Healthy Relationships and Conflict Resolution in Christian Organizations (MC611)
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
The Center for Urban Ministerial Education

Fall 2011
October 7th & 8th – November 4th & 5th – December 2nd & 3rd
Fridays: 6:00 p.m. until 10:00 p.m.
Saturdays: 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m.

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COURSE SYLLABUS

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course is useful for ministers and other church professionals concerning the key elements for building healthy relationships both personally and professionally. This course will address such issues as proper boundaries, time management, balancing life’s demands, and creating a healthy and wholesome organizational culture. Key principles, strategies and procedures for resolving conflict within the personal and organizational spheres will also be addressed in this course.

GOALS OF THE COURSE:

1. To understand, develop and articulate a biblically based theology and philosophy for conflict resolution both personally and professionally.
2. To identify key forces in conflict and conflict resolution.
3. To understand and be aware of the organizational dynamics which will facilitate healthy relationships and minimize conflict.
4. To understand the relationship between individual and organizational health.
5. Develop an awareness of levels of conflict and their importance in conflict resolution.
6. To recognize the barriers and signs of an unhealthy organizational culture.
7. To understand your own personal behavioral style, its strengths and weaknesses, and how that impacts conflict resolution, personally and organizationally.
8. To gain a basic understanding of other behavioral styles and how that impacts communication and conflict resolution, as well as key strategies on how to approach different styles effectively for conflict resolution.
9. To understand the essential elements of interest based conflict resolution.
10. To recognize how cultural, ethnic, and gender differences impact communication and conflict resolution.
11. To learn the procedural stages leading up to possible litigation.
12. To recognize, embrace and practice spiritual disciplines required in order to be personally prepared for conflict resolution.

REQUIRED READING:

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:
1. Attendance and participation in all sessions is required.
2. Students must participate actively in plenary and small group discussions.
3. Read all required textbooks and be able to demonstrate you have a working knowledge of the material.
4. Students must complete all written work by the assigned due date.
5. No late papers or e-mail papers will be accepted. It is acknowledged that life circumstances cannot be avoided and in such cases consideration with some penalty will be noted. *No work will be accepted after the last day of class.*

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Healthy Relationships in the Bible

Students are to write a five page paper providing a cursory analysis of what the New Testament teaches about “healthy relationships” among believers. Choose two or three key passages which address relationships with other believers. What should our attitude be toward one another? How would the application of such truths impact our relationships with one another and lend to a healthier church and/or ministry setting?

2. Family History

Students are to write a five page paper articulating your family’s view of conflict and its impact upon your own personal style. What were the rules in your home concerning conflict? How were issues addressed and resolved in your family? Were they resolved? What was the atmosphere like in your home concerning raising difficult issues? Was there an open or closed atmosphere? What role did you ascribe to in your family---peacemaker, troublemaker, scapegoat, silent spectator?

3. Case Study

Each student will write a five page case study concerning an organizational conflict in their ministry setting. The following is to be included in the paper.
   a. A basic narrative of the issues involved.
b. The precipitating events which brought about such conflict.
c. A brief discussion of the underlying issues (personally and professionally).
d. The key factors that is necessary in resolving the conflict and a corresponding strategy.
e. The implication of not resolving the conflicting situation.
f. The student will lead the class through the various issues and process resolving the case presented. The case should be “authentic.”

The presentation portion including class interaction will be 30 minutes.

4. Philosophy of Conflict Resolution

Students are to write a ten page paper outlining their view of conflict and conflict resolution from a biblical and practical perspective. The paper will represent a culmination of your work and learning throughout the semester, drawing from insights from your readings, lectures and class discussions along with personal reflections. The paper should incorporate key concepts of conflict resolution, biblical illustrations and life experiences to demonstrate the principles and philosophy articulated.

5. Additional Reading

Students will do a reading log consisting of journal articles, books and magazine articles on various issues of conflict. For instance, such topics to explore would be gender and conflict, cross-cultural conflict, generations and conflict, the art of listening, etc. Please include in your log the name of the article or book read, number of pages and a short paragraph stating a couple of insights you gleaned from the reading.

GRADING
10% - Attendance and participation
15% - Healthy Relationships in the Bible
15% - Family History
25% - Case Study
25% - Philosophy of Conflict Resolution
10% - Additional Reading

COURSE SCHEDULE:

October 7-8
• Introduction to course; review of syllabus
• Class Introductions
• The Meaning of the Gospel
• Overcoming the Dark Side of Leadership
• Keys for Healthy Relationships
• FAMILY HISTORY PAPER IS DUE
November 4-5
- Leading Through Conflict
- Firestorm
- Introduction to Case Study
- **HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS IN THE BIBLE PAPER IS DUE**

December 2-3
- A Biblical Guide to Resolving Church Conflict
- Presentation of Case Studies
- **CASE STUDY PAPER IS DUE**
- **PHILOSOPHY OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION PAPER DUE**