

Comparative Analysis

Winning the Real Battle at Church

by David and Diane Noble

The Peacemaker

by Ken Sande

General Comparison

Winning the Real Battle at Church (WTRBC) sets conflict resolution in the context of spiritual realities (spiritual warfare) and loving, strengthening and protecting the Bride of Christ, the Church. The book closely connects personal peacemaking with church health and effectiveness.

WTRBC uses a highly interactive format employing a variety of learning exercises throughout the book (there is no other resource like this currently available in the area of biblical conflict resolution).

WTRBC employs numerous stories about church life throughout the book to illustrate the material.

WTRBC includes several worksheets for small group use.

WTRBC utilizes numerous biblical passages (extended stories) as well as individual verses to teach biblical principles.

WTRBC defines conflict in two ways: 1) destructive conflict - involves the outward expression of sinful desires and impure motives that break fellowship with God and other people; 2) constructive conflict - happens when God's people, with pure motives, address issues of biblical truth, doctrinal purity, and church discipline (p. 31).

WTRBC describes three primary causes of conflict: 1) Satanic activity (pp. 12-15), 2) human sinfulness (pp. 16-19), and 3) spiritual immaturity (pp. 44-47).

The Peacemaker (TPM) sets conflict resolution in the context of the individual's responsibility to be a peacemaker. Other materials - such as an appendix to the book and the Peacemaking Team materials - address how personal peacemaking can lead to creating a climate of peace in congregations and Christian conciliation.

TPM has a video series for 8 sessions, using a booklet with a few fill-in-the-blank statements and questions for further reflection/group discussion.

TPM uses a real-life story at the beginning of the main parts of the book; a few other stories are in the text.

TPM does not have worksheets for small group use.

TPM uses various verses (but not extended passages) to support points in the book.

TPM defines conflict as a difference of opinion that frustrates someone's goals or desires (p. 29).

TPM describes four primary causes of conflict: 1) misunderstandings, 2) differences, 3) competition over limited resources, and 4) sinful attitudes and habits (p. 30). The book later states that the root cause of conflict is unmet desires in our hearts that control us and become "idols of the heart" (p. 102).

Common Emphases

Glorify God: Glorifying God in conflict means to allow His nature, character and attributes to flow through the believer to others. Believers are called to reflect God's glory in their everyday lives, bringing His presence and power into church conflict (pp. 125-129).

Unity: Unity is a precious, fragile gift, not something we created or deserved. Unity is a gift from God that comes with a tremendous responsibility - God's calling to zealously protect and cultivate it in our churches through the "bond of peace" (Eph.4:1-3) (pp. 48-50).

Repentance and Confession: WTRBC encourages repentance and confession as the biblical remedy to the "ungodly desires that ravage rebellious hearts and tear our churches apart." Readers can discern if they are part of the problem or solution to a conflict (pp.17-19).

Biblical reconciliation: Matt. 18:15-17 outlines the biblical process for reconciliation (pp. 37-40).

Forgiveness: To forgive is to offer grace - undeserved favor - to wrongdoers. It's the conscious, unilateral decision to reject the desire to make others pay for what they have done. Instead, forgiveness asks God to work in the lives of wrongdoers, bringing His judgment, discipline and grace (pp. 41-43).

Speaking the truth in love: WTRBC analyzes the four main ways to respond to conflict and exhorts believers to maintain the biblical balance between truth and love during conflict (pp. 135-141).

Trusting God: WTRBC describes what it means to trust God in difficult times by trusting His truth, methods and timing (pp. 120-123).

Glorify God: Glorifying God in conflict means to bring him praise and honor by showing who He is, what He is like, and what He is doing. The best way to glorify God is to depend on and draw attention to His grace through Jesus Christ. (pp. 31-34; 263-264).

Unity: Through Christ God gives believers peace with Himself, other Christians, and themselves. Unity is more than a key to internal peace; it is an essential element of a believer's witness. Jesus' reputation depends on unity (pp. 43-50).

Repentance and confession: TPM offers an excellent and thorough treatment of the nature of repentance (i.e., to change the way one thinks so that he or she turns away from sin and turns toward God) and confession (the 7 "A's" of confession) (pp. 117-137).

Biblical reconciliation: TPM provides a detailed review of the Matthew 18 process (pp. 185-196).

Forgiveness: Forgiveness is a decision to make four promises (p. 209), a process which reflects the very way God forgives believers. TPM offers excellent ways to overcome unforgiveness and replace hostility and separation with peace and friendship (pp. 204-224)

Speaking the truth in love: TPM offers an extensive, practical list of recommendations for how believers should relate to one another in conflicted situations (pp. 162-184)

Trusting God: TPM shows why God is trustworthy and encourages believers to follow biblical examples of believers who trusted God in difficult times (pp. 59-74).

Winning the Real Battle at Church

The Peacemaker

Content Unique to “Winning the Real Battle at Church”

Spiritual warfare: WTRBC asserts that Christians must understand the nature of spiritual warfare in order to understand the spiritual realities that drive church conflict. The Bible teaches believers how to engage in spiritual warfare victoriously, using the resources that God has provided to prevail over Satan (pp. 12-22).

Biblical submission and obedience: Submission is an attitude that all Christians are commanded to have: “Submit to one another out of reverence to Christ” (Ephesians 5:21). Obedience is an outward action. God’s Word calls believers to be unconditionally submissive and conditionally obedient to God’s delegated authorities in government, the workplace, at home, and in the church. Disobedience to authority does not give believers the right to be disrespectful (unsubmissive) or avoid the consequences of their disobedience. Understanding the relationship between biblical submission and obedience enables believers to resolve conflict in a godly and constructive manner (pp. 67-68; 105-110).

Conflict resolution among church leaders: Week three of WTRBC thoroughly addresses the causes and resolution of conflict among church leaders (pp. 52-74).

Spiritual abuse: Defines what does and does not constitute spiritual abuse and states how to deal with leaders who are spiritually abusive (pp. 65-69).

The nature and role of spiritual leadership: WTRBC clarifies what it means for the pastor to serve as the shepherd of a congregation (pp. 96-100).

False teachers: WTRBC describes the very real threat to the church posed by false teachers and explains how to deal with them biblically (pp. 80-84).

Difficult church members: WTRBC defines several kinds of troublemakers in the church,, how they harm congregations, and how to deal with them (pp. 85-95).

The Lordship of Christ: Devotes one day’s reading to the ways that the lordship of Christ dramatically affects conflict resolution in the church (pp. 101-104).

Experiencing God’s wisdom: Believers who apply God’s truth to their daily lives (i.e., who experience God’s wisdom in practical and meaningful ways) are prepared to address church conflict biblically and effectively (pp. 116-119).

TPM does not mention spiritual warfare, instead devoting four paragraphs to Satan’s activities and influence (pp. 50-51). TPM recommends *Power Encounters* by David Powlison for a biblical perspective on spiritual warfare.

TPM briefly describes how the Bible teaches the need to respect those in authority in the church (pp. 123-124).

TPM does not directly address the topic of conflict among church leaders.

TPM does not address the topic of spiritual abuse by church leaders.

TPM does not address the role of the pastor and how misunderstanding/disregarding that role often creates unnecessary church conflict.

TPM does not address the topic of false teachers in the church.

TPM describes the detrimental effects of sinful attitudes and actions (pp. 121-126) but does not describe how they manifest themselves in the context of congregational life.

TPM does not address the topic of the lordship of Christ.

TPM does not address the topic of applying God’s wisdom to church conflict.

Winning the Real Battle at Church

Loving redemptively: WTRBC exhorts believers to allow God's love to flow through them to others and especially to those who have wronged them. Christians are called to love others as God has loved them: deeply, intentionally and tenaciously (pp. 111-115).

Living in the power of the Holy Spirit: God's Spirit enables Christians to throw off their natural, sinful inclinations and be filled with His fruit (Gal. 5:22-23). The power of the Holy Spirit enables believers to properly glorify God, stay focused on Christ, speak the truth in love, and walk in the Spirit in the midst of a church conflict (pp. 26-29; 142-146).

Perseverance: WTRBC exhorts church leaders and members to remain steadfast through the difficulties and trials of conflict, fixing their eyes on Jesus, holding fast to God's calling on their lives, and remembering Christ's example on the cross (*hupomone* - "endurance") (pp. 147-152).

WTRBC provides an extensive list of "Scriptures for Resolving Conflict" at the end of the book (pp. 182-187).

The Peacemaker

TPM uses one paragraph (p. 171) in the chapter on "Speaking the Truth in Love" (pp. 162-184) to state how believers should ask God to put His love in their hearts and give them His ability to communicate His love with gentleness, patience and genuine concern.

TPM does not explain the role of the Holy Spirit in biblical conflict resolution.

TPM does not have a section at the conclusion of the book encouraging believers to persevere through the hardships of church conflict.

TPM does not have this feature but does offer an "Index of Scripture References" (pp. 313-318).

Content Unique to "The Peacemaker"

WTRBC does not have a conflict delineator like the Peacemaker Ministries "slippery slope" diagram.

WTRBC shows how ungodly desires can devolve into sinful, destructive behaviors in the church (pp. 16-19).

WTRBC does not distinguish between material and personal issues in a conflict.

WTRBC does not address the topic of personal rights.

WTRBC does not address the topics of negotiation and mediation.

WTRBC does not address the topics of restitution and litigation.

WTRBC does not include a pledge or checklist for peacemakers.

Conflict response delineator: TPM offers an excellent description of the "slippery slope" - i.e., the spectrum of possible responses to conflict (pp. 22-29).

TPM elaborates extensively on the development and impact of sinful "idols of the heart" (pp. 102-116)

Conflict clarification: TPM enables readers to distinguish between material and personal issues in a conflict and offers practical ways for the believer to determine if an issue should be pursued (pp. 79-99).

Personal rights: Rights are not for the benefit of the Christian but are privileges given by God, used for His glory to benefit others. Personal rights must be relinquished to advance God's kingdom (pp. 92-98).

Negotiation and mediation: TPM offers detailed and extremely practical instruction regarding principles of negotiation and mediation (pp. 225-246; 270-275).

Restitution and litigation: TPM has appendices that provide principles of restitution and biblical guidance for litigation (pp. 276-286).

The Peacemaker's Pledge and checklist: TPM summarizes the book's content in the forms of a pledge (pp. 259-261) and checklist (pp. 263-269).