

Practical Ministry Skills

Dealing with Difficult People



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Leader's Guide

How to use "Practical Ministry Skills" by BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS in your regularly scheduled meetings.

Welcome to *BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS: Your Complete Guide to Leadership Training*. You've purchased an innovative resource that will help you develop leaders who can think strategically and biblically about the church. Selected by the editors of *Leadership Resources* and *Christianity Today International*, the material comes from respected thinkers and church leaders.

"Practical Ministry Skills" is completely flexible and designed to be easy to use. Each theme focuses on a practical area of church ministry and comprises brief handouts on specific aspects of that ministry. The handouts give a succinct and practical overview of the issues most relevant to your goals. You may use them at the beginning of a meeting to help launch a discussion, or you may hand them out as brief primers for someone new to a particular ministry.

This special theme on dealing with difficult people is designed to help equip pastors, staff, lay leaders, teachers, and Bible study leaders to be effective in managing difficult relationships inside the church body. You may use it either for a training session or to give individually to key people involved in the church. Simply print the handouts needed and use them as necessary.

To help church leaders better handle those in the congregation prone to complaining and stirring up strife, see "Managing Complainers" (p. 3). The article "Leading Reluctant Followers" (pp. 6–7) offers empowering approaches to strengthen relationships with reticent people in the church. Learn about how conflict evolves and how to handle it by using "Varieties of Religious Strife" (pp. 11–12).

We hope you enjoy this theme as you nurture relationships within your congregation to build up effective followers of Jesus Christ.

Need more material, or something on a specific topic? See our website at www.BuildingChurchLeaders.com.

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Managing Complainers

Addressing complaints head-on can stop potential damage.

2 Samuel 15:1–13; Philippians 2:14

Church staff, board members, and leaders are natural lightning rods for complainers. Afraid of voicing objections publicly or confronting the pastor directly, the disgruntled can do great harm by focusing on the negative, or worse, spreading false rumors or information about those in leadership. To help avoid these outcomes, keep these important principles in mind:

1. Step away from the gate.

If we are not careful, complaining people can easily become an Absalom at the gate, stealing away the hearts of those in the congregation. Like King David's son, it is easy for some to begin to think that things would be different if they were in charge, that they are the answer to the problem. Some are tempted to think they are more "in touch" than the pastor. When they discover there's support for their way of thinking they can become the catalyst for a power struggle or church split.

2. The shortest distance between two points does not go through me.

Rather than playing Absalom, we should follow the biblical pattern of confrontation (Matt. 18:15–17). Instead of listening to rumors, we need to ask the complainer, "Have you talked to the pastor yet?" If he hasn't, we should politely tell him to follow what Scripture says about confrontation without commenting on the concerns. If he has done that and the matter has not been resolved, we should encourage him to follow Christ's instruction by taking another person along for a private meeting with the pastor. If there is no resolution, then take it to the official leadership of the church.

3. "They" will get you into trouble.

At the church I serve, we have adopted the "they" rule. If a critic says "they say" or "several people are upset," we ask the complainer to identify who "they" are. It's hard to know how serious a situation is if you don't know whether "they" are one person or 100. If the individual bringing the criticism is unwilling to identify "them" or have them speak directly to the party that has offended them, we won't listen to their accusations. After all, the end of Absalom's life shows the danger of playing to the crowd.

4. Loyal David is a better example.

Rather than Absalom's rebellion, a much better example for us is David's respect for his superior, Saul. Instead of manipulating the present for our own ends, we need to relax and trust God for our future.

To keep my heart pure and my perspective straight, I've had to discipline myself to do two things. One is to pray for my seniors on a daily basis. It's hard to criticize someone when you are praying for him. Lifting him up before God tends to diffuse any frustration and helps me to see him as God does. And two, I remind myself that, ultimately, I am serving Jesus Christ.

—MARK WHEELER



Learning Through Criticism

Criticism, although tough to hear, can bring important insight.

James 1:19

When we receive criticism from another person it may be God's way of speaking to us. That doesn't mean that criticism is always on target or that it must be taken at face value. But God could be using this person to help us see a blind spot in our life. Here are some fresh ways of viewing and learning from criticism.

Course correction. God could be correcting you or trying to bring balance into your life. Years ago at our annual staff retreat, our church's five pastors spent three days critiquing one another's lives and ministries. We have good personal relationships that enable us to share honestly without fear of being rejected. At one point, I critiqued one of the pastors, suggesting he needed to address some issues he didn't think needed attention. To my amazement, the rest of the staff turned my critique around and confronted me. They said I was the one who wasn't sufficiently aware of the effect my words had on people.

Though this confrontation was painful, it became a turning point for me. As a result, I've made a commitment to offer casual critique of others only after first reminding myself of the special weight my words carry. I've also committed myself to showing grace to at least one person every day. This might involve nothing more than taking initiative to talk with another about something that is important to them and not just to me.

Modeling grace. In another's harsh words, God could be giving me an opportunity to teach others how to react to criticism. I want to show people how to respond not defensively but with grace. One of our staff members received an e-mail from someone who was disappointed with my sermons. When the staff person passed the e-mail on to me, I immediately responded via e-mail to the critic: I thanked the person for his critique, paraphrased what I understood the critic to be saying, and then asked, "Am I hearing you correctly?" In this reply, I also acknowledged in what ways I agreed with the critique. I wanted to make it safe for the critic to be honest with me. This non-defensive reaction encourages people to give me their honest feedback. I want my critics coming to me—not going to others talking about me.

Healing the wounded. Finally, God may want me to minister to my critic. That begins with me listening carefully, and sometimes that's all the critic needs. Other times, I have to listen to what the critic is really saying. I've learned I can never assume I have the whole picture without some serious interaction with the critic. Winston Churchill once said, "There is nothing so exhilarating as to be shot at and missed." It's much easier, then, to turn negative critiques into positive experiences if I assume God is in the process and ask, "How can my response best reflect the values of God's Kingdom?"

—JIM ABRAHAMSON



Identifying Critical People

Spotting people with critical attitudes can lessen the damage they cause.

1 Peter 4:8–10

Getting along with people is an essential part of any ministry. But when relationships are vandalized by critical people, also referred to here as “dragons,” the result can be hurt feelings and discord in the body. Here is a list of some of the most common dragons found in most congregations to help you identify them early.

1. **The Bird Dog.** The Bird Dog loves to be the church leader’s eyes, ears, and nose, sniffing out items for attention. “If I were you, I’d give Mrs. Greenlee a call. She has some marital problems you need to confront.” Of particular bother is the Superspiritual Bird Dog. This purebred strain is more likely to point out things that always leave the leader feeling defensive and not quite spiritual. “The Lord has laid on my heart that we need to be praying more for renewal.” Who could argue otherwise? These people like to give the impression that they have more spiritual perception than anyone else.
2. **The Wet Blanket.** These people have a negative disposition that’s contagious. They spread gloom, erase excitement, and bog down the ministry. Their motto: “Nothing ventured, nothing lost.”
3. **The Entrepreneur.** Just the opposite of the Wet Blanket, the Entrepreneur is enthusiastic. He’s the first to greet visitors at the church and invite them to his home. Unfortunately, in addition to being enthusiastic about the church, he’s equally eager to sell them vitamins, bee pollen, or car wax.
4. **Captain Bluster.** This is the person who comes from the union steward school of diplomacy and speaks with an exclamation point instead of a period.
He (or she) is right, and everyone else is wrong, and he doesn’t mind saying in the middle of a church business meeting, “I don’t like what you said.”
5. **The Fickle Financier.** This person uses money to register approval or disapproval of church decisions. Sometimes he protests silently by merely withholding offerings.
6. **The Busybody.** This describes one who enjoys telling others how to do their jobs.
7. **The Sniper.** This is a person who avoids face-to-face conflict but picks off church leaders with potshots in private conversation, such as the cryptic “Be sure and pray for our pastor. He has some problems, you know.”
8. **The Bookkeeper.** This is one who keeps written records of everything a church leader does that “isn’t in the spirit of Christ.”
9. **The Merchant of Muck.** These people breed dissatisfaction by attracting others who are more than willing to listen to, and elaborate on, things that are wrong in the church.

The distinguishing characteristic of a dragon is not *what* is said but *how* it’s said. Even though these people are well intentioned, sincerely doing what’s best in their own eyes, they aren’t quite with you. Often they have a spirit that enjoys being an adversary rather than an ally. They have a consistent pattern of focusing on a narrow special interest rather than the big picture, which leads to tangents rather than a balanced church life.

—MARSHALL SHELLEY; Adapted from the book *Leading Your Church Through Conflict and Reconciliation* (Bethany House Publishing, 1993). Used with permission.

DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE



Leading Reluctant Followers

People sometimes need a reason to follow good leaders.

James 3:1–3

We cannot assume that people want to follow our leadership. Therefore, we need to encourage them to do so. At a minimum, that means not putting stumbling blocks in their way. Here are some ways to encourage faithful followers.

Encouraging Followership

1. *Don't butcher the sacred cows.* People will not follow us if they sense we're trying to rustle their sacred cows.
2. *Get your board on board.* Perhaps the most crucial element in successfully winning the congregation's support is to get the board behind you. Leaders have a great deal of latitude as long as they enjoy the board's support. If the congregation understands the board is foursquare behind the leader, they will fall in line.
3. *Listen for the personal dimension.* Not every situation in the church calls for strong, dynamic leadership. Often the pastoral touch is the most effective way of building trust in your leadership.
4. *Lead boldly and let grace abound.* Even though I know people are hesitant to follow, I'm not hesitant to lead. In fact, if I were hesitant, it would undermine my credibility. So I have to make tough decisions and voice my opinion about the direction of the church, albeit with some discretion at first. Still, at times leaders must act on their best instincts and leave the results with God, particularly when the issues are not clear-cut. It's what Martin Luther referred to as "sinning boldly" in the gray areas of life.

Especially Good Times for Leading

1. *The paradox of the new kid on the block.* A congregation is most eager to follow my lead when they are also the least apt to follow it—when the leader is new. In the beginning we find great expectation and excitement, which translates into eagerness regarding our fresh ideas.
2. *Healthy desperation.* Churches are usually ready to set aside their reluctance to follow when they experience healthy desperation. The church has fallen on hard times. Giving has collapsed or membership has dropped. If a plane bounces through heavy turbulence, people will reach for their seat belts when the captain flashes the buckle-up light.
3. *A grand project.* If the program or plan is big enough, people feel over their heads, and they are more willing to be led.
4. *The right age.* I've also found that age can be an asset in persuading people to follow my lead. I jokingly advise others that it helps not to be too young or too old. My own strength as a leader seemed to take a quantum leap when I hit age 40 to 45. I was no longer seen as the young kid with great potential and rough edges. At the same time they weren't expecting me to have a cardiac arrest any day.

DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE **LEADING RELUCTANT FOLLOWERS**, *cont.*

Transformational Leadership

There are immense possibilities for providing leadership that people will respond to with integrity and enthusiasm. Leighton Ford, in his book *Transforming Leadership*, stresses the difference between managers and transformational leaders. Managers attempt to do things right, while leaders are those who try to do the right thing. Leadership includes the ability to present a compelling vision to people. When people have a vision, you can withstand all manner of problems, glitches, and screw-ups.

1. *Assure the flock the pastures will stay green.* People might intellectually agree with your new vision, but their heart is still with the way things used to be. So while leading people to new vistas, I have to assure them I will continue to love and nurture them.
2. *The parable of the pear trees.* After all is said and done, a leader must sometimes be willing to leave some reluctant followers behind. Jesus did; Paul did. Every generation of church leaders have. At some point, you have to make a hard decision as to how much time you want to spend in changing reluctant attitudes.
3. *Staying the course.* Building trust depends on establishing your integrity. And that means staying with something long enough to become believable to people. Doing what you said you were going to do from day one builds trust.

The Benefits of Frustration

When people are reluctant to follow, it can hurt. But it can also give one a sense of humility. Our pride and arrogance can deceive us into believing that we have a right to a happy and fulfilling life. But in reality, hardship and suffering are part and parcel of ministry. Just because I have a burning vision doesn't mean I should have an easy road to actualizing it. That type of opposition I see as an opportunity for my soul to be cleansed, my focus clarified, and my devotion to serving God renewed.

—BEN PATTERSON; Adapted from the book, *Who's In Charge?* (Multnomah Publishers, 1993). Used with permission.

DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE**Loving Your Enemies**

Responding in love to those who oppose you can bear much fruit.

Matthew 5:43–45

At some point all church leaders will encounter serious opposition within the church. Dealing effectively and in a loving way with our enemies can be challenging. Here are several approaches that may help lessen the conflict.

Acknowledge Emotion Without Sinning

We live in a world that has fooled us into thinking you have to “be true to your feelings,” meaning that you not only acknowledge the feelings, but also express them to whomever you feel like unleashing them upon. Clearly, however, this cannot be the approach of the Christian. We have to insert into the equation Jesus’ command to love our enemies. When evil is done to us, we’re to do good in return. When we’re cursed, we’re to bless. We can be angry, but we’re not to sin in anger.

Chew on It Before Responding

We often need time to think about what was said, analyze it, and filter it through our experiences, feelings, opinions, and desires. After the analysis comes the crucial decision: How do we respond? Relationships are healthier when you don’t attack indiscriminately, even if you feel angry.

Try to Understand

When faced with opposition, try to understand why the person is saying or doing what he or she is. All behavior has a root cause. So probing a person’s background to better appreciate the perspective can make more sense of the behavior. Try to ask yourself, “What kind of a home did this person grow up in? What values are most important to them?” When trying to determine why someone does something, don’t rely on simple answers like “He’s just sinful” or “He’s just perverse.” There is usually some fear, some longing, or some bias ingrained by parents—something deeper—that’s motivating the person. Then, try to deal with this person on the basis of that reason rather than the behavior that is troublesome.

Focus on Forgiveness

Repressed anger can resurface in harmful ways. So, when I find myself getting angry, I try to remember that those feelings aren’t worth hanging onto. It’s much healthier to focus on what’s good in life and how we will respond, by God’s grace, the next time we find ourselves in a similar situation. I’m helped to forgive those who hurt me, too, by remembering how much God has forgiven me. While we’re a forgiven people who shouldn’t wallow in the memory of our past failures, it is good to remember from whence we came and where we’d be now but for the grace of God, especially if we have trouble forgiving others.

Confess Your Faults

Finally, when it comes to dealing lovingly with enemies, let’s face the fact that all of us are sometimes going to blow it. We know what we should do but for whatever reason, we lose our cool and say or do something we shouldn’t. When that happens, the only thing to do next is to humbly confess our faults and ask for forgiveness. It’s not easy, but that’s the faithful thing to do—and it may also be the only thing that will save our ministry.

—JAY KESLER; adapted from *Being Holy, Being Human* (W Publishing Group, 1988). Used with permission.

DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE



Shepherding Those Who Don't Like You

Being at peace with your enemies requires tact and sensitivity.

Romans 12:18

Being a leader is hard enough. But what about leading those who don't like you? Here are a few pointers to help soften the tension.

Resist What Comes Naturally

In ministry, doing what comes naturally is often the best approach. That's not true, however, when it comes to pastoring difficult people. One of my natural responses is to distance myself from difficult people. But, I've learned to make it a point to seek out difficult people and spend a few moments talking together. Even if our contact with the person doesn't solve the problem, it builds a bridge rather than a wall between us. There is something positive and healing about face-to-face contact with people at odds with us.

Invite Talk About Sensitive Subjects

It's important to let people know that even subjects of conflict can be discussed; they don't end the relationship. I've had ongoing differences with one couple over the style of our worship service. I've met with them to talk specifically about that issue. We continue to disagree. We see each other regularly, and sometimes, when we are talking about something unrelated to worship, I will intentionally bring the subject into our conversation. I might casually ask, "I've been wondering if you have noticed any positive changes in the worship services lately?" Or, "Did you enjoy the extra hymns we sang today?" I'm not trying to stir up controversy; I simply want them to know it's okay to talk about something we disagree on. We can disagree and still work together.

Keep Private Battles Private

One person had battled me repeatedly about my emphasis on evangelism. At a business meeting, the subject of evangelism came up, and several people expressed their excitement about how the church was finally reaching out. I took the opportunity to point out that one of my most vocal critics was part of a shrinking minority. I had scored a major victory on this issue, and a public one at that—or so I thought. Ultimately, the statement came back to haunt me. Just as a negative political ad campaign can generate sympathy for the opponent, so too can a public attack against someone in the church. Even though people didn't agree with this man's position, they disagreed even more with my public attack of him. Some things are best left unsaid. Don't make private battles public.

Practice Kindness

There is a bumper sticker that reads: "Practice random acts of kindness and senseless acts of beauty." It's a good reminder of one of the most helpful lessons I've learned about pastoring people I find difficult to love. It is amazing what acts of kindness can do to build bridges to people.

When Best Efforts Fall Short

Of course, no approach to dealing with difficult people will be successful with all the people all the time. But, the more I seek to love difficult people, the more God uses them to refine me into the image of Christ. After all, learning to love people is one of the ways we become like Christ.

—GARY PRESTON



Taming the Green-Eyed Monster of Envy

The key is being content with what God has given us.

Galatians 5:25–26

Envy is common in the ministry, but we don't often discuss it. Are we afraid to admit we look at what other church leaders have and feel sorry that we don't have the same? Envy can quickly lead to backbiting and gossip among church leaders. Here are a few ways to tame the envy monster.

Remember that we ministers are on the same team. On a team, each player is assigned a position, and when each plays the position well, the team prospers. When someone tries to stand out, the team loses. How easy it is, though, to justify envy's critical comments about others in ministry. We don't mean to be condemning; we simply claim to be "observing some obvious weaknesses." But I can rejoice because I'm part of a successful team effort. When another minister succeeds, my team benefits even though I receive no applause. We're both on the same team, playing for the same Coach.

Avoid comparison. At 42, with a Doctor of Ministry degree, I served a church with an average Sunday morning attendance of sixty-five. As I ate breakfast one morning with another pastor named Paul I said, "I have to admit, Paul, I'm jealous of your success. We're the same age, have the same amount of pastoral experience, but you're serving a church of twenty-five hundred while mine is only sixty-five." Suddenly I realized that I was comparing our ministries. Comparison breathes flames of dissatisfaction with what we have, depression because we can't have what we want, and even anger with God because he has deprived us while rewarding others.

Hold your tongue. I try to live by the motto, "I will not speak ill of another minister or ministry, because I don't know how God is using the person or ministry in others' lives." That motto gets tested when I encounter methods of ministry I flat-out reject, hear a theology I think is deficient, or see what I think is unethical behavior. But I keep silent or speak privately with the colleague, while I rejoice with God in any success for the kingdom.

Focus on your own responsibility before God. As an associate minister in Saginaw, Michigan, I worked with one of the most effective preachers I've heard. Week in, week out, he spoke something valuable to me as well as to the lay people. Yet no one ever asked him to speak at a major conference. Only rarely was he invited to speak outside his limited area. As I compared him with the renowned preachers I've heard, I slowly realized that for his own reasons, God chooses to exalt some people and not others. Those who receive attention aren't necessarily better, just more visible. No matter where a person serves or what he does, he stands responsible to God for his personal best. God takes the responsibility for whatever acclaim comes his way.

—CHARLES CERLING, JR.



Varieties of Religious Strife

Church conflict that is managed early can protect against divisive conflict later.

Proverbs 17:14

Few people find conflict a pleasant experience. The closer we work with people the more likely we will eventually find ourselves in conflict with them. But conflict can also be a means to closer relationships if it is resolved effectively. Here are five levels of conflict most churches experience and the strategies that are best used at each level.

Level I: Predicaments

In Level I conflict the major objective of the parties is to solve the problem. Level-I disputants don't accuse people but rather stay focused on the problem. By and large, the conflicting parties are open with one another about the problem. Neither party is frightened or suspicious of the other. Each assumes good will upon the part of the other, so neither party withholds information. The level of candor, in fact, is an excellent indicator of the level of conflict. Because this level is handled so smoothly, some people don't see it as "conflict." When conflicts remain at this level, a great deal can be accomplished: problems get solved, people understand each other better, relationships improve, and trust is deepened.

Level II: Disagreement

In Level II conflict, the objective of the parties has shifted slightly: each party becomes increasingly concerned about self-protection. Parties are still concerned about solving the problem, but they are especially concerned about coming out of the situation looking good. At Level I, parties explore the inaccuracies of the other party's case simply to discern the facts. But parties in Level II are more interested in "scoring points," demonstrating their intellectual prowess in conflict. When a conflict shows signs of becoming a contest, though, moving toward a consensus becomes even more difficult.

People at Level II begin to lose trust in the church leaders to help them get through the problem. They look elsewhere for help. They talk to others in the church about their concerns. They take their problems home and discuss them with spouses and friends.

As in Level I conflict, this level of conflict is typical to most churches; a level that with a little patience and planning can be turned to the good.

That can be done by:

1. Helping each party understand the specific source of their frustration.
2. Getting the parties to tell each other, in a gracious way, the facts as they see them and the emotions they are experiencing.
3. Helping the parties find an amenable solution to the conflict.

Level III: Contest

At Level III, conflict has become a full contest: the "players" are less concerned about the problem or looking good; now they want to win, to get their way. It is much more difficult, then, for people to see clearly and accurately what is actually going on, and their language reflects this. Several distortions are common:

1. *Dichotomizing.* To dichotomize means to see things as right or wrong, black or white. There is little or no room to explore a variety of alternatives: "Either the youth pastor resigns or our family leaves!"
2. *Universalizing.* We universalize when we make broad generalizations that do not accurately describe what is going on in the church. We tend to use words like *everybody*, *nobody*, *never*, and *always*:

DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE VARIETIES OF RELIGIOUS STRIFE, cont.

“This church is split right down the middle. Everybody has taken sides.” Universal statements are rarely true, and saying them distorts people’s views even more.

3. *Magnification.* When we magnify, we assume the other party has evil motives. We also imply that our motives are righteous: “They don’t give one whit about this church.”
4. *Fixation on feelings.* This means focusing on people’s feelings rather than the facts of the problem.

At Level III, groups and coalitions begin to form. These groups are not yet factions, which emerge at Level IV, but it is the kind of conflict that corrodes a congregation. Decisions made at Level III, because they are based on seriously distorted thinking, will often create more problems than they solve.

In general, the goal is to reduce Level III conflict to Level I or II. This can be done in the following ways:

1. *Increase the amount of clear, direct communication between the parties.* This is the key to reducing conflict at Level III. Parties need to meet together to listen to one another’s concerns. To make them feel safe with one another in this meeting do the following beforehand:
 - a. Clarify who will be there.
 - b. Clarify the agenda.
 - c. Clarify the ground rules.
2. *Help the parties explore areas of common agreement.* Before they look at their areas of disagreement, attempt to establish common ground.
3. *Help the parties discover the deeper interest.* The concerns and solutions each party proposes may seem incompatible. However, behind each position may lie a range of interests that have not yet been articulated. These deeper concerns can become the basis upon which other alternative solutions arise.

Level IV: Fight/Flight

In Level IV conflict the major objective of parties is to break the relationship, either by leaving or getting the other to withdraw. The focus of conflict shifts from issues and emotions to principles. The parties often battle over eternal values—truth, human rights, justice. Often the issues being addressed by the parties are problems to solve, and workable solutions can be found. However, if the problems to solve are addressed as standard bearers for eternal principles, resolutions are extremely difficult to work out.

Level V: Intractable

At Level IV the parties are willing to let the other side live, if at a distance. At Level V, people believe the opposition is so evil and so virulent that simply getting rid of them will not do. The opposition must be punished or destroyed. Those at Level-V conflict believe, for the safety of the church, that the bad people must be disciplined so they can do no further damage.

In lower levels of conflict, getting someone or some group to come in from the outside (denominational officials, church consultants) can help. At Levels IV and V it is absolutely critical. The situation is out of control. Most pastors shouldn’t even get in the middle of a Level IV or V dispute. Still, as pastors are better informed about the exact nature of their churches’ conflicts, the better are their chances of dealing with them redemptively.

—SPEED LEAS; Adapted from the book *Mastering Conflict & Controversy* (Nelson Books, 1993). Used with permission.



Further Exploration

Books, downloads, and websites to help your leadership team deal with difficult people.

 **BuildingChurchLeaders.com.** Leadership training resources from Christianity Today.

“Creating Community” Training Theme and PowerPoint

“Handling Conflict” Training Theme and PowerPoint

“Handling Conflict” Assessment

“Conflict and Healing” Case Studies

“Implementing Church Discipline” Survival Guide

 **LeadershipJournal.net.** This website offers practical advice and articles for church leaders.

Relationships: Resolving Conflict and Building Community by *The Navigators*. This Bible study examines the community God has designed for us. (Navpress, 1997; ISBN 1576830233)

Firestorm by *Ron Susek*. Traces the stages through which church conflicts usually pass, and provides suggestions for dealing with each stage. (Baker, 1999; ISBN 0801090911)

Leading Your Church Through Conflict and Resolution edited by *Marshall Shelley*. Helps pastors and lay leaders understand, prevent, and redeem conflict. (Bethany House, 1997; ISBN 1556619405)

Mastering Conflict and Controversy by *Edward G. Dobson, Speed B. Leas, and Marshall Shelley*. Offers steps to promote harmony within a church dealing with controversy. (Nelson Books, 1993; ISBN 0880705019)

Peacemaking: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict by *Ken Sande*. An attorney who specializes in conflict mediation, Sande shows how Biblical principles can be applied to resolving disputes in the church, home, workplace, and neighborhood. (Baker, 1997; ISBN 0801057418)

Well-Intentioned Dragons: Ministering to Problem People in the Church by *Marshall Shelley*. Guides church leaders through the task of dealing with difficult people. (Bethany House, 1994; ISBN 1556615159)