

## HIDDEN CONFLICT

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When I wrote last we discussed conflict within the ministry. The kind of conflict I wrote about was very easy to recognize and I went into detail about how to prevent conflict within the ‘up front’ volunteers in your church. There is however, conflict less easy to recognize in ministry, a hidden conflict of sorts.

I recently began to dread attending one of my small groups made up of some of my favorite couples in our ministry. I wondered why I felt that way and began to try to identify exactly what was going on.

I realized it was the kind of hidden conflict our pastor has talked about before. The kind of conflict that really has no source of beginning, but is just an underlying feeling you have when around certain people.

I realized the feeling of dread I was experiencing was caused by people who wanted to control or influence the leadership decisions being made.

What I was experiencing was a constant assault of suggestions and ‘kind’ critiques that kept me from being able to disengage from my work and enjoy myself. They were not necessarily unkind, just people taking advantage of a trapped leader who had to listen to them.

I confronted one such suggestion recently that was made by a husband who thought his wife (a singer at church) should stand in front of the guitarists – not back on the stage. I told him I was shocked that he would say such a thing and pointed out that it sounded arrogant and prideful. He immediately apologized and things have been better lately, although he occasionally continues with his little suggestive barbs at small group when no one else is listening.

When in a position of leadership, this comes with the territory. As a leader it is our responsibility to look for teaching opportunities at all times. Even in places we should be able just to disengage and relax. This is one of the heavy prices of leading. I tell God constantly that it was never my intention to lead and I would be fine anytime He wants me to just be ‘part of the team’ but so far He hasn’t made that change.

The solution to hidden conflict is simply to identify it and confront it. Not a fun part of the job. The other requirement of battling hidden conflict is NOT to hang on to it as if it were a personal failure. Give it to our mighty God and stand strong in the position to which He has called you.

I would be very curious to know, do any of you church leaders out there know the feeling I have described? Knowing we are not alone in these ongoing little battles brings great encouragement!

