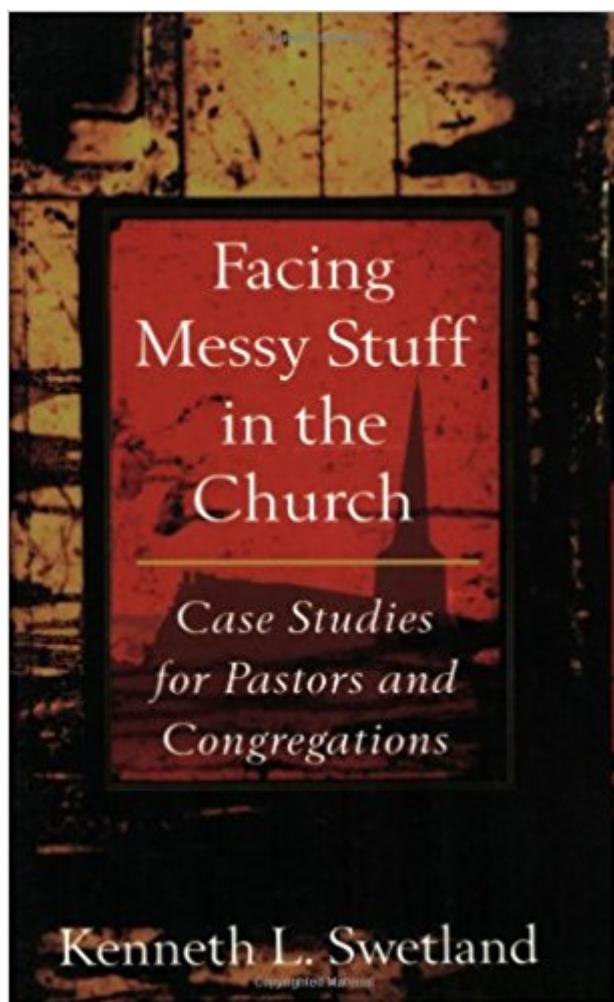


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# Facing Messy Stuff In The Church: Case Studies For Pastors And Congregations



## **Synopsis**

A collection of fourteen case studies that give church leaders practical and realistic preparation to handle tough issues like sexual harassment, pornography, divorce, and the effects of abortion. Includes discussion questions and a bibliography of additional resources.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

"Swetland, who teaches pastoral counseling at Gordon-Cromwell Seminary, has compiled real case studies— changing only people's and churches' names— to offer a candid look at thorny pastoral problems. His profiles don't offer solutions, but examine sin's skein-like messiness to show what church leadership faces and how pastors can take action. The problems are often more complicated than they appear. Issues range from the repeatedly repentant alcoholic to the mild-mannered sexual deviant who is an expert liar to the upstanding citizen and model church member who is an adulterer. . . . Recommend this book to pastors and Christian counselors who aren't looking for easy answers." (Gerry Wisz CBA Marketplace 2005-01-02)"Combining accessibility with scholarly depth, Jesus Under Fire examines the authenticity of the words, actions, miracles, and resurrection of Jesus and presents compelling evidence for the traditional biblical teachings." (Rick Warren's Ministry Toolbox 2005-04-01)"Facing Messy Stuff lends itself to group studies. It would be well for local pastors' organizations to do this among themselves using Swetland's book as a text. In addition, this is a reference book that should always be near the pastor's fingertips. A noted chaplain who works in the San Francisco Bay area, Rev. Carson Curcini,

after looking over the notes for this review, stated: ""This is a very important book for pastors...especially for this day and age that we live in."" To that this minister can give a hearty ""Amen!"" Facing Messy Stuff in the Church should be in every pastor's and chaplain's library." (Rev. Austin Miles Churchquest.com 2005-06-01)"Reading this book by Kenneth L. Swetland seemed a little like watching those daytime talk shows [`a la Dr. Phil, Oprah or The Jerry Springer Show]. Each chapter is a well-crafted presentation of some disturbing and [unfortunately] highly relevant case studies." (Ministries Today 2005-07-01)"These are the problems that are coming up with increased regularity in churches today in a world of chaos and confusion. And pastors and chaplains must be equipped to handle them spiritually, professionally, and most importantly of all--effectively. This book teaches how to deal with these problems -- as the author states [and teaches] --1

Ministry is messy business. As a pastor or church leader, you interact regularly with people struggling with depression, sexual harassment, pornography, divorce, the effects of abortion, and other serious issues. You are called upon to work through these crises, but may feel very unequipped to do so. In this collection of fifteen case studies, Kenneth Swetland prepares church leaders to deal with the messy stuff head on, rather than merely doing damage control after the problems have erupted. Each chapter presents a real-life crisis and leads the reader to work through careful biblical responses to it. Included are discussion questions for each case study, an appendix for discussion facilitators, and a bibliography of additional resources on the particular issues raised. Kenneth L. Swetland (D.Min., Andover Newton Theological School) has been academic dean and professor of pastoral ministry at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary for more than thirty-two years, and is now Campus Chaplain. He is the author of *The Hidden World of the Pastor: Case Studies on Personal Issues of Real Pastors*.

This is a interesting text. It provides no solutions, but simply messy situations and questions for discussion. Swetland is more graphic in his descriptions than some may appreciate.

its a tough subject matter sometimes - but very interesting - like that it is presented as case studies

This book is well written and provides a series of case studies challenging readers as to how to handle various modern day ethical issues. We used this text as part of a masters level course at seminary. I can see this book as being used for an excellent series of topical Bible studies on issues

that challenge Christians today.

Chapter by chapter, this book throws aspiring pastors into scenarios they could never anticipate. I found this very helpful during my seminary years, as it taught me that I can't be ready for everything. On the other hand, it did challenge me to think through my responses with a Biblical filter instead of a knee-jerk emotional reaction. It's short, it's easy to read, and it's impossible to do perfectly. Welcome to ministry!

The fifteen case studies referenced in *Facing the Messy Stuff in the Church* are absolutely overwhelming. In general, the seeming disconnectedness of the various church antagonists identified from revealed Scripture, not to mention the prevailing inability of the various churches to respond appropriately is unthinkable. In some instances, I found myself emotionally and physically shaken at the chronic abuse permitted, or at minimum enabled under the steeple of the church. It is difficult to believe that those called of God would even attempt to minister under such conditions for extended periods of time. In general, I sense this as somewhat symptomatic of latent apathy and disregard on the part of many numbered among church leadership. Unfortunately, the church leadership is often vulnerable in many instances where we find those with a social-club mentality who clearly are less than diligent about the integrity of our Lord's work in the local church. Mutual accountability in the give-and-take of ministry in a local context is patently absent. Much needed resolution and reconciliation in these matters should be properly motivated and pursued by those jealous for the unity and sacredness of the work at hand. The repetitive instances observed throughout the interviews contained throughout this reading are to some degree proof-positive of a systemic lack of self-awareness within the ranks of ministry as well as scant measures of accountability to safeguard the work of the church. A frequent post-failure remark is, "we didn't really know our pastor." The discovery is often the result of a cognitive bias commonly exercised when one's judgments of a person's character is influenced by one's overall impression of him or her, regardless of their "true" identity. This is recognized outside of the context of church ministry as the "halo effect," or "halo error." This also ventures into the subject matter of cognitive dissonance where "being" or professed values, are not in proper alignment with "doing" or expressed values. In too many instances, the antagonist is permitted to live in isolation with little or no accountability whatsoever, other than presenting a particular text on a regular basis. This is further complicated when the glory of God is frequently compromised in order to preserve the glory of men. The social-standing of the church within the community is often given priority, rather than safeguarding

the name of Christ. To further complicate matters, the church uniformly accepts the Matthew 18:15 in principle but poorly understands and therefore improperly executes this in the "real world." Eswine, in *Sensing Jesus* suggests, "Our spiritual inability to remain with a people in a place as a family through thick and thin when not everything is how we prefer it or want it becomes apparent. We do not believe we need to stay in a place in which our feelings and needs are incompletely met." In far too many of these accounts, the sanctification process in which we are all currently involved was not allowed to come to completion. The unresolved problem simply took another address with different unsuspecting actors. I am increasingly concerned that the behavior identified in this book is running unchecked through the universal church. I am convinced this will only be properly addressed when those in leadership deliberately and strategically choose to initiate careful measures to develop healthy steps of personal accountability within the role of those called to shepherd. This can only be accomplished through loving community who together rally with the mutual goal of glorifying God with our lives through a visibly healthy work and testimony of the local church. The case-studies clearly validate that "preachers are people too - only more so!"

A good read, certainly helpful in processing the messiness of life today.

Great book and read! Many great true stories and how we can consider them and minister to them when they are in the messy stuff.

must read for congregational leader

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