



Be a Peacemaker.
Transform Your Relationships.™

THE RELATIONALLY WISE LEADER

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Synopsis: This seminar describes the relational challenges Christian leaders face today and describes how they can model and teach relational wisdom® (biblical emotional Intelligence), peacemaking to equip their people to respond to life's challenges in a way that strengthens relationships, reduces conflict, promotes reconciliation, preserves marriages and reveals the transforming power of Jesus and his gospel. Although this presentation focuses primarily on leadership in the church, the principles are directly applicable to parachurch ministries, schools, missionaries and for-profit businesses.

Question: When you learn that there is major conflict in your church or community, are you and your people prepared to model Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:9: "*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God*"? (see [Pastor Resolves Texas Football Scandal](#)).

A. ONE CHALLENGE ALL CHURCHES AND MINISTRIES FACE

1. Jesus' design for the church is that it would be a community of redeemed and transformed people who reflect God's glory by loving one another as he has loved us (John 13:34-35). This love is to be reflected in relationships that are characterized by unity, kindness, forgiveness and unshakeable bonds (1 Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4:3, 1 Pet. 3:8).
2. As we see in Scripture and in our own lives, however, family, church and ministry relationships are frequently strained or broken (Acts 15:39; 1 Cor. 1:11; Gal. 5:15).
3. The number one cause of lost friendships, divorces, pastoral or missionary burnout or forced exits, staff turnover and church or ministry division is *not* theological differences, financial mismanagement, poor leadership or even moral failure.
4. The number one cause, by far, of all these events is *unresolved personal conflict*.¹
5. The *financial cost of conflict* in the church is enormous. For example, when one family leaves a church over conflict, the church loses, on average, \$2,224 of annual giving. Worse yet, the average cost of a forced pastoral exit is \$83,000 and can be far more.²
6. The *spiritual costs of conflict* are far greater, however. A forced pastoral exit can silence a pastor's preaching forever, stain a church's witness and cripple evangelism. Lacking the help of a trusted shepherd, conflicted couples are more likely to divorce, which exposes their children to mental health issues, drug use, sexual promiscuity and a greater likelihood of leaving the faith. The ripple effects of conflict go on and on.

¹ See [Eight Church Nightmares](#) and the studies summarized in [Strike the Shepherd](#).

² Costs may include reduced giving by members leaving the church, resignations of other staff, severance packages, pulpit supply, job search, relocation costs and in some cases, legal fees (*Id.*)

B. YOU ARE A KEY PART OF GOD'S SOLUTION

1. As a Christian leader, you can be used by God to counter the division and destruction of conflict by serving him and the people around you as a peacemaker, a conciliator and a model of relational wisdom (Matt. 5:9; 2 Cor. 5:17-19).
2. The key to fulfilling this role is to be an example and channel of the redeeming, transforming and reconciling power of the gospel of Christ (1 Cor. 11:1; Eph. 1:19).
3. As God's grace transforms and flows through you, you can develop skills that enable you to teach, model and practice relational wisdom and peacemaking in ways that instruct others and inspire them to follow your example. As 1 Timothy 4:15 teaches, "*Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress.*"
4. You can begin by discipling your leadership team and then together you can strengthen the relational skills of your entire church or ministry (2 Tim. 4:2).

C. THE FRUIT OF RELATIONALLY WISE LEADERSHIP

1. Your people can experience greater unity, productivity and enduring relationships.
2. You can enjoy the clear conscience that comes from faithful shepherding (Matt. 25:21).
3. You can avoid burnout and have more time with your spouse and children.
4. You and your church can avoid the devastating trauma of a [forced leadership exit](#).
5. Reduce member and staff turnover, [strengthen families and improve productivity](#).
6. You and your people can become inspiring examples of God's wisdom and grace in your families, church and community (see [Real-Life Examples](#)).
7. Best of all, God will be glorified as others witness the transforming power of the gospel and are drawn to Jesus, his gospel and his church (John 17:20-22; 13:34-35).

D. MODEL RELATIONAL WISDOM®

1. Life is all about relationships (Eph. 2:11-21).
2. Relationships are fueled and moved by emotions!
3. Emotions can overthrow us (e.g., amygdala hijacking).
4. Relational wisdom (RW) involves six skills that enable you to strengthen relationships and "get upstream of conflict."
5. Relational wisdom, in essence, is the desire and ability to live out Jesus' two Great Commandments, namely, to love God with all your heart and to love your neighbor as yourself (Matt. 22:37-39).



6. Relational wisdom may be defined as your ability to discern emotions, interests and abilities in yourself and others, to interpret this information in the light of God’s Word, and to use these insights to manage your responses and relationships successfully.
7. Relational wisdom is taught in “360’s” throughout Scripture (Eph. 4:30-32; Ex. 20:1-21).
8. Relational wisdom is an outpouring of the gospel.
9. Relational wisdom provides multiple benefits to families, churches, businesses and communities ([see studies](#)):
 - RW creates a reinforcing loop as it’s applied both at work and in the family.
 - RW strengthens your ability to harness the power of emotions and use it for good.
 - RW deepens friendships, strengthens marriages and improves parenting.
 - RW improves job performance, career advancement and business profitability.
 - RW enhances your ability to solve problems, be a peacemaker and resolve conflict.
 - All of which enhances Christians’ witness in their workplace and community (see [Reconciling Two Stubborn Scientists](#)).
 - “When companies invest in the physical and relational wellness of their workers, returns on investment can range between \$1.50 and \$6.85 for every dollar spent on these types of programs.” [Marriage & Family Wellness: Corporate America's Business](#)
10. Relational wisdom can be taught as a form of *discipleship* in your family and church and as *professional development training* in secular venues throughout your community (see [Values-Based RW](#) and [Using RW for Outreach, Evangelism and Church Growth](#)).
11. Four simple acrostics make it easy to learn and practice RW:

The SOG Plan

- **S**elf-Aware
- **O**thers-Aware
- **G**od-Aware

SERVE

- **S**mile
- **E**xplore and [empathize](#)
- **R**econcile
- **V**alue
- **E**ncourage

GPS

- **G**lorify God
- **P**ursue God
- **S**erve God

READ

- **R**ecognize and name your emotions
- **E**valuate their source
- **A**nticipate the consequences
- **D**irect them in constructive path

These concepts are taught in detail in the 8-lesson *Discovering Relational Wisdom* course (available [online](#) or [Sunday school](#)).

E. MODEL RELATIONAL PEACEMAKING™

1. Conflict provides three opportunities to apply relational wisdom: Glorify God, grow to be like Christ, and serve other people (1 Cor. 10:31-11:1).
2. Conflict is a slippery slope.
3. The 4 G's of Peacemaking (Matt. 5:9; James 3:18).

- Glorify God
- Get the log out of your eye
- Gently restore
- Go and be reconciled

4. Key Peacemaking Principles



The Progression of an Idol

- I desire
- I demand
- I judge
- I punish

The 7 A's of Confession

- Address everyone involved
- Avoid if, but and maybe
- Admit specifically
- Acknowledge the hurt
- Accept the consequences
- Alter your behavior
- Ask for forgiveness

The Golden Result

- People usually treat us the way we treat them

Four Promises of Forgiveness

- I will not dwell on this incident
- I will not bring this incident up again and use it against you
- I will not talk to others about this incident
- I will not let this incident stand between us and hinder our personal relationship

PAUSE Negotiation

- Prepare
- Affirm relationships
- Understand interests
- Search for creative solutions
- Evaluate options objectively and reasonably

5. Download free 70-page ebooklet [Guiding People Through Conflict](#).

6. To see how emotional intelligence and a biblical worldview/value system can enhance your ability to resolve conflict and inspire others, see [EI and Conflict Resolution](#).

7. These concepts are taught in detail in the 12-lesson *Relational Peacemaking* course (available [online](#) or [Sunday school](#)).

F. MODEL RELATIONAL LEADERSHIP

RW360 has mediated hundreds of church conflicts. Most of these cases were triggered or escalated by church leaders who were unskilled in peacemaking and made a series of *well-intended but clumsy relational decisions*. The following articles describe relational skills that would have *prevented most of these conflicts*. Your leaders can learn these skills by reading one article a day and then discussing the principles during regular leadership meetings. This small investment of time can help your church avoid many major conflicts and save hundreds of hours of pastoral time. More importantly, as your leaders model these skills, you will set an example for your people to follow (1 Cor. 11:1; 1 Tim. 4:12).

1. Relational leaders [model humility, teachability and flexibility](#) (Phil. 2:3-4).
2. Relational leaders realize that [sin can turn strengths into weaknesses](#) (1 Cor. 8:1).
3. Relational leaders understand [the seductiveness of power and its potential for abuse](#); (see [Power Causes Brain Damage](#) and [Psychology of Power](#); contrast with [Reagan, Lincoln, RW and You, Lincoln's Relational Wisdom](#) and [Nelson Mandela](#)).
4. Relational leaders realize that [there is one relationship that is rarely restored](#).
5. Relational leaders are [skilled peacemakers](#) and [conciliators](#) who [model confession](#) and inspire the "[Golden Result](#)" (Matt. 5:9; James 3:18; Matt. 7:12).
6. Relational leaders are [always bringing the gospel to their people](#) (Rom. 5:1-11).
7. Relational leaders [examine their own heart before confronting others](#) (Matt. 7:3-5).
8. Relational leaders develop and model [empathy and compassion](#) (Col. 3:12).
9. Relational leaders know how to [redeem an offense](#) (Prov. 15:1).
10. Relational leaders use [gentle shepherding](#) and [loving discipline to restore lost sheep](#).
11. Relational leaders are both [approachable](#) and [accountable](#) (Luke 7:37-38; Matt. 8:9).
12. Relational leaders are always [building passport](#) (John 4:7-30).
13. Relational leaders model the spiritual discipline of [drawing attention to EGGs](#) (Ps. 9:1).
14. Relational leaders provide the [Three P's of Satisfaction](#) (1 Cor. 14:40; Matt. 7:120).
15. Relational leaders practice [clarity plus charity](#) (Matt. 7:12).
16. Relational leaders know how to [defuse explosive meetings](#) (Matt. 7:3-5).
17. Relational leaders [encourage and inspire others to be better](#) (1 Thess. 5:11).
18. Relational leaders know that there is [a better way to handle abuse](#) (Prov. 28:13).
19. Relational leaders understand [the power of making a public confession](#) (Prov. 28:13).
20. Relational leaders [seek advice when they are deadlocked](#) (Prov. 12:15; 20:18).
21. Relational leaders [refuse to be crippled by ministry failures and losses](#) (2 Cor. 7:10).

G. ADOPT RELATIONAL COMMITMENTS: GUIDELINES FOR CHURCH LIFE AND PASTORAL CARE

1. American culture is increasingly hostile toward biblical values and spiritual accountability. Therefore, when a church seeks to carry out culturally rejected practices of pastoral care, such as church discipline, it opens itself to being sued for defamation, invasion of privacy and intentional infliction of emotional distress.
2. Even if a church wins a lawsuit, it can cost thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours of leadership time. Therefore, it is not good enough for a church to *prevail* in a lawsuit. You must act with such wisdom that you will *prevent* lawsuits from being filed in the first place.
3. The most important step in avoiding legal liability is to obey Jesus' timeless command to treat others the same way you would like to be treated yourself (Matt. 7:12). Beyond this, a church's best defense to a lawsuit is "*informed consent*." To secure this defense, a church must be able to prove that a person complaining of a wrong was fully informed of the church's pastoral policies and knowingly consented to live by them.
4. You can clearly define your pastoral care policies and secure informed consent to them by adapting and adopting RW360's [Relational Commitments](#), which cover the following elements of church life and pastoral ministry:



- Resolving conflict through peacemaking and reconciliation
 - Key Provision: "Our leaders recognize that there are times when they may need assistance in dealing with unresolved disagreements within our leadership team (see Prov. 11:14; 15:22). Therefore, each year they will select three godly leaders who can be invited to offer them advice when they are unable to reach agreement on a leadership issue. A request for advice will be made when our leaders have had at least two discussions on a particular issue and two or more of them believe the issue is still unresolved and significant enough to require outside advice."
- Preserving marriages, limiting divorce and guiding remarriage
 - Exhorts either spouse to report neglect or abuse in their marriage
 - Defines biblical grounds for divorce and remarriage
- Protecting children from abuse
- Providing biblical counseling and protecting confidential communications
 - Preserves "[Clergy-Penitent-Privilege](#)"
 - Protects leaders' right to report dangerous behavior to civil authorities
- Promoting mutual accountability through redemptive church discipline

- Describes church discipline as a redemptive process in which loving shepherds seek to gently restore vulnerable lost sheep (Isa. 40:11; Matt. 18:12-14)
- Protects church from lawsuits alleging defamation, breach of fiduciary responsibility and intentional infliction of emotional distress

H. ENHANCE OUTREACH, EVANGELISM AND CHURCH GROWTH

1. In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus calls his church to spread the gospel by making disciples throughout the earth and teaching people to obey all that he has commanded us. Many churches excel at discipling their members on Sunday morning, but we are often less effective at training our people to share the gospel with relatives, friends and coworkers the rest of the week.
2. As two pastors have vividly demonstrated, RW360's resources can be used to reverse this trend by [triggering remarkably effective community outreach, evangelism and church growth](#) and [resolving conflicts that had the attention of entire communities](#).
3. You can use custom RW360 resources to inspire and equip your people to share the gospel comfortably and effectively.
 - a) [Using Relational Wisdom for Witnessing](#) is a free course that describes easy ways your members can use the principles of relational wisdom and peacemaking to share the gospel with relatives, friends and coworkers.
 - b) You can strengthen your members' relational skills by offering them [Sunday school classes and small group studies on relational wisdom and peacemaking](#), which will enable them to reflect the transforming power of the gospel in their lives (see [Reconciling Two Stubborn Scientists](#); John 13:34-35 and 17:20-23).
 - c) Members who have a gift for witnessing and evangelism can use the "[values-based](#)" [relational wisdom materials](#) in the [PACE \(Professional and Community Engagement\) Program](#) to provide free professional development training in secular venues throughout your community, which can greatly enhance your church's [community engagement, evangelism and church growth](#).
 - d) You can equip individual church members in your church to use the [Transformed Pamphlet](#) to share the gospel with friends, relatives and coworkers in an easy and casual manner (see [Six Ways to Use the Transformed Pamphlet](#)).

I. REDUCE SHEPHERDING LOAD BY BUILDING A PEACE SOWER TEAM

1. In Exodus 18:13-27, we see an ancient example of a modern problem: a spiritual leader burning himself out as he tries to resolve all the conflicts in his community of faith. Fortunately, Moses' father-in-law came for a visit and offered this wise counsel:

"What you are doing is not good. You and the people with you will certainly wear yourselves out, for the thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to do it alone... I will give you advice.... Look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of

fifties, and of tens. And let them judge the people.... Every great matter they shall bring to you, but any small matter they shall decide themselves. So, it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you" (Exod. 18:17-23).

2. This advice is as relevant today as it was thousands of years ago. One of the wisest things your church can do is to identify gifted people in your ranks and train them to serve on an inhouse "Peace Sower Team" that provides your congregation with ongoing peacemaking training, conflict coaching and conciliation services.
3. These teams are like volunteer fire departments in small rural communities. Conflict resolution is not their full-time job, but when conflict breaks out, trained team members can promptly put on their "peacemaking hats" and work together to extinguish the "flames of conflict," often saving many hours of work by the pastor.
4. To learn how you can build a team in your church, download [Peace Sower Teams](#).

J. FOUR STEPS FOR BUILDING A HIGHLY RELATIONAL CHURCH

You can lead the way to building a highly relational church by taking four simple steps.

1. **Download a free [Bringing Relational Wisdom into Your Church ebooklet](#)** and share it with your leadership team to develop a united understanding of ways you can use RW360's resources to strengthen the relational and peacemaking skills of your entire church and present an appealing witness for Christ throughout your community.
2. **[Schedule a Free Zoom Meeting with RW360](#)** to answer your leaders' questions and to begin the process of developing a **custom plan** for strengthening the relational culture of your church.
3. **Provide your leadership team and staff with professional development training** in relational wisdom and peacemaking that enables them to set an inspiring example for the rest of your church. As 1 Timoth 4:15 teaches, *"Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress."*
4. **Offer your congregation Sunday school classes and small group studies** that enable them to develop relational skills that strengthen their marriages and parenting, improve their ability to share the gospel and [enhance job performance and career advancement](#).



This training can help the teens in your church [secure scholarships after high school and premium jobs after college](#), which can move them into positions [where their faith and relational skills can shine](#), bringing honor to the Lord and drawing others to Christ.

Your journey toward building a highly relational church can begin with just two simple steps: **download a free ebooklet** and **schedule a free zoom consultation**. These simple steps could be used by God to transform the culture, the witness and the growth of your church in amazing ways in the years ahead.