

Well-Intentioned Dragons

Qualifications of a pastor: the mind of a scholar, the heart of a child, and the hide of a rhinoceros. - Stuart Briscoe

The goal in handling dragons is not to destroy them, not merely to disassociate from them, but to make them disciples. Even when that seems an unlikely prospect... (40 of 208)

Anyone who's involved in leading a church recognizes the irony: the community that gathers in the name of Jesus Christ is often populated by problem people who make things much, much harder for everyone. In this book, we call them "well-intentioned dragons."

Dragons, of course, are fictional beasts—monstrous reptiles with a lion's claws, a serpent's tail, a bat's wings, and scaly skin. They exist only in the imagination.

But there are dragons of a different sort, decidedly real. In most cases, though not always, they do not intend to be sinister; in fact, they're usually quite friendly. But their charm and earnestness belie their power to destroy. (11 of 208)

Dwayne and Virginia Wilson represent only one kind of well-intentioned dragon, a complex and durable species. Many other kinds have been sighted within the church—some merely nuisances, others serious threats to church life.

Before looking specifically at some of the most common tactics of dragons, it might be helpful to catalog some of the varieties inhabiting the church. All of the following have been reported by working pastors. (41 of 208)

Dragon Species

The Wet Blanket. If you've heard the phrase "It's no use trying" or its close cousin "It's too much effort," you've probably spotted the Wet Blanket. These people have a negative disposition that's contagious. They spread gloom, erase excitement, and bog down the ministry. Their motto: "Nothing ventured, nothing lost." (43 of 208)

The Entrepreneur. Just the opposite of the Wet Blanket, the Entrepreneur is enthusiastic. He's the first to greet visitors at the church and invite them to his home. Unfortunately, in addition to being enthusiastic about the church, he's equally eager to sell them vitamins, bee pollen, cleaning products, or whatever product he's currently offering.

"We were losing people because they felt victimized,"... (43 of 208)

The Drill Instructor. This is the person who comes from the union steward school of diplomacy and speaks with an exclamation point instead of a period. He (or she) is right, and everyone else is wrong... (43 of 208)

There are many others too numerous to mention in detail:

- The Busybody, who enjoys telling others how to do their jobs.
- The Sniper, who avoids face-to-face conflict but picks off pastors with potshots in private conversation, such as the cryptic "Be sure and pray for our pastor. He has some problems, you know."
- The Bookkeeper, who keeps written record of everything the pastor does that "isn't in the spirit of Christ"... (45 of 208)

(Ministering to Problem People in Your Church: What to Do with Well-Intentioned Dragons by Marshall Shelley, Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House Publishers, Kindle, 2013 [1985]; Previously published as Well-Intentioned Dragons)