

CHURCH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT NETWORK(CLDN)



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UNDERSTANDING AND SHEPHERDING DIFFICULT PEOPLE IN MINISTRY

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PSALM 78:72

“With upright heart he shepherded them and guided them with his skillful hand”

INTRODUCTION

1. Ministry = serving God by serving people.
2. Filled with joy, growth, encouragement.
3. Challenge: dealing with difficult people.
4. Every congregation has individuals who test patience and unity.

THE REALITY OF DIFFICULT PEOPLE

1. Every leader will encounter them.
2. Types:
 - Loud/confrontational,
 - Passive-aggressive,
 - Critical,
 - Manipulative,
 - Unreliable.

ROOT CAUSES OF DIFFICULT BEHAVIOR

1. Often rooted in hurt, insecurity, fear, pride
 2. Resistance to change = fear of losing identity
 3. Criticism = inadequacy or desire for control
 4. Gossip = search for affirmation
- Proverbs 20:5 – 'The purposes of a person's heart are deep waters...'

TYPES OF DIFFICULT PEOPLE (BIBLICAL PORTRAITS)

1. Jonah – Rebel
2. Judas – Betrayer
3. Diotrephes – Know-it-all (3 John 9)
4. Goliath – Bully
5. Korah – Troublemaker
6. Absalom – Manipulator / People-pleaser
7. Thomas – Complainer/Doubter
8. Lucifer – Egotist/Proud

PRINCIPLES FOR DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE

RECOGNIZE THE HUMAN STRUGGLE BEHIND DIFFICULT BEHAVIOR

1. Not the Enemy – Eph. 6:12
2. Like Saul's insecurity or Jezebel's ambition, difficult behaviors often arise from fear, pride, or brokenness.
 - Leaders must see beyond surface actions to underlying needs.
2. Jesus consistently met difficult people with compassion, understanding their deeper struggles (e.g., Pharisees, Judas).

RESPOND WITH GRACE AND PATIENCE, NOT RETALIATION

1. David's mercy toward Saul teaches leaders to resist retaliation and show grace, even when wronged.
2. Christ's patience with imperfect disciples reminds leaders that transformation is a process, not an instant fix.

SET HEALTHY BOUNDARIES AND UPHOLD TRUTH

1. Like Moses dealing with Korah's rebellion, leaders must maintain Godly standards and address destructive behavior firmly and biblically.
2. Balance grace with accountability to prevent enabling harmful actions.

SEEK WISDOM THROUGH PRAYER AND SCRIPTURE

1. Difficult people require wise navigation—leaders should seek God's guidance continually (James 1:5) instead of reacting impulsively.
2. Difficult people can become distractions.
 - Leaders must remember the greater purpose- serving God and His people - so they do not get derailed (Php 3:14).
 - Interceding for difficult individuals transforms our own hearts while inviting God to work in theirs.

PROMOTE RECONCILIATION AND UNITY

1. Pursue peace and restoration as much as possible, following Paul's counsel to resolve conflicts lovingly (Ephesians 4:31-32).
 2. Difficult relationships can strengthen the community when handled with humility and forgiveness.
- Recognize that everyone, including ourselves, falls short (Ephesians 4:32).

TRUST GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY OVER OUTCOMES

1. Some situations will only resolve through God's intervention and timing, as with David and Saul.
- Leaders must trust God rather than manipulate circumstances.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE

DAVID & SHIMEI-2 SAM.16:5-14

1. Respond with Restraint, Not Retaliation

- Despite Shimei's harsh words and curses, David chose not to retaliate or seek immediate punishment (2 Samuel 16:12). He restrained himself, avoiding escalation.
- Christ-centered leaders today should resist reacting impulsively to criticism or provocation, instead responding with calmness and self-control.

RECOGNIZE GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY OVER JUDGMENT

- David perceived Shimei's cursing as part of God's sovereign plan and allowed God to be the ultimate judge (2 Samuel 19:21-23).
- Leaders learn to trust God with justice and vengeance rather than trying to control or punish difficult people themselves.

MAINTAIN FOCUS ON MISSION AND CALLING

- Even amid personal attacks, David continued to focus on his responsibility to preserve the integrity of his kingdom and fulfill God's purposes.
- Leaders should keep their eyes on their mission and values despite opposition or personal offense.

EXHIBIT HUMILITY AND FORGIVENESS

- David's humility enabled him to accept insults without seeking revenge. His later forgiveness of Shimei reflects a Christlike spirit of grace (2 Sam. 19:18-23).
- Leaders need to practice forgiveness and humility, extending grace to difficult people rather than harboring bitterness.

SET BOUNDARIES WISELY

- While initially pardoning Shimei, David's men later advised capturing or punishing him, showing the necessity of wise boundaries (2 Samuel 16:9-11).
- Christ-centered leaders must balance grace with appropriate boundaries to protect the community and leadership integrity.

BECOMING A CHRIST-CENTERED PEACEMAKER

LEAD WITH LOVE, NOT ANGER

- Peacemakers refuse to respond with hate or harsh judgment, choosing instead to love others as Christ loves (John 13:34).
- This means releasing anger and approaching conflicts with a spirit of reconciliation, even when wronged (Matthew 5:21-22).

INITIATE RECONCILIATION

- Christ-centered leaders actively pursue reconciliation, even if they are the one who has been wronged (Matthew 5:23-24).
- Do not ignore or postpone addressing hurts—seek to resolve misunderstandings quickly and sincerely.

FORGIVE FREELY BECAUSE YOU HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN

- Forgiveness is at the core of peacemaking. Jesus teaches, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy" (Matthew 5:7).
- Leaders remember they have received mercy from God, and extend grace to others even if not deserved.

PROMOTE UNITY AND HARMONY

- Peacemakers foster understanding and unity, working to resolve disputes and bridge divides within their teams or communities (Romans 12:18).
- This requires humility, gentleness, and active listening in all interactions, following Paul's command to "pursue peace with everyone" (Hebrews 12:14).

REFLECT JESUS' EXAMPLE AND LEGACY

- Jesus modeled peace by reconciling sinners to God through sacrifice and love. Leaders imitate Him by building, lifting, and encouraging others, even through difficulties.
- Peacemaking is not simply avoiding conflict but embracing healing, justice, and relationship repair.

GLORIFY GOD THROUGH PEACEFUL LEADERSHIP

- True peacemakers aim to glorify God in every conflict and interaction (1 Corinthians 10:31).
- Wisdom, patience, and prayer should guide leaders, trusting God to bring good out of difficult situations.

PRACTICAL TAKEAWAYS

- Practice patience and self-control when insulted or opposed.
- Pray for God's justice rather than seeking personal retaliation.
- Stay mission-focused, not distracted by detractors.
- Offer forgiveness where possible but maintain healthy limits.
- Seek wise counsel when dealing with ongoing difficult people.