

October 14, 2013

ONE YEAR STATUS REPORT

By Ken Sande

God has graciously blessed Relational Wisdom 360 far beyond what Corlette and I envisioned when we launched this ministry a little over a year ago. Please join us in celebrating God's grace as you learn about the origins and progress of RW360, as well as our vision for the future.



ORIGINS: GETTING UPSTREAM OF CONFLICT

I had the privilege of serving the Lord through Peacemaker Ministries for nearly thirty years. During that time, I saw him reconcile countless relationships that seemed broken beyond repair.

Although I rejoiced to see divorce papers torn up, congregations reunited, and lawsuits settled, I often walked away from mediations thinking, "It didn't have to get this bad; they didn't have to get right up to a cliff before they learned how to relate to each other in a gracious and biblical manner."

And even when I heard people say they forgave each other, I knew that many of them had received relational scars that would take years to heal ... if ever.

Wanting to reduce this needless damage, Corlette and I began to develop a discipleship paradigm that would help people get "upstream of conflict" by learning how to relate to one another in a Christ-like manner *during all their daily interactions* ... not just when conflict strikes. We named this new paradigm *relational wisdom*, or more simply, *RW*.

This new paradigm promotes both *relationship building* and *relationship restoring (peacemaking)*. It includes six basic skills that help people to draw closer to God, to better understand and control their own emotions, words and actions, and to build strong, empathetic relationships with other people.

The theological foundation for relational wisdom, as well as guidance on how to develop these skills, is provided in the [study guide for our Discovering RW Seminar](#).

LAUNCHING OUT FROM PEACEMAKER MINISTRIES

Corlette and I initially assumed that we would merge this new material into Peacemaker Ministries' existing resource line. But as we considered some new goals and directions adopted by Peacemaker's Board of Directors early in 2012, we decided that we would be able to develop and promote relational wisdom more effectively through a new ministry that focused exclusively on this concept.

So in August of 2012, I left Peacemakers and Corlette and I launched RW360. We are as passionate as ever about promoting Peacemakers' superb resources, training, and services through our new web site, blog, and seminars. But we are equally excited to see where God is taking this new ministry.

PASSING THE TEST

During the past year we have taught relational wisdom in a wide variety of churches and ministries. It has been well received across the denominational spectrum, including Baptist, Presbyterian, Four Square, Roman Catholic, and Independent.

We have received equally encouraging reviews from denominational, educational, and parachurch organizations, such as the Christian & Missionary Alliance, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Focus on the Family (see my recent presentation to the entire Focus staff at www.vimeo.com/73832793).

The leaders in these churches and organizations have confirmed the theological integrity and relational benefits of the RW paradigm. Leaders and members alike have affirmed the simplicity, daily relevance, and “upstream” value of relational wisdom (see www.rw360.org/2013/10/06/rw-acrostics-action).

As a result of these positive reviews and word-of-mouth publicity, our speaking schedule is 90% booked through the first half of 2014. In addition, we are seeing a growing number of pastors, ministry leaders, and Christian conciliators seeking training in relational wisdom.

RELATIONAL EVANGELISM

This new material is designed to facilitate witnessing and evangelism in three ways. First, our *Discovering RW Seminar* is designed to be welcoming and relevant to nonbelievers, so church members will feel comfortable inviting non-Christian friends, relatives, and co-workers to attend.

Second, as Christians apply RW, their marriages, friendships, and working relationships can become more appealing to nonbelievers, thus fulfilling Jesus’ teaching that our love for one another is one of the most vivid ways we can demonstrate the transforming power of the gospel (see John 13:34-35; 17:20-23).

Third, the simplicity and practical relevance of these principles makes the RW paradigm a tool Christians can use to initiate discussions with nonbelievers about real-life relational issues ... as the testimony to the right illustrates.

HARNESSING EMOTIONS

Many Christians don’t know what to do with emotions. In many churches the unspoken rule is, “Don’t dwell on emotions; they’re too misleading. Just get your doctrine and theology right, and your emotions will fall in line.”

This attitude ignores the fact that God made us as emotional creatures, giving us minds, emotions, and will. Scripture is replete with references to our emotional life, and filled with commands for us to

“Our Marriage Ministry staff and volunteer leaders were inspired by the training on relational wisdom, which has increased our effectiveness as we lead others with greater empathy and understanding.”

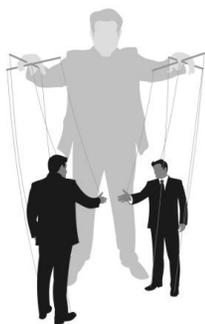
Gayle DiMartino, Marriage Ministry Director, Willow Creek Community Church

“RW equips believers to deal honestly, biblically, and lovingly with one another at work, home and in the church.”

Rhonda Dailey, Director for Human Resources, Christian and Missionary Alliance

“I was delayed in an airport for 6 hours and decided to talk with people who were sitting around. RW was a great conversation starter and witnessing tool. I talked to 13 people! They were spellbound by the RW principles. I was so thrilled that it made me wish I was held up even longer!”

fully experience godly emotions (e.g., Ps. 37:4), to detect and master sinful emotions (e.g., Ps. 37:7-8; James 4:1-2), and to discern and respond compassionately to the emotions of others (e.g., Rom. 12:15).



When the church ignores the Bible's teaching on emotions and fails to show its people how to understand and master what's going on in their own hearts, their untamed emotions are free to act like an "invisible puppeteer," provoking impulsive words and actions, and damaging their relationships.

Wanting to fill this gap, we are addressing emotions head-on in our new paradigm (see pages 5-7 of the enclosed *Discovering RW* study guide, and the detailed article on our website: www.rw360.org/Emotion-in-Christian-Anthropology).

While we will avoid an excessive emphasis on emotions, we intend to provide full-orbed teaching on who we are as image bearers of God. In doing so, we hope to equip believers "to take captive every thought, [emotion, and action] to make them obedient to Christ" (cf. 2 Cor. 10:5).

EMPATHY FOR "RELATIONALLY CHALLENGED" LEADERS

A prominent denominational leader once told me, "We tend to attract pastors who are gifted at preparing sermons but 'relationally challenged' when they try to engage their people."

This leadership deficiency has been a factor in many of the cases I've mediated. Pastors who cannot connect with their people soon fall short as shepherds. Ministry and business leaders who are unaware of their employees' concerns inevitably misunderstand, offend, and fail them. And fathers who lack empathy for their wives and children eventually lose their hearts.

Recognizing the importance of empathy in leaders (see www.rw360.org/2013/10/13/Gentle-Shepherding) we are placing a special emphasis on reaching men and women in leadership positions and teaching them to model the gentleness and compassion of Christ (see Isa. 40:11; Matt. 9:36).

"I had never learned how to read and empathize with people the way a Christ-like shepherd should. I was always wrapped up in my teaching and agenda and missing clues about their needs and struggles. But the SERVE concept has given me hope that I can change. It's so simple even a pastor can apply it!"

TAKING GOD'S WISDOM INTO THE MARKETPLACE

Christian business-owners and corporate consultants who have seen our materials have already asked us to provide them with a version that they can use in a secular work environment. They see two major benefits to teaching relational wisdom in the workplace.

First, they love our simple acrostics (GPS, READ, and SERVE) and believe they can be used to teach practical relational skills that will improve employees' communication, team-building, and conflict resolution abilities, thereby improving job satisfaction, productivity, and bottom-line profitability.

Second, and more importantly, they hope that as non-Christian employees gain an appreciation for these wisdom principles, they will take the initiative to follow links to our web site, where they can learn the biblical basis for RW and be presented with the gospel of Christ.

Realizing that God graciously reveals many relational principles even to those who do not yet know him (see www.rw360.org/Common-Grace-RW), we are developing a "marketplace" version of the *Discovering RW Seminar*, which we hope to begin pilot-testing early in 2014. Stayed tuned for updates!

THE NEXT GENERATION NEEDS A LOT OF RW

Teens and college students have typically struggled with relationships and conflict. In recent years, they've insulated themselves through social media, where it is easier to "de-friend" people on Facebook and end relationships with a text message than it is to do the hard work of peacemaking.

As Tim Elmore points out in *Artificial Maturity*, these tendencies are leaving the next generation with major deficits in their relational skills. This weakness is painfully exposed when they leave the cocoon of home and school and start real jobs where they cannot simply "de-friend" a difficult co-worker.

While teens and college students shy away from facing conflict, they value the positive aspects of building and enjoying relationships. Therefore, they are resonating strongly with relational wisdom.

We have taught variations of our *Discovering RW Seminar* in a variety of youth settings, including high school youth groups, Young Life gatherings, home school conferences (where my 19-year old son spoke to 300 teens), and a four-day retreat with a group of college students.

In each of these settings, the students fully engaged with the material. As the "media generation," they connected strongly with the Hollywood film clips we use to illustrate key points. Many of them approached us during breaks, asking to discuss personal issues. As they shared their stories, we saw tears, uncertainty, and a longing for safe and genuine relationships with parents, siblings, and friends.

The truth is that the teen and college years are a time of major relational exploration, upheaval, and pain ... lots and lots of pain. Therefore this age group has an enormous need for practical, biblically-sound guidance on how to build and preserve relationships. Please pray for us as we move ahead with our effort to customize RW resources to meet this need.

"RW is very relevant to me even though I am only twenty years old. I did not tell my mom that I forgave her before she died. I need to turn that guilt into something positive, to know that Jesus forgave my sins and her sins. That his blood covers everything."

RW AND PEACEMAKING

Relational wisdom has proven itself to be highly compatible with the peacemaking principles set forth in *The Peacemaker*, *The Young Peacemaker*, and the other resources Corlette and I have been privileged to author. The core concepts in these resources (such as the *Seven A's of Confession*, *Four Promises of Forgiveness*, and *PAUSE Principle*) all fit naturally into the RW paradigm. Thus peacemaking may be viewed as a special application of the broader system of principles included in relational wisdom.

Seeing the complementary nature of these principles, a growing number of Christian Conciliators are cross-training in relational wisdom. As they've begun to apply this training in conflicts ranging from divorces to business disputes and church splits, they are reporting that the blending of peacemaking and relational wisdom is clearly enhancing their ability to serve people in conflict.

These results strengthen our desire to continue promoting Peacemaker Ministries' resources, training, and conciliation services. It also spurs us on in our desire to develop new resources that will blend the best elements of both systems into tools that will fulfill a vision articulated by Peacemakers years ago, which we wholeheartedly support: *"Transforming relationships through the power of the gospel."*

BUILDING A NETWORK OF INSTRUCTORS

A key part of our long-term strategy is to enlist as many people as possible to teach relational wisdom. So instead of limiting our teaching to paid staff, we are training and deploying a network of *Certified RW Instructors* from around the country ... and eventually the world, Lord willing.

Thirty-two people have completed this training in the last six months. They represent a wide spectrum of the church and a variety of backgrounds, including: business managers, pastors, attorneys, retired judges, home school mothers, licensed psychologists and social workers, youth workers, college professors, and both professional and lay counselors.

They have leaped out of the starting blocks and are pursuing teaching opportunities in a wide variety of venues, including: churches, parachurch ministries, college and youth groups, pregnancy centers, Christian schools, colleges and universities, seminaries, alumni networks, home school groups, Christian-owned businesses, lawyers associations, missions agencies, jails, prisons, halfway houses, Rescue missions, women's shelters, and homes for at-risk or homeless children. Wow!

"The presentation to the Head Start management team just flowed! It went so well we've been invited to train the entire staff. The husband of one of the managers attended and is a Pastor. He asked if we'd present RW to his two churches as well as all the Methodist pastors in their town in Kentucky! We're going to be busy!"

We can hardly keep up with the many ideas they have for spreading relational wisdom in 2014 and beyond. What a delightful problem to have! For more information on this growing network, please visit www.rw360.org/Certified-Instructors.

WE COULD USE YOUR HELP

We have delayed making a general appeal for financial support for over fifteen months. Before asking others to invest in this ministry, we wanted to be sure that relational wisdom is a viable concept that would be of significant value to the church.

We believe that this report shows that we've reached that point, and we are ready to move ahead with all the energy God gives. But we need your help.

Your generous gift or monthly pledge (which you can make at www.rw360.org/donate) will support our efforts to build and preserve relationships within the church ... and to use relational wisdom as a way to connect with non-Christians and introduce them to the life-changing power of the gospel.

Thank you for considering this request. Corlette and I look forward to staying in touch and reporting to you how God is blessing our efforts and your investment.

Warmly in Christ,



Ken Sande
President

P.S. I am eager to begin writing my first book on relational wisdom. But financial needs compel me to travel so much that it will be difficult to find time to write. Your gift or pledge can help me to get off the road a bit and move ahead with our first book.