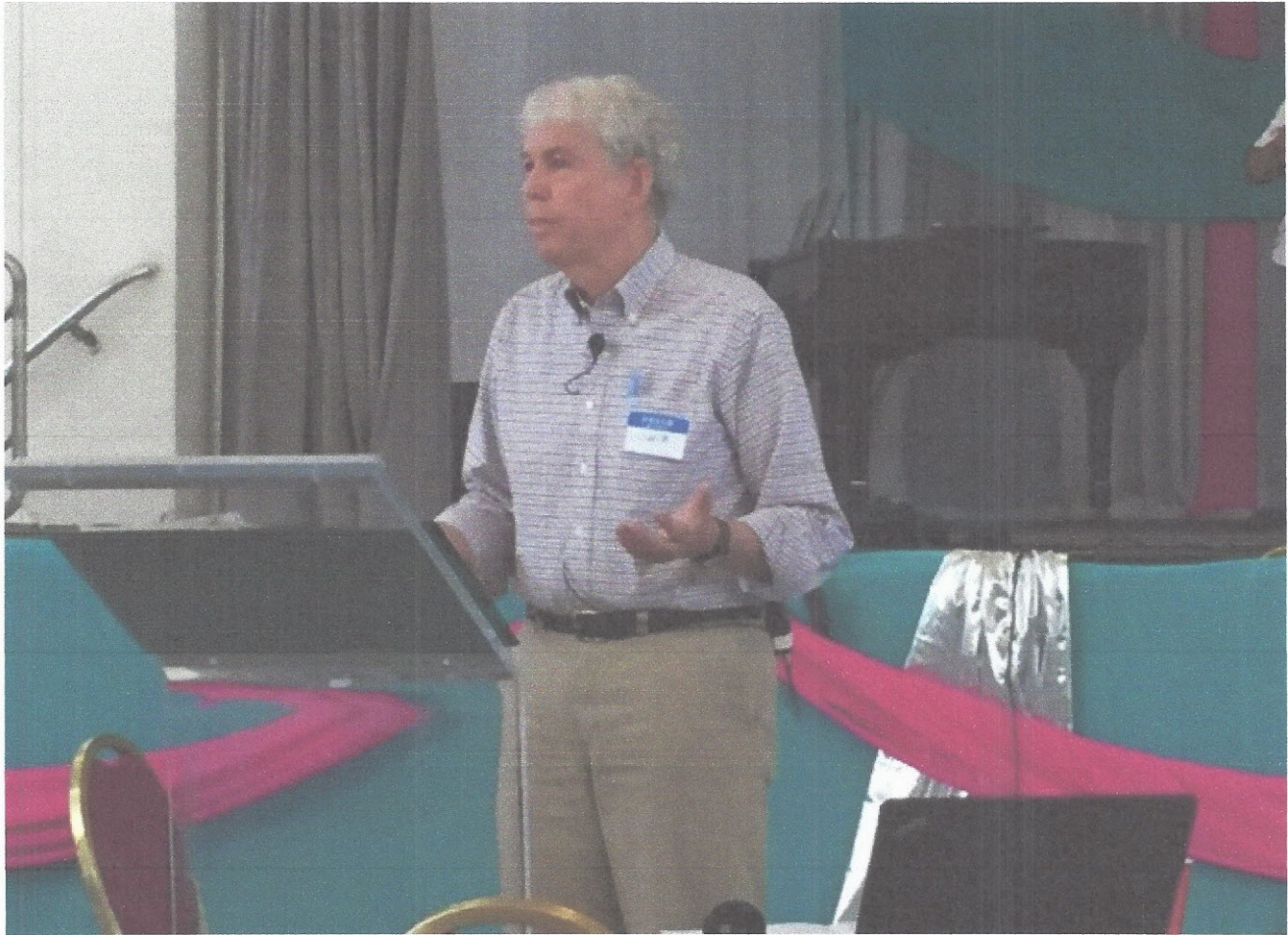


Analyzing emotions, improving relationships

Seminar offers skills to resolve conflicts at home or on the job

By Carol Winker, *Cayman Compass*, 7 April 2016



Chip Zimmer leads a seminar on relational wisdom.

Google the phrase "conflict resolution" and more than 14 million references will pop up in less than a second. Hit "healthy relationships" and the search engine will provide 3,110,000 sources for consideration.

The interest in these issues is obvious. So is the need for ways to deal with them.

Chip Zimmer, who addressed both topics in a seminar on Saturday, pointed out that relationships are fueled by emotions, both positively and negatively. "They can bring us our greatest pleasures and also cause us our greatest pain. The Bible provides a highly effective way to deal with relationships and the emotions that fuel them," he said.

The seminar, which took place at the Family Life Centre, attracted 50 people from a cross-section of Cayman's Christian community, organizer Orren Merren reported. It was sponsored by the Church of God Chapel in George Town. Given its success, the church will continue to advance a biblical peacemaking and relational wisdom focus within the congregation. "However, we will also continue to be available to serve the entire community in Cayman," Mr. Merren pledged.

The seminar, *Discovering Relational Wisdom*, was designed by Ken Sande, founder of *Peacemaker Ministries* and *Relational Wisdom 360*, both of which are non-denominational para-church organizations.

During Saturday's presentations, Mr. Zimmer explained that "relational wisdom" is living out the two commandments: the ability to love God with all your heart and to love your neighbor as yourself. Relational wisdom may also be viewed as a "relational operating system," like Windows or Mac OS, that impacts every aspect of our lives, including marital intimacy, job performance and inter-personal relationships, he said.

Seminar participants were able to learn key skills for discerning interests and emotions in themselves and in others, and for using these insights to reduce conflict and to build more healthy relationships, particularly in their families, voluntary organizations and workplaces.

Reducing conflicts between people can result in lower turnover of employees or volunteers in any organization and can improve team-building and productivity, Mr. Zimmer explained.

Peacemaking is a special application of relational wisdom, drawing people back inside the circle of healthy relationships. Biblical peacemaking also provides a practical systematic theology for resolving everyday conflicts that arise in the course of real life, he said.

Mr. Zimmer, who has more than 30 years of experience as a peacemaker, has taught peacemaking in two dozen countries. His teaching tools are not typical; they even included analysis of clips from Hollywood films.

Participant Erica Gordon said afterward, "I found the use of short video clips from popular films to be very instructive in illustrating the emotional content of inter-personal relationships. I also enjoyed the time afforded us to discuss these video clips in small groups and then to share some comments with the larger group."

Ms. Gordon, an assistant professor at the University College of the Cayman Islands, observed, "Overall, the multi-sensory approach deployed in the RW [Relationship Wisdom] seminar made it quite manageable and easy for the participants to follow."

Eustace Joseph, a senior police officer, shared his insights from attending the relational wisdom seminar. "I found it to be full of wise teaching for me personally and for me working in a group setting of any sort. By attending and participating in this seminar, anyone can find useful ways to improve their inter-personal relationships whether at home, at work or at play," he said.

Senior Pastor Alson Ebanks described the seminar as "a useful resource to bring God into the equation of what social science teaches us about emotional intelligence. Any individual or organization could benefit greatly from climbing the RW learning curve."

Pastor Torrance Bobb of First Assembly of God gave an example of a practical tip he learned from the seminar. "When we find ourselves in the midst of an emotionally charged situation, we do indeed need to take time to respond more wisely than if we do so immediately and at a purely emotional level. Mr. Zimmer suggested first taking a sip of water or the like to allow time for wiser reasoning to take place in our brain."

Pastor Bobb concluded, "I found the RW teaching to be very practical, meaningful and down-to-earth. If we implement what we have learned, it can make a real difference in people's lives." He invited Mr. Zimmer to speak to his congregation the following evening.

Mr. Zimmer also brought a message based on relational wisdom during the Sunday morning service at the Church of God Chapel in George Town.

Another seminar participant was Pastor Dave Hazle, former minister of Elmslie United Church. Pastor Hazle said he finds the relational wisdom lessons particularly relevant and helpful when counseling people who are in conflict. "Establishing and maintaining healthy relationships is a constant challenge. The RW materials are a great help, especially toward preventing conflict," he said. According to Mr. Merren, this was the first time relational wisdom has been presented in Cayman.

Any other congregation or organization interested in inviting Mr. Zimmer for another interactive seminar in Cayman may contact him by email at Chip@rw360.org or phone him at (406) 256-2381.