



Practical Peacemaking – Part 1

I. INTRO

- A. Most historians agree that Abraham Lincoln's three most famous speeches are: 1) The Gettysburg Address, 2) His second Inaugural Address, and 3) His "House Divided" speech given when he was running for a senate seat against Stephen Douglas in 1858.
1. Here is the most famous portion of the speech: "A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure, permanently, half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved — I do not expect the house to fall — but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other."
 2. Like the Civil War, families and churches that are divided will not be able to stand.
- B. *"And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand"* -- Mark 3:25
- C. To protect against a "divided house" we must become all seek to become *peacemakers*. Last week we looked at Mat 5:9: *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God"* -- Matthew 5:9 We asked two questions: 1) What is a "peace-maker"? And 2) Who are the "sons of God"?
1. We defined peace according to the Hebrew understanding of peace: Biblical SHALOM means a universal flourishing, wholeness and delight; a rich state of affairs...the webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in equity, fulfillment, and delight. SHALOM is the way things ought to be. --Cornelius Plantinga
 2. A peacemaker = "A founder or promoter of peace"¹
 3. "Sons of God" carries a two-fold meaning:

¹ M.R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament, Vol. I*, MacDonald Publishing, reprint of 2nd ed 1888: 30.

- a. Jesus, in this “beautiful attitude” is elevating the status of women to that of sons. Jesus is addressing the ancient patriarchal system that devalued women. Today we have a theological continuum that reflects different views on the roles of men and women in the home and in the church.
 - 1) One theological view is called **Complementarian** and the other is called **Egalitarian**.
 - 2) We will look at each of these views as a church in the days ahead, but what we said last week is, The Bible is very clear that BOTH views begin with males and females being identical before God in essence, worth, and personhood.
 - 3) KHC in recent years has migrated toward a Complementarian view where males and females have complementary yet distinct roles in the home and in the church.
- b. So, a “Son of God” is one of the highest complements that we could ever pay another person. Those who are *peacemakers* are those whose actions remind other people of God. There is credibility in their words and in their life.²

D. Today, I’d like to address the idea of Practical Peacemaking – Part 1.

II. BODY

A. So how do we become peacemakers?



² Adapted from Mother Theresa.

B. Peacemaking is both an art and a science and there are, at least, three practical steps to resolving inevitable conflict that I would like us to consider today” 1) The REASON for conflict, 2) How we REACT to conflict, and 3) How peacemakers RESOLVE conflict.

C. **The REASON for conflict:**

1. If we're going to overcome conflict in our lives, it will help us to understand first of all the reason that it's there. The Bible is very clear about this – in fact it's almost too blunt: “Do you know where your fights and arguments come from? They come from the selfish desires that war within you.” -- James 4:1
2. We have these competing selfish desires that are at war within each one of us. And then we go and put people together in relationships!!
 - a. Somebody said, When two people get married they become one – the trouble starts when they try to decide *which one*.
 - b. We can see this even in the little things of life. This is why they have duel controls on electric blankets. Linda and I bought a new car last year and one of non-negotiables was dual climate control, because she's always cold and I'm always warm -- so it's a whole other temperature an arms length away!
 - c. Couples can be conflicted over the tiniest things: Should towels be folded in half or thirds? Should the toilet paper loop over or under?
3. Conflict is inevitable. It's not only because we're selfish but because we're different.
4. Another reason for conflict is our competing desires. Once you understand that, you're ready to take a look at how to respond to the inevitable conflict that happens in our relationships.

D. **How we REACT to conflict**

1. “Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!” - -Psalm 139:23 David is asking God to help him deal with his own motives and heart attitudes. Did you know that God is not as concerned as much about WHAT we do as He does about WHY we do what we do?
2. With God's help let's look at four overlapping reactions to conflict in our lives. (*Making Peace* by Jim Van Yperen):
 - a. **Passive Responders**

- 1) All conflict is wrong and must be endured quietly; they surrender all, including truth
- 2) Keeping silent is a passive form of lying

b. **Evasive Responders**

- 1) Deliberately vague or ambiguous, avoiding, escaping
- 2) This is also conflict avoidant
- 3) Their, sometimes subconscious, goal is to sidetrack and confuse

c. **Defensive Responders**

- 1) Tend to use spiritual authority for self-protection or personal gain
- 2) Desire for control rather than openness
- 3) Focused on protecting, promoting, or justifying oneself
- 4) A leader does not defend

d. **Aggressive Responders**

- 1) Very capable leaders who attract a loyal following tend to be, or become, aggressive responders
- 2) Aggressive responders view all conflict as about power
- 3) Bold and assertive, often “Type A” personalities
- 4) Here’s the BIG problem: Not personally broken

E. **How peacemakers RESOLVE conflict.** There are many practical steps that the Bible speaks about that will help us to resolve the inevitable conflicts in our lives...

1. Become a sincere follower of Jesus Christ. (End your conflict with God.)
 - a. *“As parts of the same body, our anger against each other has disappeared. For both of us have been reconciled to God and so the feud ended at the cross”* --Ephesians 2:16
 - b. Paul is talking about conflict between nations here but it applies between people too. The feud ended at the cross. God is able to solve the conflicts in our lives.
2. Become a responder, not a reactor (How?)
 - a. Prayer. Before you react to the other person, talk to God about it. Often times, that may resolve the conflict. You may find it’s mostly your problem. *“If you want to know what God wants you to do ask Him and He will gladly tell you”* --James 1:5

- b. Seek out wisdom (become accountable; mentoring constellation)
“Where no wise guidance is, the people fall, but in the multitude of counselors there is safety” --Proverbs 11:14
- 3. Seek first to understand – and then to be understood (or, learning how to listen)
 - a. *“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others” --Philippians 2:3-4*
 - b. The transliterated Greek word for “interests” is “skopeo”. It’s the same word we get the words microscope or telescope from and it means to focus in on the other person.
- 4. Be in touch, or get in touch, with your own issues – and own them.
 - a. *“Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?” --Matthew 7:3*
 - b. Logs, or even chips, create blind spots.
 - c. Where do you feel the most challenged by reading *Making Peace*??
- 5. Establish Guidelines
 - a. *“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” --Psalm 119:105*
 - b. Matthew 18:15-17 becomes for us a guideline for resolving conflict:
*“If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along... -
 --Matthew 18:15-17*
 - c. Sometimes, we need to ask for help...
 - 1) Forbearance vs. healthy biblical boundaries... *“Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience [or, forbearance, longsuffering] and teaching” --2 Timothy 4:2*
 - 2) Churches (really, all organizations – and families) need “grievance procedures”
- 6. Use appropriate language

- a. *“A gentle tongue is a tree of life...”* -- Proverbs 15:4a
- b. *“If anyone thinks himself to be [Godly], and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man’s religion is worthless”* -- James 1:26
- c. Some basic skills:
 - 1) Practice reflective listening (mirroring – or paraphrasing).
 - 2) Validate the other person’s feelings (feelings are neither right nor wrong)
 - 3) Body language is important -- 55% of communication is body language, 38% is the tone of voice, and 7% is the actual words spoken.
 - 4) Never use the words *always* or *never*.
- d. Some phrases that help with conflict resolution...
 - 1) *“Help me to understand...”*
 - 2) *“Can you tell me more about that?”*
 - 3) *“How did you feel about that?”*
 - 4) *“That’s got to be hard.”*
 - 5) *“You make sense to me because...”*
 - 6) *“I can understand that.”*

III. CONCLUSION

- A. *“But **the goal of our instruction is love** from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith”* --1 Tim 1:5 (emphasis added)
- B. Conflict itself is inevitable – and it’s neutral. It is how conflict is managed that determines whether it will have positive or negative consequences on our relationships. A well-managed conflict can actually strengthen relationships, increase motivation, and contribute to our personal growth.