER TO SPEAK AT PASTORS SUNDAY SCHOOL LUNCH

Only 4 percent of all Americans and 14 percent of born-again Americans live by a biblical worldview, according to research from George Barna.

Thom Rainer believes we can do better. The Rainer Group has interviewed hundreds of pastors of churches that successfully reach, keep, and prepare people for biblical living. Rainer has concluded that "the more active believers become in their church, the more effective they become at evangelization and discipleship of others."



Rainer will be the featured speaker at the national Sunday School Luncheon during the Denver General Council. Pastors who attend on Aug. 3 will not only hear the results of Rainer's findings, but will also gain insights for making their own Sunday School and small-group ministries more effective in preparing all ages to live a LIFE that pleases God.

Rainer is the author of *High Expectation Churches* and *Surprising Insights From the Unchurched*. His most recent book is *Breakout Churches*. Rainer serves as dean of the Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism, and Church Growth.

To view a brief video of Rainer speaking about discipleship, visit <http://www.sundayschool.ag.org>.

Lunch tickets are available for \$25 on the General Council registration form or at <http://www.ag.org>.

A/G CHARITIES READY TO PARTNER WITH CHURCHES TO ASSIST LOW-INCOME PEOPLE

Imagine your church partnering with low-income people by loving and assisting them through financial training so they

can begin to save money and invest in a brighter future for their families. A/G Charities, based in Washington, D.C., is looking for Assemblies of God churches that are willing to expand their ministry in this way.

A/G Charities was awarded a \$1 million grant for an Individual Development Accounts program and is ready to partner with A/G churches and ministries to help the less fortunate in their communities. The IDA Program is a savings plan that matches every dollar a person in poverty saves with two additional dollars. One matching dollar comes from the sponsoring church, and a third dollar comes from A/G Charities via the grant. At the end of the program, participants can accumulate as much as \$6,000 to invest in education/vocational training, first-time home ownership, or starting or expanding a small business. This is not only a good way for churches to make long-term investments in people's lives, but it also helps participants gain assets in their journey to financial stability and wholeness.

Interested churches should be willing to identify participants; assist them in saving money by matching each dollar they save; lead seminars based on curriculum for financial stewardship, healthy relationships, and asset planning; and stay in regular contact with A/G Charities.

For more information about the IDA program and how to qualify for a grant through A/G Charities, contact Kevin Monroe at 404-713-0713, or by e-mail at kmonroe@agcharities.org.

REVISED SEVENTH EDITION COLLEGE GUIDE AVAILABLE

The revised seventh edition of the Assemblies of God College Guide, a 40-page resource featuring 19 endorsed schools, is available free. This full-color magazine includes current information from each school: tuition costs, application deadlines, admission requirements, financial aid, an overview of the local community, and much more.



A comprehensive chart lists the academic programs and degrees offered at each school. Business-reply postcards that can be mailed directly to the schools to request additional information are included in the magazine.

To receive free copies for your church library and college-bound students, contact the Christian Higher Education Department at 1-417-862-2781, ext. 3315, or visit <http://www.colleges.ag.org>, and request item #747001.

NEW U.S. MISSIONS CONVENTION MATERIALS AVAILABLE

Are you searching for information, ideas, or resources to enhance your missions convention? U.S. Missions can help you share your vision of reaching your community for Christ. Our



new theme missions convention materials will inspire your congregation to reach out with Christ's love and compassion.

New this year, a DVD with eight ministry videos promotes missions awareness, captures the interest of

believers, and inspires them to reach the lost in their community. Show these videos on missions Sundays or during missions convention.

Other theme products include attractive vinyl banners, life-touching posters, and preprinted bulletins. Many of these items are available in Spanish.

For a list of convention materials, visit <http://usmissions.ag.org>, or call 1-471-862-2781, ext 3266.

EVANGEL GC BOOTH OFFERS SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

Author book signings, free magazines, daily drawings, discounts and unique offers have become staples of the *Today's Pentecostal Evangel* exhibit booth at recent General Councils. This summer in Denver promises more special features for every pastor and layperson who visits the *Evangel* booth in the Colorado Convention Center August 2–5.

Besides the premiums available to *Evangel* guests, visitors enjoy wonderful fellowship when they stop by the booth, according to the publication's Managing Editor Ken Horn.

"Manning the *Evangel* booth is my favorite part of Council," says Horn, who has routinely represented the periodical since the 1997 General Council in Indianapolis. "Just about everybody stops by. We enjoy the personal, face-to-face feedback."

Along with about a dozen complimentary book-signing sessions and other activities during the Denver General Council, the *Evangel* will commemorate several recent accomplishments:

- Unveiling of a redesigned publication.
- Further growth of *Evangelio Pentecostal Hoy*, the *Evangel*'s Spanish version.

• Record number of salvation reports in 2004.

• Five-millionth *Evangel* sponsored by the Key Bearers ministry.

• Introduction of an outreach program helping churches provide the *Evangel* to their local public libraries.

Horn sees the latter achievements as part of the synergistic work of the Fellowship and the *Evangel*, saying, "These two programs are part of the outreach of the Assemblies of God. Nothing has been more effective for us than Key Bearers, and the libraries have proven to be a whole new vista of ministry."

The *Evangel* booth will occupy spaces 521, 620, 622, and 624 just to the left of the GPH Bookstore as one enters Hall D of the CCC. More details regarding activities at the *Evangel* booth will appear during July in the magazine itself. A complete schedule of book signing sessions will appear in every issue of *The Council Today* newspaper August 2–5.



With Christ

J.D. Actkinson
Freedom, California

Margaret Anderson
Pinetown, South Africa

J. Harold Arneson
Lynden, Washington

Frank Baez, Jr.
Thornton, Colorado

Arthur H. Bauer
San Diego, California

Donna J. Beaver
East Liverpool, Ohio

Thomas E. Benvenuti
Huntington Beach,
California

Melba R. Berkheimer
Orange, Texas

Robert E. Bettis
Sand Springs, Oklahoma

Wanda M. Boyd
Fort Worth, Texas

William M. Bradshaw
Ferris, Texas

Margie Brantley
Tallahassee, Florida

William W. Brewer
Cherry Valley, California

Susie I. Brooks
Athens, Texas

Melton O. Bruce
Dothan, Alabama

A. Everett Burns
McAllen, Texas

Horace W. Chapman
Fort Valley, Georgia

Kenneth L. Claycomb
Crawfordville, Florida

Henry L. Collins
Richlands, Virginia

William H. Collins
Bainbridge, Georgia

Lawrence E. Cook
Granite City, Illinois

George W. Davis
Warfordsburg, Pennsylvania

J.B. Davis
Jacksonville, Florida

Richard L. De Leon
Terra Bella, California

Leopoldo De Jesus
Brooklyn, New York

Velmer O. Dewey
Drain, Oregon

Louis W. Donaghe
Bouse, Arizona

Mrs. F.C. Drake (Bobbie L.)
Silsbee, Texas

V. William Durbin
Cypress, California

Willard K. Etheredge
Ashford, Alabama

Floyd M. French
La Mesa, California

David J. Garrison
Vancouver, Washington

Willis W. Geyer
Milton-Freewater, Oregon

Ruth M. Gilbert
Auburn, California

Ethel E. Harrington
Lady Lake, Florida

Robert W. Hawkins
Valparaiso, Indiana

Larry D. Hodge
Sugar Grove, Illinois

Frances M. Hodges
Bartow, Florida

Eugene W. Holdiness
Baltimore, Maryland

James D. Holmes
Kings Mountain,
North Carolina

James H. Hopkins
Marysville, Washington

Dee Hubbard
Roswell, New Mexico

James H. Ivie
Caldwell, Idaho

Brett L. Janzen
Irvine, California

Philip A. Keene
Louisville, Ohio

Talmadge Kennedy
Port Saint Joe, Florida

Mohamed S. Khan
Jamaica, New York

Stanley F. Kostencki
Madisonville, Kentucky

Lester L. Kramer
Sun City West, Arizona

Thomas J. Larison
Cincinnati, Ohio

Elmer W. Lindale, Jr.
Pennsville, New Jersey

Daniel L. Little
Cornelius, North Carolina

Leo Lovin
Tacoma, Washington

Marilyn E. Marker
Seattle, Washington

Malcolm G. Marshall
Stafford, Texas

John S. Mattox
Encinitas, California

Mario M. Mejia
Kearney, Nebraska

John M. Morris
Richton, Mississippi

Dale E. Neller
Bradenton, Florida

Rebekah J. Noe
Tempe, Arizona

Kenneth A. Norris
Des Moines, Iowa

Palmerine Pratt
La Mesa, California

Ben A. Reeves
LaMarque, Texas

Ruby L. Reine
Bloomington, Minnesota

Edmond L. Rey
Woodland, Washington

Lester F. Richardson
Lakeland, Florida

V. Ernest Shores
Glendale, Arizona

Wallace B. Shows
Rosenberg, Texas

Mary F. Smith
Bella Vista, Arkansas

Nolen E. Smith
Alamogordo, New Mexico

John W. Snavely
Ozark, Missouri

Harold E. Stacy
Pacific, Missouri

William T. Stewart
Birmingham, Alabama

Robert L. Swope
Salem, Oregon

Barbara F. Turner
Lodi, California

Adalena Valdez
Tampa, Florida

Henry Varela
Stockton, California

Abraham L. Vargas
Clovis, California

Maile A. Vi
East Palo Alto, California

David Williams
Corsicana, Texas

Berniece M. Yaws
Midland, Texas

Marianio N. Zizzo
Ozark, Missouri

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The Good Fight

BY GEORGE O. WOOD

A retired missionary and friend gave me this advice when I was a young pastor. He recounted the story of his father, a farmer/deacon in a small-town Assemblies of God church in Iowa. His dad was working one day in the barn and another deacon was helping him.

"Remember that problem we had in the church a couple of years ago?" asked the deacon to my friend's father. "That problem kind of went away, but we never really dealt with it. I think we ought to make sure it never comes up again. We should go back and get to the root of it and deal with it once and for all."

With Iowa farmer wisdom, my friend's father drawled, "Well, I reckon that problem is like the manure on this barn floor. It doesn't smell half as bad if you don't dig it up."

That advice has helped me more than once. Some things are not worth digging up.

One of my favorite stories on conflict comes from an Assemblies of God church in west Texas.

A new convert noticed that the plastic floral bouquet on the Communion table in front of the pulpit looked rather aged and decrepit. She told the pastor that she enjoyed making floral arrangements and asked if she could provide a new one. He readily agreed.

About an hour before the next Sunday evening service, the pastor was in his office adjacent to the sanctuary. He looked out his window and noticed the lady carrying the new bouquet to the church. A few moments later he heard the loud voices of two ladies arguing in the sanctuary.

One of the older saints had arrived early and accosted the new convert. She told her not to change the flowers. The new convert tried to explain that she had the pastor's permission. The old bouquet was no longer attractive and needed to go.

As their voices rose, the pastor had the good sense to remain in his office.

Finally, the old lady said, "This bouquet has been here for a long time. It was given in honor of a deceased friend of mine. I won't let you remove it. You'll take it out over my dead body."

That pronouncement was followed by the sound of a sharp slap.

Five minutes later the new convert stood in the doorway of the pastor's office, sobbing. Her cheeks were stained with tears and smudged mascara. "Pastor," she said, "I brought the new flowers and this old lady tried to stop me. I explained that I

It is our task as leaders to make sure we only engage in the good fights.

had your permission. She refused to listen to me and told me that those old flowers were in honor of her dead friend and that I would take them out over her dead body. Pastor, she was so unreasonable. The spirit of slap came all over me."

Have you felt the spirit of slap from time to time?

Effective Christian leaders learn when to let the *manure* lie on the barn floor, and when to give a proverbial *slap* to a person or issue that needs it.

The apostle Paul says, "I have fought a good fight" (2 Timothy 4:7). Not all fights are good. It is our task as leaders to make sure we only engage in the good fights. You are fighting a good fight if:

- It is not with your spouse.
- You do not lose a single fruit of the Spirit before, during, or after the conflict.
- You can lay your head on your pillow at night without bitterness, anger, or regret.
- You gain nothing for yourself by winning.
- You do not lose the war because you insisted on winning one particular battle.
- You help the other person get back up.
- You fight fair even though the other person does not.
- You fight from principle rather than power or position. (If you throw your weight around, you may be overweight.)
- You still get back up after being knocked down.
- In the end, the devil hurts worse than you do.

May all our fights be good ones, and may we be good in all our fights. ■

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