

ASSISTING MINISTERS IN MANAGING CONFLICT IN THE CHURCH

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New ministers need to be prepared to manage conflict situations in their personal lives and within their congregations. Bible colleges and seminaries seek to prepare future pastors to function within numerous pastoral duties. At times conflict resolution is omitted, or inadequately covered, leaving the novice ministers without sufficient resources to handle the tensions that are a normal part of any congregation.

This project provided a review of biblical-theological literature to find passages that would supply universal principles to guide pastors through the conflicts they will face. The prescriptive words of Jesus in Matthew 5 and 18 gave insights to deal with conflict between individuals and with a group of believers. Descriptive portions of the Old and New Testament revealed a wealth of information for both the first-time minister and the seasoned veteran of pastoral ministry. Comparison of passages dealing with the temptations of Eve and Jesus in garden settings and the sexual temptations of Joseph and David were used to focus on intrapersonal conflicts. Two stories that involved Phinehas showed the impact of well-managed and mismanaged interpersonal conflicts.

The biblical material was augmented by a survey of the general literature on conflict to produce a series of lesson plans presented to three groups of ministerial students at Trinity Bible College. This material included conflict management styles, conflict development and management cycles, and general information to encourage the students to see that conflict situations can be healthy, beneficial, and resolvable rather than something to be avoided.