

Are You A Peacemaker?

Matthew 5:9

Aristotle is noted as saying “we make war that we may live in peace.”

Napoleon said “What my enemies call a general peace is my destruction. What I call peace is merely the disarmament of my enemies.”

Peace has been defined as a concept of societal friendship and harmony in the absence of hostility and violence. In a societal sense, peace is commonly used to mean a lack of conflict such as war and freedom from fear of violence between individuals or groups.

The beatitude we will discuss today from **Matthew 5:9** is this: “**Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.**”

Jesus is calling each of us to be peacemakers. It’s not just the job of a specific group of people or to a person. Everyone who in humility acknowledges their spiritual bankruptcy apart from Christ, mourns over their sin in repentance, humbly comes to Christ to have Him do something about their sin, hungers and thirsts for His righteousness, is merciful, pursues purity of heart is then called to not just show what it is to have peace, but to become a peacemaker. We’ll see that being a peacemaker is more than just working to resolve conflict between offending parties. More importantly it brings people to peace with God by sharing the gospel, which is at the heart of peace with Him.

That Jesus is calling on us to be peacemakers insinuates that there is conflict of some kind. If there was no conflict, there wouldn’t be a need for peacemakers. It’s not just a call for us to arbitrate between two or more people or two or more groups to settle a feud. Instead, I believe it is a call to share what will bring lasting peace to hearts that are otherwise bent on conflict with God and others.

Before we talk about what it means to be a peacemaker and our call to that task, let’s consider first the conflict without peacemaking. In other words, what does it look like without peace.

I. THE CONFLICT WITHOUT PEACEMAKING

William Hendriksen asks this probing question: “Without the influence of this mighty army [the church] [the peacemakers] how much worse would not world conditions be today?”

Back in 1968 a major newspaper reported that there had been to date 14,553 known wars since 36 years before Christ. That’s roughly 2,000 years.

Since 1958 nearly 100 nations have been involved in some form of armed conflict.

Some historians claim the U.S. has had two generations of peace from 1815-1846 and from 1865-1898, but only if you exclude the Indian Wars.

The Council on Foreign Relations is currently tracking 27 conflicts around the globe ranging from things like all out war, border disputes, territorial disputes, civil war and the like. That doesn’t take into account riots, antagonism from protests or disputes among neighbors or within families.

Before we consider conflicts with others, we need to understand that ultimately all these stem from one major conflict. That is our conflict with God.

A. Our Conflict With God

Because people aren’t in a right relationship with God, they cannot be in a right relationship with others and I’m not just talking about people who aren’t Christians. Even within the family of God there is conflict. Just look at the many church splits that occur and you’ll see what I mean.

But conflict with others, begins with conflict between us and God. I mentioned a couple definitions a moment ago. Let me give you another. This comes from Ken Sande who wrote a book titled The Peacemaker, one I would recommend.

He says conflict is “a difference in opinion or purpose that frustrates someone’s goals or desires.” **Isaiah 14** describes a conflict between Lucifer and God. Lucifer had other ideas about his desires than God had for him. Created as the most beautiful

angel in the heavenly kingdom to reflect God's glory, he wanted his own glory and sought to usurp God. It didn't work out so well for him, who along with about 1/3 of the angelic host were cast out of heaven for their rebellion. Isn't rebellion just another term for conflict? It's a disagreement of goals. They have been hostile toward God ever since.

The next event of conflict in recorded history, at least as recorded in the Bible, which I take as recorded history, is the conflict Satan created between God's created man and woman and God. We find it in **Genesis 3**. He created conflict by telling Eve that God was holding out on them something that would make them better than God had created them to be. Their desires weren't God's desires – they rebelled and steeped mankind into conflict with God.

The Tower of Babel became a conflict between man trying to usurp God.

Throughout the wilderness wanderings, the Israelites had a conflict with God.

The Bible is replete with examples of man at great odds with God.

In my opinion, it would be safe to say that all sin is a conflict of desire between our will and God's will. Because we don't like God calling the shots, we rebel and that creates conflict between us and God. We want what we want regardless of what God has said is best. It really comes down to a matter of wills. Do we want our will or God's will. Any sin, all sin is a defiance of will against God.

Isaiah 53:6 “All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every man to his own way.”

As I said last week, it really boils down to a matter of the heart.

Genesis 6:5 “The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.”

Jeremiah 17:9-10 “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure or desperately

wicked. Who can understand it. I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve.”

Mark 7:20-23 “What comes out of a man is what makes him ‘unclean.’ For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man ‘unclean.’”

I don't need to belabor the point because I know you get it. When it comes to conflict, it's a heart issue. Sin impacts the heart resulting in a heart that is bent on sin and conflict. Someone has described the heart as the engine room that is revealed in our attitudes and actions. Conflict ultimately begins with our conflict with God, but we take it out on others resulting in conflict with them. When we aren't in a right relationship with God, we will have conflict of some kind with others.

B. Our Conflict With Others

If you are on social media at all, you know there can be lots of conflict. Reports suggest that during the COVID shutdowns, there was a significant increase in domestic violence. Divorce is still around 50% with the US ranking 6th in the world. Watch the news and conflict is quite evident. Even in the opening pages of the Bible we see conflict between man and man.

Cain had conflict with Abel because his sacrifice was inferior.

Some unknown conflict caused Lamech to kill a man who had wounded him.

The herdsmen of Abraham and Lot had a conflict over pasture.

Five kings had a dispute with four kings that led to the kidnapping of Lot.

Jacob and Esau had a conflict with each other.

Jacob had conflict with his father-in-law Laban.

Sisters Leah and Rachel had a conflict.

Ten sons of Jacob had a conflict with Joseph.

Potiphar's wife had a conflict with Joseph.
And that's only in the book of Genesis. When man is not in a right relationship with God, it is inevitable that there will be conflict with others. There is conflict between believers and unbelievers. There is conflict between unbelievers. There is conflict between believers. Again, it begins in the heart and is the result of being in conflict with God.

But not only is there conflict between us and God and between us and others, there is also conflict within ourselves.

C. Our Conflict With Self

Paul talked about this personal conflict with self when he described that there were things he knew he shouldn't do, but did anyway and there were things he knew he should do that he didn't.

(Romans 7:14-24)

1. There is internal conflict because of sins we commit

When we steal.
When we cheat.
When we covet.
When we get angry.
When we are unforgiving.

2. There is internal conflict because of sins we commit against others

When we lie.
When we fight.
When we commit some sexual sin.
When we murder.
When we disobey parents or authority.
When we gossip or speak unkindly about someone.

3. There is internal conflict because of sins against God

Psalm 51: 4 "Against You, You only, have I sinned and done what is evil in Your sight."

Even though David had sinned against Bathsheba for his adultery and had Uriah murdered, ultimately

his sin was against God. It's His standard of holiness that we have violated when we sin. Guilt is that inner voice that brings conflict when we know what we did was wrong.

Again, when we are not right with God, we will not be right with others. There is conflict without peacemaking. Because conflict exists, Jesus is calling us to be peacemakers.

II. THE CALL TO PEACEMAKING

To be a peacemaker, we must first have experienced peace ourselves. If we don't know peace within, we can't show peace without to others.

Ken Sande writes "It is one thing to know how to respond to conflict Biblically, but it is better to know that we are called to peace and have been given peace as a spiritual preventative against conflict. The believer's life, though not immune to conflict, should be characterized by a permeation of peace. Peace should be the rule, rather than the exception, among God's people."

I Corinthians 7:15 "God has called us to peace."

There is first of all, a call to peace with God.

A. The Call To Peace With God

This has to do with peace that is vertical. Peace begins there, with God. Numerous times in the New Testament God is referred to as "the God of peace." Peace is a part of His character.

Romans 15:33 "The God of peace be with you."

Philippians 4:9 "Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me – put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you."

I Thessalonians 5:23 "May God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through."

God's peace is one of those things that He bestows on His people when they follow Him.

Psalm 29:11 "The Lord gives peace to His people; the Lord blesses His people with peace."

Proverbs 16:7 “When a man’s ways are pleasing to the Lord, He makes even His enemies live at peace with him.”

God commands His people to pursue peace.

Psalm 34:14 “Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.”

Pursuing peace also includes extending it to others. God taught His people to express peace to one another in greeting people through the word Shalom. It was more than just a hi, how are you doing. It wished well-being on the other person.

But there isn’t anything that demonstrates the peace God desires us to have with Himself and with others than in sending His Son to die on the cross in our place. That is the only means possible for us to have peace with God. **Isaiah 9:6** describes Him as the Prince of Peace. At His birth, the angels spoke of Him bringing peace on earth (**Luke 2:14**). Paul sums up the peace we can have with God in **Romans 5:1** “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Peace with God is only possible through faith in Christ. Until then, we remain in conflict with Him because of sin. When we trust Christ as Savior, we are automatically made right with God and have peace with Him. He is the one who initiates peace with us, not the other way around. We can’t do anything that would result in peace with God.

Because we have this peace with God, we are called to have peace with others.

B. The Call To Peace With Others

I think that the heart of being a peacemaker is to pursue the two greatest commands which is to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love others as ourselves. If we strive to have that kind of relationship with God first by loving Him above everything else, then loving others will follow and with that the pursuit of peace in our relationship with both unbelievers and believers.

II Corinthians 13:11 “Be of good comfort, be of

one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.”

Hebrews 12:14 “Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.”

James 3:13-18 “The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable...Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” There is a contributing relationship between godly wisdom, genuine righteousness, and peace as John MacArthur writes “Godly wisdom produces a continuing cycle of righteousness, which is planted and harvested in a peaceful, harmonious relationship between God and His faithful people and between those people themselves.”

Isaiah 32:17 “The work of righteousness will be peace, and the service of righteousness, quietness and confidence forever.”

Both James and Isaiah are saying that the fruit or byproduct of righteousness will be peace with God and with others. We have a role of being a peacemaker.

Romans 12:18 “It is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”

That’s the overarching principle of seeking peace with everyone and it puts the responsibility squarely on us to pursue peace with others. We can’t claim that they started it or even make the excuse that we can never forgive them for what they may have done. As far as it depends on us, seek peace with others. “True peace is never one sided. Our responsibility is to make sure that our side of the relationship is right. Short of compromising God’s truth and standards, we should be willing to go to great lengths to build peaceful bridges to those who hate us and harm us. We must forsake any grudge or settled bitterness and fully forgive from the heart all who harm us. Having done that, we can seek reconciliation honestly” writes John MacArthur.

Francis of Assisi prayed: “Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love.”

Because it is a command of God, we are to pursue peace with everyone, even with unbelievers, even with our enemies. But we are also to pursue peace with believers, yes, even believers making every effort on our part to overcome the conflict.

Romans 14:19 “Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.”

I Corinthians 14:33 “For God is not the author of confusion but of peace.”

II Corinthians 13:11 “Finally...Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.”

I Thessalonians 5:13 “And be at peace among yourselves.”

II Timothy 2:22-26 (22) “Pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”

Warren Wiersbe has said:

To dwell above with saints we love
That will indeed be glory.
But to dwell below with saints we know,
Well, that’s another story.

We are called to peacemaking.

It’s easy to like those who like us and get along with us. We can even get over the occasional little tiff that may occur between us and someone else. But when there’s something major that ruffles our feathers, we avoid them like the plague. Scripture tells us we are to pursue peace and be peacemakers. It begins with your heart. Here’s the admonition from Paul to the Colossian church **“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.” (Colossians 3:15)**

That word rule means to umpire. We all know what an umpire is. He’s the one who’s in control of the game. Matthew Henry describes it as letting peace prevail and govern your heart. In other words, do whatever it takes to bring about peace in you and through you. If you have God’s peace in you, then His peace will work through you.

Ken Sande describes this peace as a spirit that keeps the peace and makes peace.

John MacArthur adds that **“when self is first, peace is last. Self precipitates strife, division, hatred, resentment and war. [Self] is the great ally of sin, the great enemy of righteousness and consequently, of peace. Jesus has called us to a special mission of peace. His kind of peace is different from what is offered by the world.”**

At best the kind of peace the world wants to offer is conciliation rather than reconciliation. At best, the world can only offer a truce where you stop shooting at me and I’ll stop shooting at you. General MacArthur agrees. He said **“A truce just says you don’t shoot for a while. Peace comes when the truth is known, the issue is settled, and the parties embrace each other.”**

Or as someone else put it **“Peace is that glorious moment in history when everyone stops to reload.”**

The peace the world offers is like two siblings sitting in the back seat. They draw that line in the middle of the seat and tell each other not to cross or else. As long as you don’t cross the line, things are okay. If you have a sibling, don’t tell me you never did that.

It’s just like the agreement Laban made with Jacob when they parted company. They agreed that neither would cross the imaginary line in the sand to harm the other.

We have taken a look at the conflict without peacemaking.

We have considered the call to peacemaking.

Let’s close with the commitment to peacemaking.

III. THE COMMITMENT TO PEACEMAKING

It’s clear from the verses we looked at a moment ago that we are to be committed to being a peacemaker.

It’s to rule our hearts.

As far as it depends on me.

Pursue peace.

Live in peace.

Being a peacemaker isn't just about stopping a conflict. There is a more profitable result from our efforts. Where one just gets people to stop the conflict, a true peacemaker seeks to reconcile the two. That's what Jesus did. Where we were once the enemies of God due to sin, His death coupled with our faith brought us together where we aren't just no longer at odds, but instead we are brought into the same family. We are now in a right relationship with God.

Paul refers to being a peacemaker this way.

II Corinthians 5:17-20

Paul says we are ministers of reconciliation. He also used the term ambassadors. I think we can exchange the term peacemakers there. In other words, as God's peacemakers, we are to proclaim to others that they can have peace with God through Christ.

First of all, there are the actions of a peacemaker.

A. The Actions Of A Peacemaker

Simply put, peacemakers actively work at making peace. As I just mentioned, our role as peacemakers is to first help others be at peace with God by sharing the gospel so they can be in a right relationship with Him. They can't be at peace with others unless they are first at peace with God. They need to hear how Christ died for them to be their peacemaker with God. You take them through the steps of what it means to be poor in spirit, to mourn over sin and so on. God uses us to tell others that they can be at peace with Him when they have faith in Christ who died to make them right with God.

Only after they have peace with God can you begin the work of helping them be at peace with others. Until they are at peace with God your efforts only result in bringing about a truce, not reconciliation. True peace will result in true forgiveness.

Here are some actions of peacemakers.

1. Peacemakers have first made peace with God

Romans 5:10 essentially says that when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled or brought into peace with Him through the death of Jesus Christ.

2. Peacemakers lead others to peace with God

They do so in a humble and gentle way, showing them what it is to sorrow over sin, hunger after righteousness, mercy and purity. To preach Christ is to promote peace.

Acts 10:36 "You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace, through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all."

3. Peacemakers help others make peace with others

As Christ was our mediator to bring peace between us and God, so we are God's mediators to bring peace between others. They find a point of agreement, some common ground on which to begin the process of bringing peace between them.

4. Peacemakers pursue peace in their own lives with others where there may be conflict

Matthew 5:23-24

5. Peacemakers pattern their lives after the Prince of Peace

John 13:15 "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you."

Those are just some of the actions of the peacemaker.

Let me close with the attitudes of a peacemaker.

B. The Attitudes Of A Peacemaker

Who we are on the outside only comes from what we are first on the inside. If we are going to exhibit the actions of a peacemaker, that begins with our attitudes.

1. Peacemakers are characterized by a disposition of peace

To me that speaks of someone who has a gentle and humble spirit. They aren't contentious. It's marked by a Christlike attitude of putting the best interest of others ahead of their own, so that in the matter of being a peacemaker their desire is not self-centered.

Abraham sought peace with Lot by allowing Lot to choose where he would take his sheep when Abraham had every right to choose first.

2. Peacemakers let the peace of Christ rule their heart

Matthew Henry writes: “Let this peace rule in your heart; prevail and govern there, or as an umpire decide all matters of difference among you.”

In other words, in matters of dispute, let peace be the deciding factor in the course that should be taken.

I have been called a lot of things in my lifetime. But there isn't anything better than being called the son of God and that's what Jesus says those who are peacemakers are called. The word called means ownership. Peacemakers belong to God. **John 1:12** says that those who receive Christ, those who believe in His name, are given the right to become the children of God. We want to be peacemakers who show others the way to being at peace with God so they too can be called the sons of God. God's peacemakers have an eternal sonship in God's kingdom.

Are you a peacemaker? Are you seeking to bring others to peace with God and then peace with others? That can't happen unless first you are at peace with God and then are at peace with others and yourself.