

Response Activities



PHASE 1

The Problem Is You, So Know Yourself

One of Jesus' more profound statements concerns speck-gazing — picking out a speck in another's eye while ignoring the beam in one's own eye. Interesting how he turns the issue around. Most of our time is absorbed with looking at the offenses of another person. But it's our belief that the speck in the other's eye *is* the beam in my eye. When I judge the other person, I am in fact judging myself.

So the first step in proper conflict management is to understand ourselves.

In a survey published in *Your Church* magazine,¹ the following were revealed as reasons ministers leave the ministry or are pressured to resign:

- 46 percent left the ministry because of a conflict in vision between themselves and their church.
- 38 percent left because of personality conflicts with board members.
- 32 percent because of the unrealistic expectations placed on them.
- 24 percent because of a lack of clear expectations.
- 22 percent because of theological differences.

Eight years later, in a survey of 506 pastors who were readers of *Leadership* journal, 95 percent reported experiencing conflict.² When respondents were asked about the causes of conflict in the church, they reported the following sources:

1. John C. LaRue Jr., "Forced Exits: A Too-Common Ministry Hazard," *Your Church* 42, no. 2 (March/April 1996), 72.

2. Eric Reed, "Leadership Surveys Church Conflict," *Leadership* 25, no. 4 (fall 2004), 25 – 26.

- 85 percent: control issues
- 64 percent: vision/direction
- 43 percent: leadership changes
- 39 percent: pastor's style
- 33 percent: financial issues
- 23 percent: theology/doctrine
- 22 percent: cultural issues
- 16 percent: other

These ministers, however, reported not only negative outcomes but also positive outcomes:

Negative Outcomes of Conflict	Positive Outcomes of Conflict
68 percent: damaged relationships	72 percent: I'm wiser
58 percent: sadness	44 percent: purifying process
32 percent: decline in attendance	42 percent: better-defined vision
32 percent: leaders left the church	35 percent: better communication with congregation
31 percent: loss of trust	30 percent: stronger relationships
29 percent: bitterness	16 percent: reconciliation
3 percent: loss of communication with congregation	16 percent: growth in attendance

Ministers go into ministry because of a calling, a calling that includes changing lives. But after a few months, they become embroiled in conflicts that distract them from that call and make their lives miserable.

This conflict is not a personal failure, nor is it a distraction from their calling. It *is* their calling. But for most ministers, conflict is the result of a misunderstanding of the forces that are brought to bear as they struggle to lead their community.

In our story, Barry's life had spun out of control. He had left everything to attend seminary and then go into ministry. And what

thanks did he get? One reason he's in a fix is because he doesn't understand the internal forces that are in play:

- The stories we tell about others are really stories about ourselves.
- None of us does a very good job of examining ourselves. It takes practice.
- The less one deals with his or her own story, the more it crops up, over and over, in the stories we now live.
- Conflict is never about the other person. It's always about me. Dealing with conflict teaches me about *me*.

Self-awareness allows you to be able to manage yourself. Once you are able to manage yourself, you are able to better understand relationships (and the conflicts that relationships always involve) and, as a consequence, to better manage relationships.

Work through the following exercises, which are designed to lead you to greater self-awareness.

RESPONSE ACTIVITY 1

Reflection Scenario and Questions

Think of a time in ministry when an idea or initiative you'd introduced was called into question, creating controversy. As the controversy escalated, every idea seemed to be challenged. You worked hard to understand the intensity of the pushback, only to find your best efforts challenged or dismissed.

1. At what point did you become aware that you were angry and resentful?
2. As you became aware of your anger, what did you do?
3. As you were challenged, at what point did you decide it was important to take a stand on or to bring a firm hand to the situation?
4. When you took a stand, did the problem resolve or escalate?
5. If the problem resolved, did those who were adversarial comply with your wishes?
6. Is compliance the same as commitment? Why or why not?

RESPONSE ACTIVITY 2

Red Zone, Blue Zone Quiz

Review for a moment the points that Elliott made to Barry regarding the Red and Blue Zones (chapters 2 and 3) by taking the following quiz.

THE RED ZONE, THE BLUE ZONE

Agree Disagree

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1. Conflict and confrontation are the same. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. Conflict in teams is good. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. Lack of conflict in teams indicates high team cohesion. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. Conflict in teams indicates poor leadership. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 5. Conflict in teams should always be dealt with. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. Conflict in teams should never be dealt with. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 7. When conflict arises, it is the responsibility of the team leader to deal with it. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 8. When conflict arises, it is the responsibility of the entire team to deal with it. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 9. Expressed conflict in teams is less dangerous than unexpressed conflict. |
| | | 10. When I see conflict among my coworkers, I feel _____. |

Issues regarding conflict are confusing. Is conflict good or bad? How do I manage it? As we have stated, conflict is necessary and beneficial, if it is focused properly (i.e., in the Blue Zone). As conflict strays away from issues and accesses personal stories (i.e., in the Red Zone), conflict becomes unmanageable and destructive.

The Red Zone is where the atmosphere is characterized by a lack of professionalism and by emotional heat, which can burn those who get too close.

When we focus more on feelings and personal issues than on results, people aren't sure where their personal and professional boundaries lie, and everyone is unsure of how to act. One of the classic Red Zone behaviors is blame-shifting, an unwillingness to accept that one is part of the problem. In the Red Zone, no one knows where they stand, what is expected of them, what is appropriate and inappropriate, or even whether they are doing a good job. That creates uncertainty and anxiety. And people generally don't know how to handle uncertainty and anxiety, so they lash out at others as the cause of their anxiety.

RED ZONE	BLUE ZONE
This conflict is personal.	This conflict is professional.
It's about me.	It's about the business.
Emotions rule without being acknowledged.	The mission of the organization rules.
I must protect myself because I'm feeling weak.	I must protect the team and the business.
I deny my emotions; therefore I project them onto others.	I understand and acknowledge my emotions.
The situation escalates.	The situation is reframed into a more useful construct.
Behaviors: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I disengage.• I become easily annoyed.• I am resentful.• I procrastinate.• I attack the other personally.• I use alcohol as medication.• I avoid people and situations.	Behaviors: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I am thoughtful.• I am reflective.• I listen for what the underlying issue might be.• I do not see negative intentions in the other person.

RESPONSE ACTIVITY 3

Your Red Zone Behaviors

Make a list of your Red Zone behaviors. You may find it helpful to photocopy this chart. You may want to make two separate lists (or three or four if you like), one for work and one for home (or church or club, etc.).

RED ZONE BEHAVIORS

As I sink into the Red Zone, my personal story emerges. That story typically has one of four central themes: Will I survive? Am I acceptable? Am I competent? Am I in control? Each time I sink into my Red Zone, this same core theme emerges. Consequently, you will hear me express the same theme over and over again. “You’re trying to control me!” (control). “Don’t you think I can do this?” (competence). This Red Zone theme will color my every interaction until I become aware of it and am able to manage it appropriately.

As my Red Zone core theme is activated, feelings associated with that issue are also activated. I then sink deeper into a morass of feelings, many of which come from old stories unrelated to the current story that has provoked my Red Zone response.

Which of the following describes you best?

RED ZONE THEMES

RED ZONE ISSUE	SELF- DESCRIPTION	POSITIVE SIDE	NEGATIVE SIDE
Survival	“I must take care of myself. The world is full of peril, so I must enjoy the moment.”	People with this issue have traits of competence, self-reliance, and responsibility.	People with this issue lack the ability to trust others and tend to be wary and troubled in relationships. They have little interest in anything but what is of practical benefit. They become angry and panicky (Red Zone) whenever they feel their survival is threatened.
Acceptance	“I will do anything to be loved and accepted by others. I want to please people.”	People with this issue have a heart for serving others and are attentive to the needs and feelings of other people.	People with this issue are overly compliant and self-effacing. They tend to be rescuers. They become angry and carry personal grudges (Red Zone) whenever they feel they have been rejected.

Control	“The world is a threatening place, and the only way I can feel safe is if I control every situation and the people around me.”	People with this issue tend to have strong leadership qualities. They are vigilant, highly organized, and have high expectations of themselves.	People with this issue often wall themselves off emotionally. They do not let others get too close to them. They can be overly controlling of others — bossy, directive, demanding, rigid, and nit-picky. They impose perfectionist demands on others. They become anxious and angry (Red Zone) whenever anyone or anything threatens their control.
Competence	“I am loved only on the basis of my performance. My performance is never good enough, so I never feel worthy of being loved.”	People with this issue tend to be high achievers. If you are a leader, you want these people on your team, because they will work hard to achieve a great performance.	People with this issue are never satisfied with their achievements. They have a hard time receiving from other people. They impose perfectionist demands on themselves. They are defensive and easily angered (Red Zone) whenever they perceive that their competence is being questioned.

RESPONSE ACTIVITY 4

Boundaries

Boundary issues go hand in hand with Red Zone issues. As I sink deeper into the Red Zone, my personal boundaries invariably are involved, and I engage others in my emotional drama in unhealthy ways.

Boundaries are the fences, both physical and emotional, that mark off our world, creating zones of safety, authority, privacy, and territoriality. Boundaries are essential components because they:

- Define who we are, what we believe, think, feel, and do, and where our story ends and others' begins.
- Restrict access and intrusions.
- Protect priorities.
- Differentiate between personal (Red Zone) and professional (Blue Zone) issues.

For some people, boundaries become too rigid. When this occurs, there is a bottleneck in the flow of vital information that is the lifeblood of any healthy person. Stylized ways of behaving become fixed. Prejudices are constructed and maintained.

For other people, boundaries become too porous or ambiguous. In such cases, the integrity and cohesion of the person are threatened by a lack of definition: "Who am I, other than an extension of you?"

We are used to the visible boundary markers of our world: fences, hedges, traffic signs. Less obvious, but equally effective, are the internal boundaries that mark off emotional territory: "These are my thoughts, my feelings, my story" or "This is my responsibility, not yours." These internal boundaries are emotional barriers that protect and enhance the integrity of individuals.

A person can be so closed-minded that no new thoughts or information can reach her. She can also be so open-minded that she's

swayed by every idea that comes along, never able to establish her own position on anything.

Boundaries are critical in understanding the Red Zone, because among other things, sinking into the Red Zone represents a boundary violation. When I'm in conflict with another person, it is critical that my thoughts and emotions stay present to the issues upon which we disagree. When I permit old storylines to color my feelings, I violate a boundary. When I begin to see the other person as someone other than who she truly is, I violate a boundary. For those people who have poor boundaries (too rigid or too porous), the dangers of Red Zoning are more prominent.

Here's a quick test to help you determine the health of your personal boundaries.³ See if you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Agree Disagree

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1. I have difficulty making up my mind. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. I have difficulty saying no to people. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. I feel my happiness depends on other people. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. I would rather attend to others than to myself. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 5. Others' opinions are more important than mine. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. People take and use my things without asking me. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 7. I have difficulty asking for what I want or need. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 8. I would rather go along with other people than express what I would really like to do. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 9. It's hard for me to know what I think and believe. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 10. I have a hard time determining what I really feel. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 11. I don't get to spend much time alone. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 12. I have a hard time keeping a confidence. |

3. Based on ideas suggested by C. L. Whitfield, *Boundaries and Relationships* (Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, 1993).

- ☐ ☐ 13. I am very sensitive to criticism.
- ☐ ☐ 14. I tend to stay in relationships that are harmful to me.
- ☐ ☐ 15. I tend to take on or feel what others are feeling.
- ☐ ☐ 16. I feel responsible for other people's feelings.

If you answered "agree" to even two or three of these statements, you have at least some issues with porous boundaries. The more statements you agree with, the greater your problem. If this is the case, you're having trouble knowing where your story ends and others' stories begin.

Now let's see if your boundaries might be too rigid.

Agree Disagree

- ☐ ☐ 1. My mind is always made up.
- ☐ ☐ 2. It is much easier for me to say no to people than to say yes.
- ☐ ☐ 3. My happiness never depends on other people.
- ☐ ☐ 4. I would rather attend to myself than to others.
- ☐ ☐ 5. My opinion is more important than others'.
- ☐ ☐ 6. I rarely, if ever, lend my things to other people.
- ☐ ☐ 7. Most issues appear very black and white to me.
- ☐ ☐ 8. I know exactly what I think and believe on almost every issue.
- ☐ ☐ 9. I have a hard time determining what I really feel.
- ☐ ☐ 10. I spend much time alone.
- ☐ ☐ 11. I keep most of my thoughts to myself.
- ☐ ☐ 12. I am immune to criticism.
- ☐ ☐ 13. I find it difficult to make and maintain close relationships.
- ☐ ☐ 14. I never feel responsible for other people's feelings.

If you agreed with two or three of these statements, your boundaries are probably too rigid.

Gaps and Overlaps

Boundary problems always arise at the extremes, where boundaries are either too vague and weak or too rigid. Rigid boundaries produce gaps, and weak boundaries produce overlaps.

The establishment of boundaries can also be paradoxical — not an either-or proposition when it comes to rigidity or permeability. Those with permeable boundaries often will compensate by establishing extremely rigid boundaries.

My Role versus My Self

A confusion that continues to arise with clergy is the distinction between my role as clergy, and my self (who I am as a person). Barry has had great difficulty with this, not realizing that much of the resistance from his board had to do with his role as clergy, not an attack on his person. However, as Barry misunderstands, then mishandles the accusations, the attacks become personal.

So much of what the pastor deals with, both positive (“You’re simply the best pastor we’ve ever had!”) and negative (“You’re constantly trying to control our meetings, and I resent it”), has to do with the role of pastor. Bound up in this role are ideas of parent, authority figure, healer, disciplinarian, and a whole host of others. Congregants transfer their leftover ideas and feelings from parents and other authority figures onto the pastor. Hence, the pastor is either overly adored (“I know you will be able to heal all of my childhood wounds”) or reviled (“I can’t believe you would be such an uncaring cad”), according to his or her role as pastor. This is what makes so many of the attacks that pastors suffer seem so disproportionate and illogical.

PHASE 2

Resistance Is Your Ally

The book of James begins with this compelling statement: “When all kinds of trials and temptations crowd into your lives, my brothers, don’t resent them as intruders, but welcome them as friends!” (Phillips). When Barry walked into the board meeting that fateful night and realized that a kangaroo court awaited him, the last thing on his mind was embracing this pressure as a friend. The board members were armed with their accusations — watered-down sermons, trivial expenditures, weird new approaches to worship. And besides, Barry is new at this pastoring thing, and basically doesn’t know what he is doing. All in all, there is a whole lot of resistance to Barry’s leadership.

In any organization, voices of dissent provide clues about unexpressed pain within the organization. However, these voices are often misinterpreted by the leaders of the organization because they are seen as oppositional. It is hard to hear the message when one feels personally attacked, and almost any response to the attack makes the situation worse. However, as we shall see, it is precisely at these critical moments, when resistance arises, that you, the leader, are in a pivotal position to bring about change.

Answer the following questions to get a sense of how you have handled difficult situations in the past. Then in the following pages, you will find clear guidelines for managing yourself (staying Blue Zone) as you navigate the turbulent waters of church leadership.

RESPONSE ACTIVITY 5

Reflection Scenario and Questions

Think of a time when you knew that a controversy was brewing and you worked hard to avoid it. Reflect on who was involved, what the issues were, and how you began to mobilize internally.

1. Did you fear that things would get out of control with the controversy?
2. Did you fear the outcome would not be what you wanted?
3. How did you try to defuse the situation (e.g., controlling the conversation)?
4. What toll did this take on you?
5. How often do you work to avoid a conflict?

Resistance. Pushback. Call it what you will. It's basically an opposing force that slows or stops movement. Pastors of churches must come to expect it. Most people, after ministering for a time, do expect it, but they also resent it and see it as harmful. "How dare he question my leadership!"

A critical principle to keep in mind: the success of every church initiative, every new program, or the hiring of every staff member hinges on the moment when resistance emerges. Never be surprised that resistance has emerged, no matter how much homework you've done prior to taking action. It will emerge. Welcome it! And then handle it correctly.

All of us from time to time resist. It's a way of protecting ourselves from real or perceived danger. In and of itself, it is not a bad thing. It's merely energy. You've probably already noted in ministry that it especially emerges when change looms. If we can effectively redirect that energy, we can move the resistance in the direction of change.

Resistance can take on many guises:

- *Confusion.* "So why are we doing this?" (Asked after many explanations.)

- *Immediate criticism.* “What a dumb idea.”
- *Denial.* “I don’t see any problem here.”
- *Malicious compliance.* “I concur completely and wholeheartedly.”
- *Sabotage.* “Let’s get him!”
- *Easy agreement.* “No problem.”
- *Deflection.* “What do you think the Cubs’ chances are this year?”
- *Silence.*
- *In-your-face criticism.* “You’re the worst pastor we’ve ever had!”⁴

4. Adapted from Rick Maurer, *Beyond the Wall of Resistance* (Austin, TX: Bard Books, 1996).

RESPONSE ACTIVITY 6

Resistance

Take a moment to think of resistances you have been dealing with, and fill out the chart on page 117.

When faced with resistance, we can act either in the Red Zone or in the Blue Zone. When we react in the Red Zone, we first assume that the resistance is about our persons, not our roles. Feeling personally attacked, we then:

- Use power.
- Manipulate those who oppose.
- Apply force of reason.
- Ignore the resistance.
- Play off relationships.
- Make deals.
- Kill the messenger.
- Give in too soon.

You can be sure that you're in the Red Zone with your responses when:

- They increase rather than decrease resistance.
- They fail to create synergy.
- They create fear and suspicion.
- They separate us from others.

So what to do? Remember, you must be in the Blue Zone. The first step in staying in the Blue Zone is to realize that the resistance has to do with my role as pastor, and it is therefore not about me personally. Then I can:

Maintain clear focus:

- Keep both the long and the short view — one eye on the goal, and one on the present moment.

- Persevere. Hang in there.

Embrace resistance (Remember, it's my ally!):

- Move toward the resistance. Remember, resistance always signals that the resistant person is expressing internal conflict. The voice of resistance tells you what's wrong. The most resistant person is merely the voice for others. Once you know why people are concerned, you can attempt to find common ground. Knowing objections unlocks possibilities.
- Hear the reasons beneath the reasons. People fear change.

Respect those who resist:

- Continually monitor your Red Zone.
- Listen with interest.
- Tell the truth.

Join with the resistance:

- Begin together.
- Look for ways that the situation needs to change.
- Find themes and possibilities. People polarize quickly around issues, with the Red Zone rising for all participants. Staying Blue Zone allows you to find paths to walk below the bluster and assist those who are in the Red Zone as they move toward the Blue Zone.

Who gives me the most resistance?	What form does that resistance take?	What is my normal response to this resistance?

RESPONSE ACTIVITY 7

Projection

There are aspects of myself that I have difficulty owning and dealing with. These aspects cause me anxiety. To reduce the anxiety, my mind keeps these aspects out of my awareness. Thus, my mind censors information that could be potentially troubling.

The buried unacceptable parts don't stay buried within me. Two things happen: 1) they covertly influence my behavior; 2) I project them onto other people so that I can see them in action.

These disowned aspects of myself then become some of the raw material of my story-telling, giving shape and substance to what my mind constructs. Thus, I'm back to boundary problems. Projection is a boundary problem; I'm unable to keep my own story within myself. I project that story onto other people and act according to that story, not according to what that other person is doing. Pastors are projection screens for the congregation. Everything they struggle with — good or bad — gets put on the pastor.

Things That I Disdain

There are things about me — personality traits, propensities, maybe even that part of myself that is creative — that were systematically covered up as I grew up. This took place because, frankly, my parents, families, friends, and society couldn't handle these things. It's not that these things were bad; they were just unacceptable for one reason or another. For this reason I came to be uncomfortable with, or even to disdain, these things.

Take, as an example, an athletic child growing up in a literary family. The child's athletic talents are often ignored or actively discouraged, and they are driven from the growing child's awareness. He still has an athletic bent but is unable to develop it.

If I am angry about something, and I don't want to feel or to handle that feeling, then I can unconsciously project it onto you. If you buy it, also unconsciously, and act it out by expressing it for me to others and also back to me, then I won't have to own and deal with my feelings of anger and resentment. If you express the anger I have projected onto you too much to others and to me, I will criticize and berate you.

A Quiz

Answers to this quiz will give you insights into aspects of yourself you might not be fully aware of.

1. What things really set me off and cause me to overreact?
2. Do I read other people's minds? Whose? When do I read them? What is occurring?
3. What do I fear the most? Rejection? Loss of control? Incompetence? Abandonment?
4. What people or things do I hate the most?
5. What characteristics do I find myself disliking in others, especially those of the same sex? Is there one person in my life that I really can't stand? What is it about him or her that sets me off?
6. What things do I know about myself that I try hard to keep hidden, even from those closest to me?
7. What things do I never do, even though doing them may benefit me?
8. What strengths do I have that, being preoccupied with them, may prevent me from being real and having fulfilling relationships (e.g., always caretaking others prevents me from caring for myself)?
9. What are the themes of my dreams? Who is doing what?
10. What do others say about me, especially those closest to me (spouse, friends, parents)? How am I perceived in the organization?
11. Think back on a recent hardship, a loss of something truly important to you (spouse, friendship, job, status). What issues emerged? What was said to you?

GUISES UNDER WHICH PROJECTION MAY APPEAR

Characteristic	Definition	Example	Possible Projected Material
1. All-or-nothing behavior	Seeing people, places, or things only one way	All men are brutes. Bosses can't be trusted.	I am a brute. I can't be trusted.
2. Strong "yuck" reaction	Revulsion and antagonism in reaction to others' behavior	I hate neediness.	I hate my own neediness.
3. Repetition, compulsion	Poor choices I make over and over	I keep getting into bad relationships.	I keep hoping someone will take care of me.
4. Limits in my behavior	What I never do, even though doing it may benefit me	Never confront. Never share.	I fear dealing with or confronting my issues.
5. Strengths in my own behavior	What strengths I have that, being preoccupied with them, may prevent me from being real and having fulfilling relationships	Always caretaking for others prevents me from caring for myself.	Hoping I will be cared for.
6. Resentment	Longstanding unresolved anger or bitterness	I resent him for ____.	I fear facing ____.

Adapted from C. L. Whitfield, *Boundaries and Relationships* (Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, 1993), 92 – 93.

RESPONSE ACTIVITY 8

Transference

In transference, I experience a person in the present as though they were a parental figure from my past; I transfer problems that I had in that original relationship into my current relationships. I had a bad relationship with my father; I transfer my feelings about him onto you, the pastor.

In order to experience the present person as a past person, I must transfer to the present person my relationship to the past authority figure. Thus, I am unable to know the present person for who she truly is as a person. I see her as that past person, because I'm looking at the qualities of that person, not the qualities standing before me in the present person.

Actually, it starts out that I unconsciously see the pastor as the good parent, the one who will heal wounds left behind by my parents. So my expectations of the pastor are enormous (again, when I received especially bad parenting and still struggle with the results of this). This is the process that unfolded between Barry and his board. He thought that these dedicated people wanted him to rejuvenate their dying church. That was only part of it. They unconsciously wanted him to heal their woundedness.

When the pastor fails to heal all of these wounds (and it is certain that this will happen, especially with the deeply wounded in the congregation), I now see the pastor as the bad parent, and I glue all of my wounded feelings from childhood on the pastor. Thus, I am transformed from needy, dependent child to attacking monster.

The same process can also happen for the pastor. He can begin to look for approval and acceptance from members of the congregation. The pastor's personal story that he can't handle is brought to the parishioner to resolve or absolve. The pastor expects the parish to affirm and appreciate him for his sacrifice and service to them.

When they are dissatisfied and critical or take the pastor for granted, the pastor will either react in hurt or anger and isolate himself from them, or try to please all the more through performance.

RESPONSE ACTIVITY 9

Postures

Let's add another piece to the puzzle. People seem to be genuinely perplexed when they get into disagreements, and their adversary gets more and more perturbed. "Why can't that jerk see my position on this matter?" we scream, never realizing that we are throwing gasoline on the fire at the very moment we want to lower the intensity and move to agreement.

Before we look at the steps involved in this, let's review the steps we have already established:

- When I see you do something, I reach into my story to attach meaning to what I'm seeing ("Oh, you're attacking me because you think I'm an incompetent boob"). At this point I may go Red Zone, my intensity increasing as I experience anxiety over what I think is occurring ("You're not just disagreeing with my proposal, you're saying that I'm incompetent").
- As I go Red Zone, my anxiety (intensity) increases (not necessarily noticeable but enough to alter my behavior) because of the energy pouring in from my past story.

Now let's consider the next steps:

- When I get anxious, I assume one of several postures that I have learned in the past. These postures help me hold my anxiety at bay.
- My anxiety is held at bay temporarily because I disguise from you (and, more often than not, from myself) my true Red Zone feelings. I refuse to let you know that I am feeling weak, vulnerable, afraid, unacceptable.
- Unfortunately, the only thing you notice is my posture. Seeing my posture activates your story, and you react to me accordingly,

never taking the time to get beneath my posture to see what is going on with me.

Now think of the posture that you assume when you become anxious. You may not realize it, but when you become anxious and move into the Red Zone, you have a posture you assume to deal with the anxiety. This posture conveys information to the other person. Your posture may temporarily lower your anxiety, but unfortunately it will also likely cause a response in your adversary that is the opposite of what you hope to achieve.

Am I Forwarding This Discussion, or Inciting to Riot?

When I've been in and out of conflict with the same adversary over time (spouse, boss, colleague), the pattern of conflict gets stylized. Each of us responds to the other in very predictable ways.

This has a bad side to it: it takes very little provocation to fall into the pattern, assume the requisite postures, and have at it.

It also has a good side to it: I've done the same thing over and over again. This isn't rocket science! I only need to figure out my part of the pattern and change it. Unfortunately, I'm usually too busy yelling, "You change!" to realize that it's up to me to do the changing.

Red Zone issues give rise to feelings associated with those issues. And once aroused, those feelings lead me to assume certain postures.

These postures become important in my unfolding relationships with people important to me.

Now look at the following table. See if you can identify the posture you assume when you get anxious and go Red Zone. We also included the Red Zone issue that often (but not exclusively) occurs with each of the postures; for example, competence-issue people often take a blaming stance.

All of us can employ all of these postures from time to time. But you probably employ one of these the most, especially when your anxiety is particularly high.

Posture	Hoped for Result	Your Insides	Others' Response
<i>Placating</i> (often used by Acceptance people)	So others won't be mad "Spare me."	"I feel like nothing inside."	Guilt
<i>Blaming</i> (often used by Controlling people)	So others will see me as strong "Obey me."	"I'm lonely and unsuccessful."	Fear
<i>Computing</i> (often used by Survival people)	So others will see I'm not threatened "Ally with me."	"I feel vulnerable."	Envy
<i>Distracting</i> (often used by Competence people)	So others will ignore the threat "Tolerate me."	"Nobody cares. There's no place for me."	Fun

Adapted from Virginia Satir, *Peoplemaking* (Palo Alto, CA: Science and Behavior, 1972).

PHASE 3

Adaptive Change

Once a person has understood her Red Zone, come to terms with it, and been able to manage it effectively, she is able to establish more of a Blue Zone pattern of living and leading. And as Barry discovered in our story, she can begin to make critical distinctions between technical and adaptive changes.

Life, and certainly church life, has this annoying way of serving up problems that don't lend themselves to easy answers. Even so, people look to those in authority to deliver solutions. Unfortunately, pastors all too often are more than willing to assume these expectations. Instead of solving the problems, the pastor becomes the one upon whom the congregation can dump all of its ambivalence, anxiety, and anger.

An example is an established, aging congregation in a historic building in an ethnically changing neighborhood. What has developed is a gap between what people hope for ("I want my church to remain the same as it has been") and the present reality ("There is no way it can remain the same, with everything around it changing quickly"). Adaptive leadership for the pastor involves creating an environment in which the congregation can wrestle with the competing values and implications associated with this problem.

Technical change refers to fixes, such as altering techniques or acquiring new equipment or reshuffling personnel in an attempt to change the situation. These problems aren't trivial, but they do involve solutions already existing within organizations. Adaptive solutions involve a deeper level of change; they often require us to alter deeply held beliefs and modify established habits and patterns of behavior. It is those who are directly affected by the solutions who must be guided by the leader through the process of finding the solutions, no matter how painful this process might be.

The leadership failure that afflicts all too many organizations is the tendency to treat adaptive problems with technical solutions. When communication breaks down on a church staff, when churches become stuck and unable to establish their mission and vision for the future, or when Sunday morning worship attendance drops dramatically as the surrounding neighborhood undergoes cultural change, you generally have a major adaptive problem that needs far-reaching adaptive solutions. Mere technical patches and fixes will never work.

In the following pages, you will be taking a look at yourself as a leader. Work through the various scenarios and quiz yourself on how you have handled these situations in the past. Then we'll unpack the important concepts of adaptive and technical change.

RESPONSE ACTIVITY 10

The Adaptive Leader

Scenario 1

As the pastor, you are the authority figure in your church. Two of your staff members have asked you to resolve an interpersonal conflict between them. They tell you they will abide by whatever decision you make. Consider how you would answer the following questions.

What's your approach as an adaptive leader?

1. Do you help them resolve the issue?
2. Do you resolve it for them?
3. Do you believe they can resolve the issue?
4. Do you expect them to work at it until they resolve the issue themselves?

Scenario 2

As the pastor and leader of the church elders, you have agreed that decisions concerning the strategic focus of your church will be made by consensus. The group becomes deadlocked over an important issue.

What's your approach as an adaptive leader?

1. Do you allow the conflict in the group to continue?
2. Do you choose the direction you want and try to influence the members?
3. Do you decide to relieve the stress in the group and make the decision for them?
4. Do you help the group discern what the underlying values conflict really might be?

Scenario 3

After a particularly difficult meeting in which a decision was finally reached, several staff members approach you to complain about one member who often challenges the group's consensus. They do not clearly ask you to intercede, but their intent is clear.

What's your approach as an adaptive leader?

1. Do you agree with their assessment of the person?
2. Do you hope the conflict will pass?
3. Do you decide to schedule a coaching session with the individual?
4. Do you suggest to those complaining that they should raise the issue at the next team meeting and make an effort to resolve the issue?

Scenario 4

A small group of church leaders has always been very supportive of you. They have supported all the changes you have suggested and been instrumental in helping you accomplish your vision. One day they approach you about a concern and want your support for their cause. You are concerned because you think what they want may not be in the best interests of the church.

What's your approach as an adaptive leader?

1. Do you risk losing their support by disappointing them?
2. Do you decide to give them your support and hope for the best?
3. Do you raise your concerns about the endeavor with them?
4. Do you challenge them to find a better alternative?

Rate Yourself

As the pastor of the church, I am willing to take the risk and accept the consequences of exceeding my authority to make a decision that I think will be good for the community.

Never

Sometimes

Always

I am willing to provide feedback to any group member whose performance is getting in the way of their growth and development, even though the conversation may be uncomfortable for me.

Never

Sometimes

Always

These and many other everyday situations require leadership skills. Your ability to handle these situations in a positive and productive way will often determine how effectively your church will serve its members. As the pastor and leader, you are responsible for creating an environment in which people can grow and develop. It is the responsibility of leaders in all organizations, sacred and secular, to help the community they serve face its conflicts, heal its divisions, and find new ways to move forward together.

People tend to think that their leaders must be charismatic speakers or dynamic personalities to effectively lead them. They are quick to look for heroes to solve their most difficult problems, but effective leadership centers around mobilizing the individual, the group, and the community to address and resolve its conflicts. These are the skills of the adaptive leader.

RESPONSE ACTIVITY 11

Technical versus Adaptive Change

So how do we know which order of change is required — technical change or adaptive change? The key question we have to ask ourselves when faced with such a situation is this: Can I solve this situation with resources, or does the solution lie in changing people's values, attitudes, and habits? If it is the latter, then we must boldly shoulder the task of producing adaptive change.

One reason this is such a difficult challenge for leaders is that before we can encourage adaptive change in others, we must accept adaptive change within ourselves. Like the people who work in our organization, we are creatures of fixed attitudes, beliefs, habits, and behavior patterns. We don't enjoy change any more than the people who work around us do. But that is the burden of leadership: to face facts, accept the truth about ourselves and our situation, to make internal adaptations of our own minds and emotions, and then to mobilize the people around us to adapt as well.

Make a list of key adaptive changes you have personally had to make in the course of your life. (Examples: Coming to faith. Career-path change.)

Adaptive change is not easy for anyone. In fact, it is extremely stressful and painful for everyone — for leaders and followers alike. It means releasing old beliefs, while adopting new beliefs, roles, relationships, attitudes, and behaviors. There is always resistance to

adaptive change. Always. Old traditions, attitudes, habits, and comfort zones die hard. Disorientation and confusion are frequent by-products of adaptive change. Conflicts easily arise — and leadership must resist the temptation to merely suppress conflict instead of allowing those conflicts to bring important issues to the fore. Conflict and collective pain can often be useful in underscoring the need for adaptive change.

During times of adaptive change, it is crucial for leadership to maintain poise, exude confidence, quell fears, and hold a steady course. This means that leaders need to possess a high tolerance for uncertainty, frustration, and distress, both within themselves and in the people around them. During times of adaptive change, leadership will be scrutinized by followers, watching for both verbal and non-verbal signs of security and steadiness. Leadership must continually communicate assurance and confidence that the change is manageable, healthy, and for the betterment of everyone involved.

Make a list of adaptive changes your church has had to make in the last ten years.

Make a list of adaptive changes that your church will need to make in the next five years. Then prioritize your list, number 1 being the adaptive change that will need to be made first. For example:

1. Reach out to the growing Hispanic community.
2. Alter worship service to accommodate potential new members.

RESPONSE ACTIVITY 12

Reframing

People don't like to be in the dark, not knowing what's going on. We constantly search for meaning in everything we see and experience. When a person does something, we want to know their motivation and intent. "Why did he do that?"

Unfortunately, often our frames miss the mark. We say someone or something is bad or distasteful or rude, when in fact another explanation is more valid. At the same time, we assign intention to actions. "She did that because she wanted to hurt me, plain and simple!"

So where do these frames come from? They come from the stories we've stored in our heads, stories replete with heroes and villains, rescuers, and saints. And we project onto others all of those distasteful parts of ourselves that we can't look at and deal with. So if I have trouble with my powerful part and shrink from leadership, I might then project this onto others and see people constantly trying to control me. That becomes my frame in situation after situation.

As we place people around us into the stories we carry in our heads, and subsequently frame them, we are at the same time valuing these people, situations, and experiences. "Judy is such an asset to this company. She's always smiling and happy. Harry, on the other hand, is a lazy bum who constantly procrastinates." People then get forced into categories in our minds. Once a frame is established, it is very difficult to escape from it.

The goal of reframing is to change our perspective, the way we think about ourselves and our problems and other people — the way we act, relate, and feel.

THE FACT

He comes in late to work a lot.

She disobeyed.

THE FRAME

He's a lazy bum.

She is a bad person.

He ignored me.
She tells jokes.
He spoke with a loud, harsh voice.

He is insensitive.
She is funny.
He is a tyrant.

All behavior has numerous strains of motivation. Our tendency is to pick out only certain strains of motivation — our projections. Reframing picks out another, equally valid strain of motivation that sheds new light on the person or experience.

- “He did act poorly, but I think he did it to protect you.”
- “She ignored you, but it might be because she’s so shy and not because she’s arrogant.”
- “He spoke harshly, but it may be because he feels his authority is threatened, not because he’s mean.”

When I successfully change the meaning of a person or experience, my emotional response to that person or experience changes, and my behavior toward that person changes.

Exercise

In the left column of the table on page 135, write the various problems you have heard people express to you over the years (problems with themselves and others). In the right column, write a reframing of the problem.

Now think of some people in your life who are irritating, people who just send you over the edge (see p. 136). For example:

PERSON	HOW I SEE THE PERSON	REFRAMING
My boss lence	Micromanaging	Concerned about excel-
	Overbearing	Willing to take charge
	Devious	Clever

You don’t necessarily have to buy the reframing at this point. The intent of this exercise is to begin to see other possibilities in this person’s behavior.

PROBLEM	REFRAMING

REFRAMING	
HOW I SEE THE PERSON	
PERSON	

Successful Reframing

Let's look at the elements of reframing. Putting this skill in your Blue Zone toolbox will enhance your ability to deal with people effectively. And of course, one must be *in* the Blue Zone to effectively implement reframing.

To begin with, effective reframing:

1. *Provides an alternative view.* Remember, behavior has many motivational strains. It's always problematic to say that a person does a particular behavior for one particular reason. We usually pick the reason a person behaves a certain way from our own story (projection), and that makes it doubly problematic. Reframing provides another view.
2. *Is valid.* Reframing is not just picking reasons for behavior out of the blue. The reason picked for the reframing must be valid.
3. *Provides a positive option.* So many of the frames we impose on others are negative. Even when people do a nice thing (Mary decides to help build a Habitat for Humanity house), the frame is negative (Mary's only doing this to make herself look good in the community).
4. *Allows someone to take action.* As we apply negative frames to people, we often paralyze them, giving them no room to maneuver. If I constantly tell my son that he is lazy and insolent, that definition hems him in to behavior that fits the bill.

That's a problem seen over and over again with parents and with spouses. They've applied the same frame over and over to their kids or their spouse, frames that have served to define the person.

"You're just a no-good, worthless bum."

"You'll never amount to anything."

"You're a tireless nag."

"You're just looking out for yourself."

Each of these frames depletes a person's motivation and steals their energy for useful action.

RESPONSE ACTIVITY 13

Principles for Managing Conflict

We've established that conflict can be a good thing, a useful thing, and an indispensable thing. We've also argued that to make conflict work for us, there has to be in place certain prerequisites, the most important of which is our ability to monitor ourselves. Let's add another indispensable piece.

Walking hand in hand with conflict is caring. Wait just a minute! you say. Conflict and caring going together? How can that be? I'm in conflict when I'm angry, not when I feel warmth. If I care about someone, I can't be in conflict with them, or I'll hurt them. Right?

Well, no. Conflict that's useful, that calls out new information and understanding, and that leads to resolution is conflict that weds care for relationship with care for the achievement of goals. I don't have to sacrifice my relationship with you in order to achieve the ends that I'm passionate about. In fact, Blue Zone living allows me to set aside my own story, and all the baggage that that involves, and truly care about others, even in the midst of conflict.

Anita is a woman of principle who takes stands on issues, who is passionate about things she believes in. She's the pastor of a medium-sized mainline church in one of our nation's leading cities. She is well trained and knows what she's doing. Anita is also a person who cares deeply about her peers, her subordinates, and her superiors.

Because Anita generally operates in the Blue Zone, and has come to grips with her story and how it can contaminate relationships if she's not careful, she is able to enter into conflict with the denominational authorities, with fellow clergy, with her board, and with members of the congregation without any of these people feeling personally attacked.

Quite the contrary, to be in conflict with Anita is to know two things: 1) I am valued by her, and 2) she's going to fight me tooth and nail for things she believes to be right. She is a person who cares

deeply about personal relationships and personal goals. Let's put this in a table.

CARING ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP	CARING ABOUT THE ISSUE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You personally, and our relationship, are important to me. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I care very deeply about this issue on which we disagree.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I really want to hear what you have to say. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I want to clearly express my point of view on this matter.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I respect your position. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> My position differs from yours.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I will stay with this discussion until we reach an understanding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please keep working with me until we reach an understanding.

Adapted from David Augsburger, *Caring Enough to Confront* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1973), 59 – 61.

We've studied Anita and people just like her to find out what makes them tick. How can they stand firm, be passionate, and fight like mad, and yet never seem to alienate the people with whom they fight?

Congruent Living

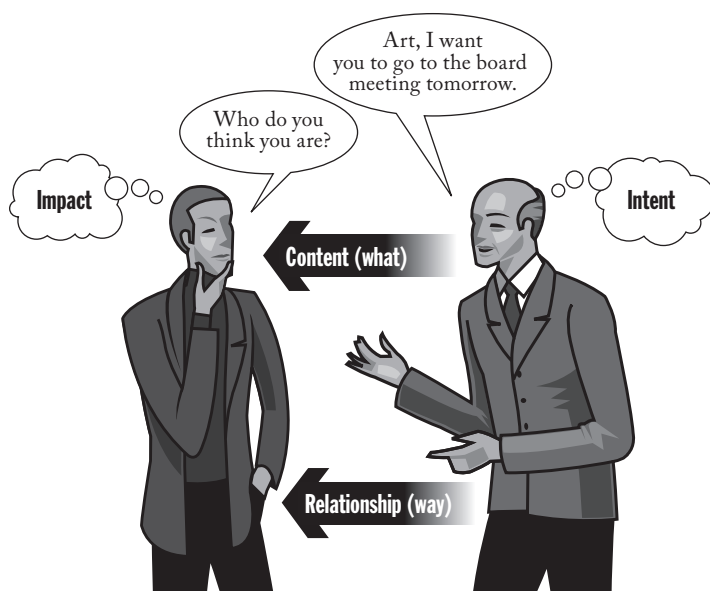
We haven't spoken much of the role of communication in conflict. And it is a critical role. Communication not only transmits thoughts and ideas from one person to another, it also reveals things about the communicator (often that the speaker is unaware of) and conveys whether the speaker is in the Red Zone or the Blue Zone.

Our brains have different areas that are critical to communication, and that send and receive messages in different ways. Let's consider just two channels for communication.

The left side of the brain produces and processes words. It's the side that uses language. Here concepts are strung together and understood. Here the world is broken down into components. This is the side we usually think of when we think of communication.

The right side of the brain works completely different. It works in the shadows, somewhat out of our awareness. This side of the brain sends and receives messages concerning the relationship. It is the side of the brain where Red Zone behavior emerges.

Consider the two speakers Maurice and Art in the figure. Maurice (the speaker) has a particular intent as he speaks to Art. He wants Art to attend a special corporate meeting. That is the content of his message.



Notice that the impact on Art is totally different from Maurice's intention. Art has evidently gone Red Zone. The goal of communication is to have our intent equal the impact on our hearer. So what misfires?

We know a lot about content messages. We deal with words-formed-into-sentences every day. Relationship messages are formed by our bodies as we speak and are shaped by the context in which our messages are found. These messages tend to be sent and received

outside of our awareness. So while Maurice is asking Art to go to the board meeting, Maurice's body is also sending messages, messages that state the nature of the relationship between Maurice and Art.

Because relationship messages are shaped outside of our awareness, they tend to have more power. We don't sit down and think about how we want these messages to be; they just emerge automatically.

We both send and receive relationship messages outside of awareness. So critical relationship messages are constantly being passed back and forth between us unconsciously. But the fact that we aren't aware of these messages doesn't mean that we don't act on them. We act on them all the time, reacting to insignificant comments as though the world were ending, blowing up when someone makes a simple request, steering clear of certain people because we just don't feel right around them.

Of course, these relationship messages are breeding grounds for Red Zone behaviors.

RESPONSE ACTIVITY 14

Secrets to Healthy Conflict

- Remember, the ability to manage conflict in a healthy way begins with you. So you need to ask yourself:
 - Do I understand my story, the themes that emerge from it, and the ways in which I still live it?
 - Am I comfortable with both my loving feelings and with my feelings of annoyance and frustration?
 - Do I respond flexibly to life's events?
 - Do I focus on issues and the task at hand (goal-directed)?
- Work with more rather than less information. Conflict in the Blue Zone deals with issues. To deal with issues effectively in the Blue Zone requires information from every reliable source available. If the conflict isn't personal, you can gather the information you need to make an informed decision.
- Debate on the basis of facts. Once you get the information you need, fight all you want. But the fight has to be about the facts, not about personalities.
- Develop multiple alternatives to enrich the level of debate. As the fight unfolds, generate a number of alternatives and write them down.
- Share commonly agreed-upon goals. Make sure everyone in the conflict shares the same goals.
- Inject humor into the decision-making process. The ability to laugh at a situation is the best signal that everyone is still in the Blue Zone (at least, if you're not laughing at someone). It also clears the air and lets everyone keep perspective ("This isn't so important that we can't still laugh").

- Maintain a balanced power structure. Nothing stops conflict faster than a power play. “I’m the boss. No more discussion. You’ll do as I say.” If that’s the way you feel, then why invite alternative positions and get into conflict in the first place?
- Resolve issues without forcing unanimity. Forget total agreement. It’s a pipe dream. More than that, if you have unanimity, you’ve probably got group-think on your hands, in which everyone puts their minds on hold and just votes with the majority.

Having trouble with some of these? It may be that the Red Zone is creeping into your ability to manage conflict appropriately.

RESPONSE ACTIVITY 15

The Confrontation Process

Conflict often involves confrontation. We have all come across behavior that demands to be confronted. In fact, to allow certain behavior to go unchallenged is an affront to the organization.

All of us, from time to time, need to be confronted. We tend to excuse behavior that is unacceptable. At these times, we need a person who cares for us to confront us and direct us down the proper path. But if this is not done in a caring manner, our inclination is to dismiss the confronter as punitive and misguided. So when you confront:

- *Be honest and direct.*
- *Be specific.* Never generalize, because when you generalize, your story can come creeping back in, contaminating what you are trying to say.
- *Use I messages, not you messages.* We tend to confront with *you* messages. “You didn’t do this right. You screwed up!” But such messages convey blame, making the confronted person defensive. When we use *I* messages, we own our responsibility, feelings, and demands without blaming.
- *Affirm in public; correct in private.* There is nothing more destructive to a person’s dignity and to the morale of an organization than public confrontation. Affirmation is for the ears of the public. But correction should take place in privacy, and even then, correction should be within the context of care for and support of the person being corrected.
- *Distinguish people from issues.* Build allegiances to people, not issues. Issues, like opinions, come and go. No point in getting too attached. But people are a different matter. People must always be the priority. That’s why it’s so important to keep

conflict in the Blue Zone. Red Zone conflict dissolves relationships, hurts people, and destroys organizations.

- *Distinguish symptoms from causes.* Another way to think about this is to center your feedback on observations, not on conclusions; on descriptions, not on judgments. When I jump to conclusions, invariably I'm also making judgments. And when I make judgments, I am ascribing intent. And when I ascribe intent, there's a good possibility I'm projecting out of my story. So instead of confronting you, I'm really confronting myself (in the person of you). And that gets confusing.

Conflict in a Group

We've talked about dealing with conflict between individuals. But what happens when conflict explodes within a group, a department, or a management team? Members of groups have a way of feeding each other's Red Zones. As a result, problem-solving turns into personal bashing, which is why people in organizations avoid conflicted issues. They fear that the conflict will turn personal and ugly. We've found a three-step process to be extremely helpful.

1. *Discourse.* During this phase, everyone is given a hearing. Each person takes a turn telling what he or she thinks about the situation. No one is allowed to comment on what is being said. We've found this stage to be critical, for usually when groups get into sustained conflict, people yell back and forth at one another, and no one is heard.
2. *Discussion.* During this phase, people are allowed to interact with each other. Each has heard fully the other participants' points of view. Now it is time to discuss these points. This is also a winnowing process in which the best ideas rise to the top and less useful concepts are discarded.
3. *Decision.* During this phase, a decision is made as to what direction the group needs to take or how the conflict is to be resolved. Specific action steps and timetables for implementation are generated.

RESPONSE ACTIVITY 16

When Heading into the Red Zone

We have found that most people who are successful in conflict not only manage to stay Blue Zone most of the time but also have learned to handle their Red Zone when it lurks in the shadows, ready to hijack the conflict. People who monitor their Red Zone tend to recover from distress more quickly than those who don't.

Consider Julio. He knows that he goes Red Zone with one particular manager — Franco — at his company. Julio knows that this fellow reminds him of a tormenting brother and that Julio's Red Zone issue is control. But still he tends to go Red Zone whenever Franco is around.

What Julio learned he needs to do whenever he finds himself going Red Zone with Franco is to excuse himself, go to the men's room, sit on a stool, and coach himself out of the mental place he is in.

Probably the most important strategy is to have the time to get a mental picture of what is occurring and to alter it. "I know I'm going Red Zone right now. My acceptance is not at stake."

The Most Important Questions to Ask to Stay Blue Zone

1. With whom do I tend to go Red Zone?
2. In what situations do I tend to go Red Zone?
3. What is my core Red Zone issue?
4. What strategy do I need to employ to get myself out of the Red Zone?

A question we are constantly asked is, What do I, as a leader, do when someone in a group setting is getting Red Zone? This is a common occurrence as a person begins to take the discussion person-

ally. Though each situation is different, there are several important principles to follow.

1. If a person is Red Zone but not disrupting the meeting, there is probably no reason to draw attention to the person. Drawing attention to the person may in fact ignite more Red Zone behavior.
2. Red Zone behavior tends to spread from one person to another. I go Red Zone, and I attack you. You go Red Zone and counterattack. Once two people have become locked in a Red Zone exchange, it's up to the leader to step in and halt the action. "You both are unable to focus effectively on the issue we're discussing. I suggest we take a break, and the two of you need to cool off and refocus."

Summary of Myths versus Truths

In parting, we'd like to share with you some myths and truths we've uncovered over the years in working with people. Most of these have been covered in the preceding pages, so you can treat this as a review.

MYTH	TRUTH
Others are much more "together" than I am.	Everyone is as fragile as I am.
New stories are constantly emerging.	There are no new stories, only variations.
My most important lessons are learned in successful relationships.	My most important lessons are learned in failed relationships.
Every statement people make is grounded outside of themselves.	Every statement people make is at least partially autobiographical.
I have only one story. I take it everywhere I go, and I can't change it, because the same things happen to me over and over.	I have a story that I was taught and now live, but it is up to me to examine it and make necessary changes.

continued on next page

continued from page 147

MYTH	TRUTH
Somebody else will give me the chance to change my story.	It's up to me to figure out my story and make necessary changes.
It's real easy to fix this mess.	Messes, especially relationship messes, are more complex than I think.
The way out is out.	The way out is inward.
The problem is out there, with them.	The problem is always in the room ... and begins with me.
The road to feeling better is a steadily upward movement toward pleasure.	The road to feeling better is through a certain amount of pain.
Life is easy.	Life is hard.
I'm at least as bad as I think I am, and everybody else knows it.	I'm better than I think I am and capable of more than I know.
My greatest resource is somewhere out there.	My greatest resource is myself.
If I want to know what's going on, I should look at the person.	If I want to know what's going on, I should look at the pattern.
I grow only when I am comfortable.	I grow only when I am uncomfortable.

Discussion Questions

Chapter 1

1. Given what you read about First Community, what would be some of the most challenging aspects of being its pastor?
2. What are some of the reasons that a one-time supporter might become a leader's nemesis?
3. Why did Elliott's words to Barry, "Are you sure you are cut out to be a pastor?" create so much rage in Barry? What do you think your response might be if someone asked you the same question about your job or career?

Meditation: There are moments in all of our lives when we face a crisis that creates doubt in our ability to minister. What raises the doubts for you?

Chapter 2

1. What are the differences between technical change and adaptive change?
2. Do you think a church should be run like a business? Why or why not? Are there any aspects of business management that can be helpful in leading churches? If so, what are they?
3. Do you think a church should be led like a family? Why or why not?
4. In your own words, define a Red Zone leader. Then define a Blue Zone leader. Finally, define the difference between the two types of leaders.

Meditation: As you reflect on your Red Zone behavior, what conflict is preventing you from realizing the success you've envisioned for your ministry?

Chapter 3

1. Do you agree with Elliott that Red Zone and Blue Zone issues are the same at home and at work? Why or why not?
2. Elliott argues that when we are in conflict with another, the real conflict lies within ourselves, not with the other person. Do you agree with this? Why or why not?
3. As Barry is leaving, Elliott says to him, “Every time I hear you talking about Jim Grendell, I hear you talking about yourself.” What might Elliott mean?

Meditation: Think about a Jim Grendell in your life, and the things you think and say about that person. Would Elliott say the same thing to you that he said to Barry?

Chapter 4

1. Where do you think Barry erred, if at all, as he introduced changes into his church?
2. How do you think Barry handled his meeting with Jim and the board? What do you think was driving Jim’s concerns? What’s your assessment of the way the other board members handled the meeting?
3. Who do you find yourself meeting, over and over again?

Meditation: What within yourself is blocking you from examining the deeper issues that lie within?

Chapter 5

1. Barry states that the current evaluation of ministry success is attendance and membership, rate of church growth, and quality of church facilities. What is your evaluation of this comment? What standards do you use to measure your success in ministry?

2. How successful have you been in living up to your standards of success?
3. How often do you reevaluate the standards of success you use?

Meditation: What core issue within yourself has kept you from meeting your goals over the years? How does that issue relate to the “who” you meet over and over again (question 3 in chapter 4)?

Chapter 6

1. What links do you see between the difficulties Barry has at church and the difficulties he experiences with his son, Jake?
2. What do you think of the changes Barry proposed to the board? What’s your reaction to the board’s response to the changes?
3. What changes have you been considering at your church? What strategies have you considered to implement these changes? What is your hesitation in implementing them?

Meditation: In what ways do core issues within yourself block your ability to be fully present to your spouse, family, and friends?

Chapter 7

1. What is the difference between loving someone and approving of someone?
2. Why do you think that Barry, after the school principal shared his thoughts about Jake with him and Sophia, was sad and confused, and yet hopeful?
3. As he talked about transforming change, Elliott mentioned that Barry had the opportunity of a lifetime to provide for his son what Barry had never received from his own father. What was Elliott referring to?

Meditation: How many times, because of your fears, do you miss the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of those you love and serve?

Chapter 8

1. Because you are the pastor and leader of your church, do you feel primarily responsible for defining the vision and direction and for solving the challenges of your church?
2. Why are leaders of all organizations, not just churches, reluctant to challenge the values and beliefs of their congregation or community?
3. What do you think Elliott means when he speaks of the unspoken bargain that many pastors and congregations arrive at?
4. Do you think that vision is given to the pastor, or do you think vision is the shared vision of the community brought about in the crucible of conflict?

Meditation: What is the unrealized redemptive potential in the people you serve?

Chapter 9

1. As you consider challenging your congregation to live more fully in the Spirit, what do you think might be the “right questions,” the hard questions to ask yourself and your congregation?
2. Are you willing to disappoint the expectations of those who look to you for answers and risk their disapproval?
3. Are you willing to maintain a relationship with someone who challenges you and your integrity so that you might help them with the challenges they face?
4. “When a person is at their most oppositional, that is the time when they are most vulnerable.” What do you think that means for you and those who have entrusted themselves to you?

Meditation: Are you ready to face the fears within you and become a source of transformation and healing in your community? This is the challenge of becoming an adaptive-change pastor or leader: embrace the conflict within ourselves and accept our own flaws so that we can accept the flaws of others. This humility allow us to understand the conflicts that lie within others and to become a source of healing for them.