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Resolving Everyday Conflict [review] / Sande, Ken and Kevin Johnson

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cultural perspective of all players. When focusing on transcultural legal activities, from contract to litigation, that mindfulness becomes obligatory” (p. 61). Though organizational leaders face hazards of operating across differing legal and cultural systems, I agree with the writers that their only safety is to choose the domain of rule of law nations. The writers posit that operating within the rule of law nations will differ markedly from those in non-rule of law nations; hence, operating in the rule law nations is more predictable and reliable.

As much as I agree with the writers in their candid stance on diversity, I sensed some bias. Though some authors hailed from other countries, most if not all are living in the United States or have lived here before. As a result, their writings emerge from an American perspective. The following assertion was made in the book, which I believe is not wholly true as far as Africa is concerned:

Difference between Western, Asian, African and Arab leadership: Western leadership theories place a high value on empowerment, coaching, performance management, rationality, delegation, vision and strategic direction. In contrast, Asian, Arab and African countries place more emphasis on directive and authoritarian leadership styles. Respect and obedience are expected from subordinates and harmony is a key value of leadership in Asian, Arab and African leaders (p.117).

As an African myself (I'm from Ghana), I think this strong assertion lacks credibility. If they had talked about some Asian, Arab and African countries, they would have been accurate enough. But this broad statement is as inaccurate as it is unfortunate.

One of the key issues in integrating cultural awareness into a leadership curriculum design is that the leadership curricula is built on Western leadership models, based on Western research and examples, and focuses primarily on Western leaders (p. 117). This creates the impression that the indigenous values of non-Westerners render them unsuitable for leadership. This conveys to international students that the West is best, and, if they conform to the Western paradigms, they will be successful leaders (p. 117). This mentality is faulty. The author stated that “there is a heavy reliance on US leadership literature due to lack of material published by non-US sources” (p. 117). Could not the authors have searched more carefully for more information from places other than the United States alone?

In conclusion, despite my reservations, I believe Contemporary Leadership and Intercultural Competence is logically coherent and that the contributors remained fully focused on the purpose of the book which was to explore “the role of diversity and intercultural issues in the modern workplace and how diversity can be used to build successful organizations” (p. 3). They appear to have done justice to the fundamental issues of cultural diversity and cultural competence by providing a concise and pragmatic analysis to support their work.

RESOLVING EVERYDAY CONFLICT

Ken Sande & Kevin Johnson
Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books (2011)
Paperback, 220 pages
Reviewed by NATAL GARDINO

Resolving Everyday Conflict, by Ken Sande and Kevin Johnson, deals

competently with the common and often difficult issue of interpersonal conflicts. The lead author, Ken Sande, an attorney and a Christian, has succeeded well in dealing with this line of expertise, having authored best-selling books and founded The Peacemaker ministry (www.peacemaker.net). His book *The Peacemaker* has been translated into a dozen languages. His co-author, Kevin Johnson, also an author (see www.kevinjohnsonbooks.com), pastors Emmaus Road Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Acknowledging that “conflict is a normal part of life” (p. 7), the authors target Christians with the purpose of helping any person who might face an interpersonal conflict to have the knowledge and the skills to be stronger than their impulses and emotions and resolve the conflict in a way that may “please and honor God” (p. 8).

The focus of the book may be summed up in one statement: conflicts must be faced, resolved and healed by the power of God through peacemaking rather than escaping to either of two extremes: fleeing, which is actually “peacefaking,” or attacking, which is actually “peacebreaking.” This statement, beyond showing at a glance how creative and communicative the authors are in transmitting their message, also shows that they present God as the only Enabler who can transform us into His healing and peacemaker agents.

The authors show that peoples’ responses to conflict resemble a hill, a “slippery slope” whose top, though more difficult to achieve, is the ideal place upon which to stand—the peacemaking approach. However, it is actually easy to slip and fall toward one of two extremes of conflict: fleeing or attacking.

Many people will agree that

attacking is generally not the best answer to an interpersonal conflict. But contrary to what many may think, fleeing (avoiding) is not the best solution for a conflict. In doing so, the healing of the parties is avoided as well. The book shows how fleeing is abandoning the problem and leaving it with someone else, even though we too are part of the conflict.

I appreciate the simple manner in which the book is presented, even while it goes deep on the importance of forgiving and healing when it comes to interpersonal conflicts. Another enjoyable aspect is use of the Bible in specific contexts in a manner that allow it to shine new with significant meaning for the Christian who is facing conflict. The Christian life is not, as they say, only a “ticket to heaven” (p. 27) without any power to transform that life. The authors affirm that “we miss God’s great plans for us if we think of the Gospel only as the key to eternal life” (p. 28). The Christian life is experienced now, on earth, and includes forgiving and maintaining healthy relationships.

Also interesting is the manner in which the authors present their arguments with logical appeal and with impactful intelligent phrases, promoting a brainstorm of reflection along with the reading and convincing the reader of the deep importance of the issue of conflict resolution. For example, on the issue of forgiveness they write that “forgiveness is the opposite of excusing” (p. 89), meaning that it does not diminish the ugliness of the offense, simply saying something like “it was not such a big issue” (pp. 88-89). Also, “forgiveness isn’t a feeling. It’s an act of the will” (p. 88). Furthermore, on forgiving and forgetting, they say that “forgiveness isn’t a matter of whether we forget, but of how we remember” (p. 89). Forceful yet effective phrases like this appear

naturally throughout the book, dealing with the most different issues regarding conflict and resolution.

I concur with the caution that we cannot fix ourselves suddenly as “peacemakers” just because we know “what” to do. We actually need a “power source” to enable us to accomplish the heavenly ideal. This shows the Godward direction of the book, confirmed by use of Scripture that shines in a special way in their specific contexts. This is evidenced in their observation that the peacemaker approach has “four G’s” to be followed in order to reach the goal which is the healing of the conflict: 1) Glorify God, 2) Get the log out of your eye, 3) Gently restore, and 4) Go and be reconciled. Such steps are fully based on the tried and true instructions that are found in the Bible but for some reason seem to be hidden from Christians when it comes to “who will win the conflict.”

Being experienced as an attorney, Sande says that even if a person rejects litigation in a court, it can still be pursued apart from court in how we deal with relatives or friends. A person may establish his position on a conflict and try to pull everybody to his side, making them “understand” his correctness or the damage he has suffered in the situation and finally “resolve” the problem. The result is that “while litigation might resolve a problem, it never achieves reconciliation” (p. 41). Reconciliation, as a healing of the conflict, is the real solution.

The book made me think in a new light on the necessity of resolving conflicts rather than avoiding them by fleeing. It convinced me to experience climbing the difficult slippery slope to reach that godly ideal of peacemaking, which will glorify God and represent His own attitude toward conflict.

In the end, I believe the book

achieves its goal: to instruct Christians who face interpersonal conflicts—be it in churches, families, or workplaces—on how to find resolution by the word and power of God. Instead of using labored words or difficult theological or psychological terms, it was written brilliantly, in such a way that anyone can understand it, with high-impact phrases and well-developed arguments that go to the point. Thus *Resolving Everyday Conflict* successfully fulfills the main purpose announced in its introduction, which is to teach the reader “God’s way of resolving conflict” through reconciliation and healing. The reader will come away striving to be a peacemaker rather than a “peacefaker” or a “peacebreaker.”

THE MOUNTAIN WITHIN: LEADERSHIP LESSONS AND INSPIRATION FOR YOUR CLIMB TO THE TOP

By Herta von Stiegel

New York: McGraw-Hill (2011)

Paperback, 229 pages

Reviewed by ERHARD H. GALLOS

Herta von Stiegel’s monograph, *The Mountain Within*, is based on an expedition she led in July 2008 to climb Africa’s Mount Kilimanjaro. A group of 28 multi-national climbers, including seven disabled people, set out on the tour. Against incredible odds, nearly 60 percent of the group made it to the summit. Though this expedition was recorded on film and has become an award-winning documentary, in her book von Stiegel narrates not just the expedition but also the invaluable leadership lessons she learned, all within the context of preparing for the expedition, failing to accomplish the goal a decade ago,