



Greater Sydney SDA Conference

Growing Through Conflict & Crisis

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“Actually, the wonderful and terrible thing about crisis is that it’s the one resource we do not have to fund or staff or program. It just comes. However, pain does not automatically produce spiritual growth. Ghettos and barrios and abusive homes and trauma wards may produce scarred souls; they can cripple more human spirits than they strengthen. Crisis can lead to soul strength, but not if the soul is starved of other nutrients, and not apart from certain responses.” John Ortberg

Preemptive Peace – Ken Sande

- To survive conflict, churches and pastors must prepare before one arises. Put structures in place that foster accountability and allow conflicts to be dealt with when everyone is getting along well
- Once we are in conflict it's very difficult to put in place the structures we need.
- Believe what you preach about the nature of sin
- Put in place accountability systems – you need to be prepared for sin to infect your leadership team at some point.
- Train all of your leadership in peacemaking so that when you end up in conflict you already have agreed methods of handling it.
- During a conflict church leaders generally go in one of two unhealthy directions – People pleasers or control.
- Often conflicts are pitched as theological differences over doctrine. Look for what might really be going on.
- Remain humble – humility is vital!
- Remember that the only way to carry on a meaningful discussion is in the context of relationship. Preserving the relationship is crucial: Listening, Being kind, Forbearing – even if the other person is wrong.
- Always remain teachable – lead by example.
- Beapproachable? Many pastors are simply not approachable. “They’re up in their ivory towers.”

- Visiting – get out often enough that people realize that you haven't delegated everything.
- Selection process for key leaders is vital. "I don't ask people what they're going to do in a leadership role. I ask them what's happened in the past, because that's an indicator. What are the relationships like there?"
- Chart conflict on a graph – the intensity, the number of people involved, the emotional level. Is the curve rising? Has it plateaued?
- Seek Counsel. Have a healthy scepticism of your own objectivity in a conflict. Confide in someone you can trust, outside of the conflict, and ask for their perspective.
- The most frequent mistake pastors make in the midst of conflict is to use the pulpit as leverage for their position. Preaching in a conflict is like walking through a minefield.
What you can do is talk about general concepts
Humility, being open to correction, seeking forgiveness, speaking truth in love, loving even our enemies, looking for ways to serve others.
- Email: Whatever you say or whatever you write about in an email or online, to the best of your ability communicate in a way that you will not be embarrassed or ashamed if (when!) it is publicly distributed.
- Never use email to communicate delicate personal issues.
- Be careful of 'defending' yourself against online criticism. It gives more fuel to the situation, your words are used against you and it usually solves very little.

Don't Waste A Crisis – John Ortberg

- Crises, while unwanted, are windows of opportunity for the Cure of Souls.
- The number one contributor to spiritual growth was not transformational teaching, it was not being in a small group, it was not reading deep books, it was not energetic worship experiences, it was not finding meaningful ways to serve. It was suffering.
- Test: Can you mourn with those who mourn?
Ministry in crisis takes time. In a larger church you won't be able to mourn with everyone however will need to mourn with team members/leaders/direct contacts.
- "One of the ironies of crises is that often we have them because we feel we have no time – only to find that when the crises hits we suddenly have nothing else"
- If there is not enough time to deal with small crises, then eventually the pace of your life will create a large one. Then you will have time.
- We need to help people learn how to make changes that will outlast the crisis. Suffering enables us to see the folly of chasing

after temporal gods, and when people suffer, they often resolve to not return to their old way of life.

"Affliction is able to drown out every earthy voice...but the voice of eternity deep in the soul it cannot drown." Soren Kierkegaard

"God isn't at work producing the circumstances I want. God is at work in bad circumstances to produce the me He wants."

- Crisis can produce deeper roots
- Is it possible that we actually need adversity and setbacks – maybe even crisis and trauma – to reach the fullest level of development and growth?
- In crisis, people are hungry for Hope

God is still in the business of redemption, specializing in bringing something very, very good out of something very, very bad.

Resolving Conflict - Gordon MacDonald

Many pastors are conflict avoiders. We become super-nice and convivial, by taking care to say nothing that might offend or create controversy and quickly backing down when opposed.

Steps to Resolving Conflict:

1. Accept that conflict – the collision of two or more perspectives – is a necessary ingredient of any human relationship.
2. Recognize that each of us brings 'baggage' from past experiences into present dealings. Past fears or hurts or humiliations are likely to influence present circumstances. So when I feel irritable or angry at someone, I try searching my memory: are any issues from my past injecting themselves into my present?
3. Conflict need not be – and should not be – about winning or losing. Conflict should be an energetic search for a better idea, personal insight or for a more effective way of achieving something.
"Among the more difficult things I learned about conflict was the assumption that there was probably a kernel of truth in the opinions and positions of those who, while in conflict, might seem for a moment to be my worst enemy."
"Through the years I came to realize that some of the most important insights I gained about myself came not from my friends but from my critics who, while playing rough, nevertheless alerted me to blind spots and inadequacies no one else had the courage to tell me about."

4. Disagreements of any kind must be limited to the issue.
5. Conflict needs to reach a terminal point where adult versions of 'sorrlys' are said and solutions found.

Conflict carries within it an inherent danger that the spiritual enemy loves to fan the flames of conflict as to divide good people and shatter their ability to accomplish great things.

Conflict is Your Friend Patrick Lencioni

Death by Meeting, Jossey-Bass, 2004

- Conflict makes a meeting great.
- Most leaders of meetings seem focused on avoiding tension
- Leaders must look for legitimate reasons to provoke, and uncover relevant, constructive ideological conflict. By doing so they'll keep people engaged, which leads to more passionate discussions and ultimately to better decisions.
- The truth is, the only thing more painful than confronting an uncomfortable topic is pretending it doesn't exist. And I believe far more suffering is caused by failing to deal with an issue directly – and whispering about it in the hallways – than by putting it on the table and wrestling with it head on.
- Consensus is usually not achievable. The likelihood of six intelligent people coming to a sincere and complete agreement on a complex and important topic is very low.
Instead
Have a passionate, unfiltered, messy, proactive discussion that ends when the leader of the team decides all the information had been aired. At that point, if no one had made a compelling enough argument for making a decision, the leader breaks the tie.
- Once the decision is made, everyone supports it. That's why it is critical that no one hold anything back during the discussion.