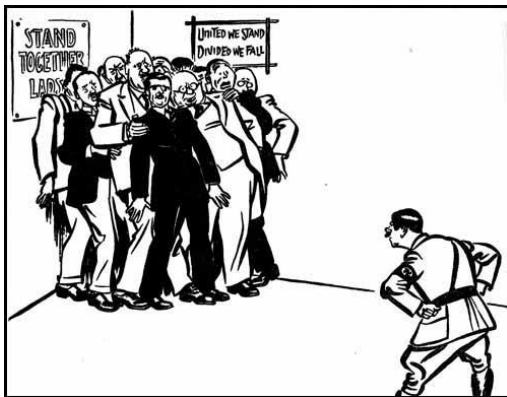


Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons (and daughters) of God." (Matthew 5:9, NKJV).

This attitude in the Beatitudes is not about us maintaining our personal peace. We're all good, at least, at trying to do that. Jesus is describing one of the highest levels on that stair step to a blessed, happy, rich relationship with Him. Jesus is describing the kind of person who brings true peace, true shalom, into the lives of others and into the world around him or her. Much of how we encourage and make peace is how we deal with personal conflicts in which we find ourselves. Jesus is stating that one of the key characteristics of a true disciple is a person who is a peace maker. It is a person who understands that our ministry as believers is one of reconciliation. We have peace with God through Jesus, and it is our ministry to share that good news with others and to work out true peace with our neighbors. That, in essence, is the Great Commandment found in Matthew 22:37-40.

The Hebrew word for peace, *shalom*, refers to harmony, wholeness, prosperity, and welfare. How can we bring this into our personal relationships? Today, we're going to look at practical biblical steps that we can take when there is a conflict or a potential conflict with another. I want to preface the sermon with some broad general truths that we should all understand. Then we can frame some specifics into that broad tapestry.



First, notice that Jesus is saying that Peace**MAKERS** are blessed. He is NOT saying that Peace**KEEPERS** (those who desire peace at any price) are blessed. He is not saying that those who avoid conflict are blessed. He does not say that those who appease a wrongdoer are blessed. Peacemaking often involves confrontation. But the Bible tells us how we are to confront others. Jesus was very quick to confront those who abused others and those who were hypocrites. In this sermon we will learn that it is VERY IMPORTANT not only what we say to

others, but HOW WE SAY IT. British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain appeased Adolph Hitler and by his desire for peace *at any price* World War II began. Six million Jews consequently died in the gas chamber and another 75 to 80 million people died in the war. It was the deadliest war in human history killing 3% of the world's population at the time. Neville Chamberlin was what I will call a "fearful peacemaker." Are you a fearful peacekeeper or are you a peace maker?

Peacekeepers keep peace out of fear through avoidance.

Peacemakers restore peace out of strength through reconciliation.

F.E.A.R. = FALSE EVIDENCE APPEARING REAL

4 Characteristics of Fearful Peacekeepers

1. Peacekeepers believe in peace at any cost. They walk on eggshells to not upset anyone.
2. Peacekeepers hide their true feelings to prevent arguments.
3. Peacekeepers work to avoid and prevent conflict.
4. Peacekeepers can be vulnerable to people who will bully and abuse them.

Jesus did not tell His followers to be peacekeepers. He told us to be peacemakers.

I also must add that the overall strategy of peacemaking is a little different for working with believers and non-believers. In the interest of time, I'll set forth some ideas that are good to use for both, but realize that when you're working through difficulties with fellow believers the approach will be a little different because you're dealing with family.

BIG APPROACH - Great Biblical Overall Concepts to Apply to Our Lives

Don't make everything a big deal. ⁴ *Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!* ⁵ *Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.* ⁶ *Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.* ⁷ *And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:4-7, NIV).* - This verse is telling us to stop getting so worked up about everything! **Don't be a person that is easily offended.** Solomon tells us, "⁹ *Do not let yourself be quickly provoked, for anger resides in the lap of fools. (Ecclesiastes 7:9, NET).*

Here are 3 reasons we should be interested in being Peace Makers:

1) It blocks our fellowship with God. Horizontal and vertical come together. *Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen.* ²¹ *And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister. (1 John 4:20-21, NIV).*

2) It blocks our prayers. This is connected because God is love and we're to learn how to love. ⁷ *Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.* (1 Peter 3:7, NIV).

3) It blocks our happiness. ¹⁸ *Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness. (James 3:18, NIV).* **YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW**

7 STEPS TO BEING A PEACEMAKER - Handling Personal Conflict

1. MAKE THE FIRST MOVE - You don't wait on another to take the initiative. This is more important than worship and it's more important than church. ²³ *"So if you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, ²⁴ leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God. (Matthew 5:23-24, NLT).*

Make peace at once. It's more important than church. It doesn't mean we run from conflict. This is really, really hard in a marriage. A conflict comes and someone has to make the first move. If you cover it up, bitterness just grows and grows. Make the first move!

Conflict is not resolved naturally, and time doesn't heal all things. THE ONLY WAY TO RESOLVE A CONFLICT IS TO CONFRONT IT. YOU GO THROUGH IT. Why do we postpone confrontation? FEAR - We're always afraid of conflict. F.E.A.R. = FALSE EVIDENCE APPEARING REAL

FEAR keeps us from having a deep connection with others. Where do you find the courage to make the first move? It only comes from the Holy Spirit. First John 4:18 tells us that perfect love casts out fear. That means that fear is overcome by love. That's what makes someone run into a burning building to save a child. The love for that little child overcomes the fear of burning up. It is God's love that gives us courage.

2. ASK GOD FOR WISDOM in handling the conflict - ⁵ *If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking.* ⁶ *But when you ask him, be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind. (James 1:5, NLT).*

God will tell you what He wants you to do. Never react; instead respond. To know how to respond correctly, we need to pray for wisdom. So let us pray.

3. BEGIN WITH WHAT IS YOUR FAULT (Come to conflict with a humble heart - confess your part of the conflict first.) - (Why? Two reasons: you and I are selfish and we're filled with pride.) - It might be almost all the other person's fault but you can apologize for how you reacted. A lot of this depends about whether we are at peace with ourselves. The real source might be with what's going on in us. If it weren't for stuff going on in us, some things might not bother us so much. ¹ *Where do you think all these appalling wars and quarrels come from? Do you think they just happen? Think again. They come about because you want your own way, and fight for it deep inside yourselves. You lust for what you don't have and are willing to kill to get it. You want what isn't yours and will risk violence to get your hands on it. (James 4:1, MSG).*

When I'm at peace inside, what's outside doesn't affect me much. This doesn't mean that I wish others might be different, but I don't have to get distressed. We're distressed by what's going inside of ourselves. If you disagree with others, you don't have to be disagreeable.

You and I can choose to love anyone we want to choose to love. It's inflexibility that often creates the big conflicts in a marriage, a friendship, or a relationship. Sandy and I are very different but we choose to love one another. We came from different socio-economic backgrounds. The greater your differences the greater your opportunity to grow. Your friendships are not just to make you happy, but they are to make you holy. Are we willing to learn from one another?

Pride only leads to arguments. ¹⁰Arrogant know-it-alls stir up discord, but wise men and women listen to each other's counsel. (Proverbs 13:10, MSG). Magic miracle phrase: I'm sorry, I was only thinking of myself.

It is hard to see our own blind-spots. Remember when we learned about seeing clearly the plank in our own eyes? ³*And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? (Matthew 7:3, NKJV).* Stop and ask yourself: Am I showing gratitude? Am I being unrealistic? Am I being insensitive? Am I being overly sensitive? Am I being over-demanding? What are my blinds pots?

4. LISTEN FOR THE OTHER SIDE'S HURTS AND PERSPECTIVES - Listen for their hurt and their perspective (often we argue over feelings). Someone gets their feelings hurt and then conflict occurs. Remember that HURT PEOPLE HURT PEOPLE. I will also add that INSECURE PEOPLE HURT PEOPLE. They go through life trying to meet their three basic needs through fleshly means which always results in FRUSTRATION and CONFLICT. When people feel they're not listened being to, they get mad. It makes them feel unimportant. Start with the needs of others by listening to their hurts and interests.

People will say one thing, but they mean something else. ¹⁹*So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; ²⁰for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. (James 1:19-20, NKJV).* After all, God gave us one mouth and two ears!

ALWAYS LISTEN BEFORE SPEAKING.

5. SPEAK THE TRUTH TACTFULLY - (Speak the truth in love.) Some say, "I just tell it like it is." Most of that is just being rude. That means you're a jerk. *Ephesians 4:15 tells us to speak the truth in love.* The truth is not just what you say, but how you say it.

**YOU ARE NEVER PERSUASIVE WHEN YOU'RE BEING ABRASIVE.
YOU NEVER GET YOUR POINT ACROSS BY BEING CROSS.**

This just turns people off. Wrap the truth up in love. With love it will be received. *The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. (Proverbs 12:18, NIV).*

DON'T USE WORDS THAT ARE WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION. In a marriage, don't use the word divorce as a threat. What words are atomic bombs to relationships? Don't use them.

6. FIX THE PROBLEM AND NOT THE BLAME - Attack the issue, don't attack each other. Realize you're on the same team. As long as you're attacking each other you're not attacking the issues or the problem.

⁷You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. ⁸But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. (Colossians 3:7-8, NIV).

Don't intimidate with anger and threats. Don't psycho analyze others. Don't insult others. Don't label others. Let God work on you and in you before you attempt to fix others.

7. FOCUS ON RECONCILIATION - NOT RESOLUTION OF EVERY ISSUE - Reconciliation means reestablishing the relationship. (Dictionary: the restoration of friendly relations.) You bury the hatchet. Be at peace with each other. Find the new norm where you don't go around with a sick feeling in your gut every time you see a person or think you might run into that person.

Resolution doesn't mean we resolve every disagreement. The truth is that you're never going to agree on everything with anyone. Learn to disagree without being disagreeable. We can have unity without uniformity.

BE A PEACEMAKER - BE AN AGENT OF RECONCILIATION IN A WORLD OF CONFLICT.

¹⁸All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. ²¹God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:18-21, NIV).

Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.