



Be a Peacemaker.  
Transform Your Relationships.™



# Bringing Relational Wisdom Into Your Church

Relational Wisdom® 360

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## BRINGING RELATIONAL WISDOM® INTO YOUR CHURCH

RW360 views itself as a “**bridesmaid**” to the Church, the Bride of Christ. Therefore, our calling is to do all we can to make local churches more beautiful by equipping their leaders and members with relational skills that build unity, strengthen relationships, prevent conflict and reveal the transforming power of Jesus and his gospel.

PDF AT [RW360.ORG/SA-CHURCH](http://RW360.ORG/SA-CHURCH)

### MODERN CHURCHES ARE PRONE TO CONFLICT

From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible is filled with stories of conflict among believers. Our tendency toward conflict was not removed by the advent of Christ, which is why every book in the New Testament addresses conflict. Our modern tendency for conflict reveals itself in these kinds of issues:

- Leadership tensions and divisions
- Elder/staff misalignment or siloed teams
- Doctrinal and cultural controversies
- Marriage, family and parenting tensions
- Social media controversies and gossip cycles
- Abuse of children and counselees
- Lawsuits against pastors and churches
- Compassion fatigue and pastoral burnout
- Forced pastoral exits and church splits

To see *real-life examples* and *sobering statistics* of how painful and costly church conflict can be, see [Eight Church Nightmares](#) and [Strike the Shepherd](#).

### TRANSFORM YOUR CHURCH

The good news is that there are effective ways to prevent or resolve these types of conflicts. When church leaders invest in proven relational and peacemaking skills training, they can bring many benefits to their people. Among other things, this training enables church leaders to:

- Build solidly united and supportive leadership teams
- Unify elders and staff around shared values and mission
- Shepherd members with humility, empathy and wisdom
- Teach members to resolve conflicts personally and privately
- Strengthen marriages and reduce incidents of divorce
- Prevent incidents of abuse

- Reduce exposure to threats of legal liability
- Train Peace Sower Teams to lighten the load on pastors and prevent burnout
- Strengthen members' witness for Christ
- Enhance [community outreach, evangelism and church growth](#)

## SUPPORTING STUDIES

Multiple studies reveal the value of relational skills training in churches.

1. [Strike the Shepherd](#)
2. [Emotional Intelligence for Church and Ministry](#)
3. [Emotional Intelligence and the Prevention of Ministry Burnout](#)
4. [Relational Wisdom Strengthens Both Families and Businesses](#)

## THE SKILLS OF RELATIONALLY WISE LEADERS

RW360 has mediated hundreds of church conflicts (see [examples here](#)). Most of these cases were triggered or escalated by church leaders who had little training in emotional intelligence and peacemaking and made a series of clumsy relational decisions. The following articles illustrate relational skills that would have *prevented* most of these conflicts. These are the skills that leaders in your network can learn today and use to prevent serious conflicts in their churches tomorrow. Relationally wise leaders:

1. [Model humility, teachability and flexibility](#) (Phil. 2:3-4).
2. Realize that [sin can turn strengths into weaknesses](#) (1 Cor. 8:1).
3. Guard against [the seductiveness of power and its potential for abuse](#); (see [Power Causes Brain Damage](#) and [Psychology of Power](#); contrast with [Reagan, Lincoln, RW and You](#), [Lincoln's Relational Wisdom](#) and [Nelson Mandela](#)).
4. Become [skilled peacemakers](#) and [conciliators](#) who [draw on God's wisdom](#), [model confession](#) and inspire the "[Golden Result](#)" (Matt. 5:9; James 3:18; Matt. 7:12).
5. [Always bring the gospel to their people](#) (Rom. 5:1-11).
6. Always provide the [Three P's of Satisfaction](#) (1 Cor. 14:40; Matt. 7:12).
7. Develop and model [empathy and compassion](#) (Col. 3:12).
8. Show how to [redeem an offense](#) (Prov. 15:1).
9. Show their people how [political strife creates opportunities](#) (1 Cor. 10:31-11:1).
10. Use [gentle shepherding](#) and [loving discipline to restore lost sheep](#).
11. Be both [approachable](#) and [accountable](#) (Luke 7:37-38; Matt. 8:9).
12. Constantly [build passport](#) (John 4:7-30).
13. Show how to practice [clarity plus charity](#) (Matt. 7:12).
14. Know how to [defuse explosive meetings](#) (Matt. 7:3-5).
15. Show that there is [a better way to handle](#) abuse (Prov. 28:13).
16. [Debate theological issues](#) candidly yet graciously (Matt. 7:12).

17. Know how to lead [smooth leadership transitions](#) (John 3:30).
18. Show how to apply RW in every challenge of life, including [cancer](#).

## A STRATEGY TO STRENGTHEN YOUR CHURCH

### Step 1: Confirm RW360's Compatibility with Your Church

To make sure that RW360's theology and resources are compatible with your church's theology, ecclesiology, vision and mission, we encourage you to review this background information:

- Our [website homepage](#), which provides an overview of our entire ministry.
- Our [about page](#), which includes links to our history, statement of faith, vision and mission, staff and training clients.
- [Training Endorsements](#), which show the breadth of our theological and professional acceptance.
- [Relational Peacemaking™](#), our practical theology on conflict resolution, which is based on [The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict](#).
- [Relational Wisdom®](#), which is our God-centered, biblically grounded, gospel-driven paradigm for emotional intelligence.

### Step 2: Consider the Cost of Conflict in Your Church

As detailed in [Strike the Shepherd](#) and [8 Church Nightmares](#), conflict imposes major spiritual, relational, witnessing and financial costs on churches every year. For example:

- When churches are embroiled in conflict, gossip and backbiting often leak into their community, giving non-Christian friends, neighbors and coworkers one more reason to ignore Jesus and the gospel. As George Barna observed, "Modern people contend that the greatest proof that God does not exist is the behavior of Christians themselves! In short, the way Christians live and act is solid proof in their minds that what Christians believe is not true."<sup>1</sup>
- Conflict can also exhaust church leaders, as well as ministry volunteers, making it difficult to recruit people to serve in these areas, which places greater burdens on existing volunteers and speeds their burnout.
- Leadership and congregational conflict are the major reason that pastors burn out or resign from ministry, which leads to an attrition rate of 79 pastors leaving their pulpits every week in the U.S. (4,100 pastors per year).
- When a pastor leaves his pulpit and his gift for preaching is silenced for months, years or forever, countless sermons will never pass from his lips to the ears of people who need to hear the gospel.
- The financial cost of replacing a pastor is typically at least \$83,000. Forced pastoral exits that trigger division and other departures can cost up to \$278,000.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See George Barna, [Hypocrisy is Keeping People from the Church](#).

<sup>2</sup> [Elephant in the Boardroom](#), Weese and Crabtree, pp. 29-31.

- Every time a family leaves a church because of unresolved conflict, the church loses, on average, \$2,224 of financial support per year.<sup>3</sup>
- When a pastor is not there to shepherd a married couple through difficult times, they are more likely to divorce, which can have a devastating impact on their children, increasing mental health issues, such as depression, guilt, social fear, developmental regression, anger and suicidal ideation; delinquency and impulsive behavior; poor academic performance; increased likelihood to engage in drug use and sexual activity; difficulty forming attachments and likelihood to leave the church as an adult.<sup>4</sup> The lambs suffer greatly when the sheep fight!

These spiritual, relational and financial costs wreak havoc with churches' discipling and youth ministries, pastoral care, witnessing and evangelistic efforts. Thus, when it comes to conflict in the church, "an ounce of prevention is actually worth a *ton* of cure."

### **Step 3: Confirm the Effectiveness of RW360's Peacemaking Principles**

To see how effective RW360's peacemaking resources and services can be, visit [Christian Conciliation Service](#) and read the real-life examples you'll find through these links:

- [Personal Peacemaking Cases](#)
- [Informal Conciliation Cases](#)
- [Professional Conciliation Cases](#)

Our 70-page ebooklet, [Guiding People Through Conflict](#), provides a summary of the peacemaking principles your church leaders can use to lead similar conciliation efforts.

### **Step 4: Explore Ways to use Relational Wisdom for Evangelism and Church Growth**

In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus called his church to make disciples throughout the earth and teach people to obey all that he has commanded us. Many churches excel at discipling their members on Sunday morning, but we are often less effective at training our people to model and share the gospel with relatives, friends and coworkers the rest of the week.

RW360 has developed a variety of resources that churches can use to strengthen their members' capacity for witnessing, evangelism and church growth, including:

- Our [courses on relational wisdom and relational peacemaking](#) (which can be studied online or in Sunday school and small group studies) are designed to equip believers with relational skills that reflect the transforming power of the gospel in their lives (see John 13:34-35 and 17:20-23).
- Our [PACE \(Professional and Community Engagement\) Program](#) equips believers to use relational wisdom materials to provide free professional development training in secular venues throughout their communities, which can greatly enhance a church's [community engagement, evangelism and church growth](#).

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<sup>3</sup> [Church Giving Statistics](#)

<sup>4</sup> See [13 Saddening Children of Divorce Statistics for 2022](#) and [The Long Term Effects of Divorce on Children](#); and [Statistics: Children and Divorce](#).

- [Using Relational Wisdom for Witnessing](#) is a free course that describes easy ways to use the principles of relational wisdom and peacemaking to share the gospel with relatives, friends and coworkers.
- Individual church members can use our [Transformed Pamphlet](#) to share the gospel with coworkers in an easy and casual manner (see [Six Ways to Use the Transformed Pamphlet](#)).

### **Step 5: Review RW360's Legal Risk Management Resources**

America is one of the most litigious countries in the world. Our culture is also becoming increasingly hostile toward biblical values. Therefore, when a church fails to prevent abuse or carries out culturally rejected practices of pastoral care and personal accountability, it will sometimes receive a letter from a member's attorney threatening to sue the church for negligent hiring and supervision, defamation, invasion of privacy or intentional infliction of emotional distress.

RW360 has developed a unique risk management resource that can dramatically reduce churches' exposure to these kinds of legal threats and strengthen their ability to protect their flocks from abuse and carry out biblically grounded pastoral care with confidence and effectiveness.

To learn more, download [Relational Commitments: Principles for Building Strong Relationships in the Local Church](#). You can gain further protection from lawsuits by using RW360's [conciliation clauses](#) in your contracts and membership covenants.

### **Step 6: Explore the Benefits of Establishing a Peace Sower Team for Your Church**

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

“What you are doing is not good. You and the people with you will certainly wear yourselves out, for the thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to do it alone... I will give you advice, and God be with you .... Look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. And let them judge the people at all times. Every great matter they shall bring to you, but any small matter they shall decide themselves. So, it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you” (Exod. 18:17-23).

This advice is as relevant today as it was thousands of years ago. One of the wisest things your church can do is to identify godly and gifted people in its ranks and train them to serve on an inhouse “Peace Sower Team” that provides your congregation with ongoing peacemaking training, coaching and conciliation services.

These teams are like volunteer fire departments in small rural communities. Conflict resolution is not their full-time job, but when conflict breaks out, trained team members can promptly put on their “peacemaking hats” and work together to extinguish the “flames of conflict.”

To learn how you can build this kind of team in your church, download [Peace Sower Teams](#).

### **Step 7: Request a Consultation to Explore Ways that RW360 Can Help You Bring Relational Wisdom and Peacemaking into Your Church**

If you believe that RW360's resources and training would be of value to your church, please use [this form](#) to request a consultation with our staff so we can answer your questions and explore ways that you can make use of our materials. Depending on your needs and priorities, we can help you develop an implementation plan that includes these kinds of action steps:

- Encourage your leadership team to **read this ebooklet and its linked resources** so you can develop a unified understanding of the ways that RW360's training could strengthen your church and your witness for Christ.
- Request a [Zoom meeting or webinar for your leadership team](#) so RW360 can answer your questions and brainstorm ways that you could make the best use of our resources and training.
- Develop a **customized plan** for personal, leadership and congregational growth ([Download template here](#))
- Request **conflict coaching or conciliation services** to help your church resolve current conflicts (see [Christian Conciliation Service](#)).
- Request **consulting services or professional development training for your staff** to enhance unity, relational skills and productivity (see [Relational Wisdom Strengthens Both Families and Businesses](#)).
- Whet your congregation's appetite for growth in relational wisdom and peacemaking by hosting a **Weekend Kick-Off Event** with an RW360 Instructor that could include a Friday evening session with your leadership team, a [half-day or all-day seminar](#) for your congregation, and a related sermon on Sunday.
- Encourage your members to participate in follow-up **Sunday School classes or small group studies** using RW360's [group study sets](#), which enable people to dig deeper into the principles of relational wisdom and biblical peacemaking and apply these concepts to practical relational issues and realistic conflict scenarios.
- Use RW360's [Young Peacemaker](#) resources to teach peacemaking to your **children**.
- Lead your **teenage students** through RW360's [online course in relational wisdom](#) so they can earn a "**Certificate in Enhanced Emotional Intelligence**," which will strengthen their resumes as they compete for future jobs or college scholarships (see [EI for College and Beyond](#)).
- Encourage your **church leaders to strengthen their relational and peacemaking skills** through our [RW Shepherd Certification Program](#). Some leaders may decide to go on for [Advanced Training and Certification](#) as coaches or conciliators.

- Use RW360's model [Relational Commitments](#) to clarify your pastoral care practices and reduce your church's exposure to threats of legal liability.
- Establish an [in-house Peace Sower Team](#) that can provide ongoing training, coaching and conciliation services for your entire congregation.
- Build a [PACE \(Professional and Community Engagement\) Team](#) that enhances your church's [Outreach, Evangelism and Church Growth](#).

Your church does not need to commit to all these action steps up front. RW360 recommends that you start with two or three of the early exploratory steps to see how our material aligns with your church's mission and priorities. If your leaders and congregation respond positively, you can move on to other relevant action steps.

To help you get started on this process, RW360 would welcome the opportunity to meet with your leadership team via Zoom to develop an initial customized plan for your church.

As stated at the beginning of this document, RW360 views itself as a bridesmaid to the Bride of Christ. Therefore, it would be our privilege to be used by God to make your church more spiritually and relationally beautiful as you seek to reflect the glory of God and await the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

*“Hallelujah!  
 For the Lord our God  
 the Almighty reigns.  
 Let us rejoice and exult  
 and give him the glory,  
 for the marriage of the Lamb has come,  
 and his Bride has made herself ready;  
 it was granted her to clothe herself  
 with fine linen, bright and pure’ –  
 for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.”  
 Revelation 19:6-8*

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