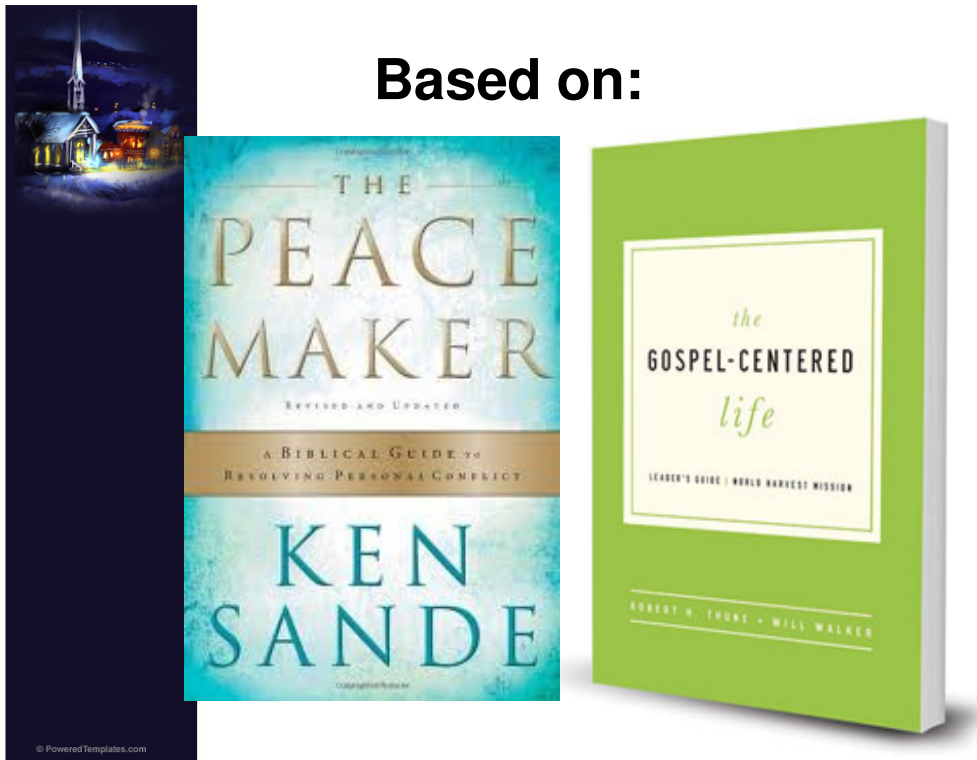




THE STORY

- Piecing together Galatians 2 with the book of Acts, it was 14 years after Paul's conversion that he found himself before the apostles and elders of the church in Jerusalem arguing his case that the good news of salvation through faith in Jesus is for Gentiles as well as for Jews.
- At that time, Peter had stood up and testified that God spoke to him in a vision, commanding him not to call unclean what God had called clean and commanding him to preach the gospel to a gentile soldier in Caesarea. Peter further testified that when Captain Cornelius and his household believed the good news about Jesus, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, just as the Spirit had fallen upon the apostles and the Jewish believers. Then, contrary to the Jewish ceremonial rules, Peter had eaten a meal with this Roman soldier and his family to demonstrate the fellowship that they had as fellow believers in Jesus.
- After Peter's testimony at the Jerusalem council, the apostles and elders under James' leadership agreed that it was entirely appropriate for Paul to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, and that the Gentiles should not have to abide by all the Jewish ceremonial laws, and they commissioned Paul to proclaim this verdict in all the churches.
- One of the first churches Paul went to with this message was the church in Antioch, Syria, which had become a center of Christianity, in part due to Paul's own persecution of Christianity earlier in Jerusalem which had resulted in Christ-followers moving from Jerusalem to Antioch.

Based on:



Based on *Sonship*, chapter 15, *The Gospel-Centered Life* chapter 9, and Ken Sande's book *The Peacemaker*

- Well, at some point, Peter came up to visit the church in Syria, much like he had done earlier to check out the church in Samaria after Phillip had reported on the conversions there. At first Peter was friendly with the non-Jewish Christians. Syrians would invite him over to their houses and feed him dinner and listen to him tell stories about Jesus, and they would bring their non-Christian friends to hear, and they would get saved and it was all very exciting.

- Then some other Jewish Christians also came up from Jerusalem to check out the church in Antioch. Galatians 2 says they came from James. Their attitude, however was very different from the attitude toward Gentiles that James expressed in the Jerusalem council when he said, "We should not trouble those among the Gentiles who are turning to God," and agreed that they did not need to be circumcised or keep the ceremonial laws. (Acts 15) It's possible that these men were not sent by James but had simply been members of the church that James pastored in Jerusalem or perhaps even were relatives that had lived in James' house.

- Whatever the case, these guys told all the Jewish Christians in Antioch that it was improper for them to associate with Gentile Christians. How they managed to influence so many Jewish believers is not explained.

- Perhaps they claimed that James had changed his mind as president of the assembly in Jerusalem and that Paul's message should not be listened to anymore.

Apostolic Conflict - Galatians 2:11-14

Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood (αντεστην) him to his face, because he was to be blamed (κατεγνωσμενος – “stood condemned”); for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew (υπεστειλλεν) and separated (αφωριζεν) himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not straightforward (ορθοποδουσιν) about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before *them* all, "If (ει + Present Tense) you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews (ιουδαιζειν)?

NKJV

- Perhaps they claimed that the Jews had to keep following all the ceremonial laws even after they had become Christians and that made it impossible to be able to associate with the Gentile Christians because they would become unclean if they touched a Gentile or, heaven forbid, if they were to be served pork chops while visiting a Gentile's home, or, even if the food was kosher, if the Gentile's pet dog were to lick their hand. Better to just avoid the Gentiles altogether than risk ceremonial uncleanness.
 - Maybe they appealed to the Jews' pride. Salvation is of the Jews, and the promise was first to the Jews. Therefore the Jews should have special privileges and Jews-only meetings; it's just part of the privileged status God had given them!
 - As we saw from the Gospel of Matthew, Peter could get enthusiastic about hairbrained ideas, so when the guys from James left, Peter continued to enthusiastically promote their bad idea.
 - Maybe Paul was too busy sharing the gospel with Gentiles to see all this developing among the Jews, but when he saw Barnabas, his close friend and mentor participating in this hypocritical elitism, it put him over the edge. He realized this was a pervasive problem that had infected all the Jews in town and if reconciliation wasn't made quickly the church would be split.
- READ PASSAGE

Paul's Example - Galatians 2:11-14

- **Personal:** “to his face”
- **Well-researched:** influences, actions, feelings
- **Strategic:** “when I saw that they were compromising the gospel”
- **Direct:** “hypocrisy”
- **Winsome:** (v.16 “so that we may be justified by faith in Christ... V.17 Is Christ a minister of Sin? ... V.21 “if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly”)



- **Personal:** Not behind his back but face to face
- **Well-researched** – he knew who had influenced Peter (James’ friends) and when and what Peter was feeling (“fear”), and what Peter was doing
- **Chose his battle** over something important: (“when I saw that they were compromising the gospel”)
- **Direct:** Calls out sin of hypocrisy.
- **Winsome:** Asks a question. Appeals to Peter’s desire to glorify Christ (v.16 “so that we may be justified by faith in Christ... V.17 Is Christ a minister of Sin? ... V.21 “if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly”)
 - Jameison Fausset & Brown’s commentary paraphrases the question: “If thou, although being a Jew (and therefore one who might seem to be more bound to the law than the Gentiles), livest ... as a Gentile (freely eating of every food, and living in other respects also as if legal ordinances in no way justify, Gal. 2:12), and not as a Jew, *how* ... is it that thou art compelling (virtually, by thine example) the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?” ... that is, to keep the ceremonial customs of the Jews... The high authority of Peter would constrain the Gentile Christians to regard Judaizing as necessary to all, since Jewish Christians could not consort with Gentile converts in communion without it.”
 - Vincent: “... by reasserting the obligation of the law as you, Peter, have done... Christ's death would be superfluous and useless...”
- Paul won Peter over, and towards the end of his life Peter wrote in his second epistle: “...consider *that* the patience of our Lord *is* salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, talking about these things in all of his epistles” (2 Pet. 3:15-16)
- Conflict is something that is not unique to the apostles; it’s something we all face, and it is a challenge we all have to figure out how to deal with. Thank God for the examples (like that of Paul and Peter) which we have from scripture in how to deal with interpersonal conflict. In addition to these examples, we also have commands in the Bible about how to deal with interpersonal conflict, and I plan to get to some of them in a moment.
- First, let me present an overview chart that can help us get a handle on some of the issues involved:

Conflict Management Choices

	ATTACK	WITHDRAW	PEACEMAKE
			

- The Peacemaker book calls these three choices “Peace-Breaking, Peace-Faking, and Peace-making” (Sande)
- As with so many aspects of wisdom, there are ditches on both sides of the road, or as Kenneth Sande put it, a “slippery slope.” The high road is what I’m calling Peacemaking – it is the way God teaches us in His word to handle conflict, but it is all too easy to slide into a ditch on either side and attack or, on the other hand, to be passive-aggressive and withdraw.
- Paul could have denounced Peter for the harm he was doing to the Gentile church and taken over Peter’s place as one of the 12 apostles, claiming that Peter was no longer fit to be an apostle and that everybody should quit following Peter. Conversely, Paul could have withdrawn and said, “I can’t believe all the other apostles are caving like this. I am alone in upholding the truth. I can’t possibly confront Peter, and I don’t want to cause a stir in the church, so I’m just going to move to another town and start another church, and I am going to teach that new church to have nothing to do with Peter and his hypocritical ways.” But that’s not what Paul did. He took a bold step to create reconciliation.
- Let’s look at what’s going on in these three different choices:

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Conflict Management Choices

	ATTACK	WITHDRAW	PEACEMAKE
MOTIVE	Pride, Anger	Fear	Love

•People will often attack in order to preserve their pride.

•On the other hand they may withdraw out of fear, but...

Love is not... proud (1 Cor 13)

Perfect love casts out fear (1 John)

After we sinned against God, God did not attack us nor did He give up on us; “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son” (John 3:16)

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Withdrawing/Attacking



- “We may run and hide from problems with a friend or we may steamroll over her, but in either case we’re not concerned about loving God or that person. We merely want to feel at peace with ourselves, not make a true peace or pursue genuine reconciliation... Both options – retreating and subduing – are unloving...” ~Sonship, p.229



Conflict Management Choices

	ATTACK	WITHDRAW	PEACEMAKE
MOTIVE	Pride	Fear	Love
ULTIMATE	Self	Self	God



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The most important thing in an attack or a retreat is self, but the most important thing to a peacemaker is God's will.

Use the next slide to elaborate on this point

Conflict Management Choices

	ATTACK	WITHDRAW	PEACEMAKE
MOTIVE	Pride	Fear	Love
ULTIMATE	Self	Self	God
GOAL	Self-right	Self-peace	Reconcile to God

The “withdrawer” is actually lazy when it comes to issues he or she should fight for. He has trained himself to think that it is easier not to trouble the waters, so he or she avoids anything controversial.

I remember a situation in a church once where I heard somebody complaining about somebody else in the church. From the way they talked, this was a big problem. Pretty soon I heard the other party talking about sin problems in the first person and what grief it was causing them. Well, being the naïve person that I am, I suggested to both parties that they get together and work through these problems, and I offered to mediate. Well, just like magic, they suddenly didn’t have any problems with each other any more. Never did have any problems with that other person. Well, were the problems still there? I think so. But in this case a faked peace felt more preferable to these individuals than the difficult and messy business of reconciliation and true Christian fellowship.

But note that the goal of reconciliation is not merely to get to people to work their differences out. The ultimate goal is not just for people to be nice to each other. The ultimate goal is for each party to be reconciled to God. To be Gospel-oriented, the real problem will always be sin, and the offended party will always ultimately be God, and the ultimate solution will always be to trust Jesus to make us right with God because He paid the price for our sin and adopted us into His family. And when we are reconciled to God we are reconciled to each other. When we realize how God has forgiven us we are able to forgive each other. When we realize how much God loves us, we are able to love each other.

Conflict Management Choices

	ATTACK	WITHDRAW	PEACEMAKE
MOTIVE	Pride	Fear	Love
ULTIMATE	Self	Self	God
GOAL	Self-right	Self-peace	Reconcile to God
STRATEGY	Argue	Ignore	Dialogue




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Please understand that these are generalizations and that putting one word in each field of this chart has certain limitations. There is a place to argue your case if it is done winsomely for the glory of God like Paul did with Peter, and there is a place to ignore an irritation that is unimportant in the big scheme of things, but it is all too easy to try to ignore things that will actually fuel bitter resentment, just as it is all too easy to argue points to prove a point that does not win them to a right relationship with you or with God.

I chose the word “dialogue” because of its connotation that both parties in the conflict will get to talk, both will listen to the other, and hopefully they are not only talking to each other but also praying to God while they’re talking the problem through, asking Jesus to make everything right.

Conflict Management Choices

	ATTACK	WITHDRAW	PEACEMAKE
MOTIVE	Pride	Fear	Love
ULTIMATE	Self	Self	God
GOAL	Self-right	Self-peace	Reconcile to God
STRATEGY	Argue	Ignore	Dialogue
VERDICT	I'm right; He's wrong	I'm right; He's wrong	We're wrong; God's right
			

We all go into conflict with pre-conceived notions. There are certain things we assume to be true. Both the attacker and the withdrawer start with the wrong assumptions. The only difference is that the attacker thinks he can prove to the other party that they are wrong, and the withdrawer thinks he probably won't be able to convince the other party.

The truth, however, is that both you and the other party have some sort of sin which brings this whole conflict into being, and the only way you are going to find success in resolving conflict is if you go into the dialogue with the other party assuming you have some fault that you should repent of as well as them, and that God's righteousness in Christ is enough to reckon both you and the other party righteous.

I can't tell you how many divorcees have made it a point to tell me how much worse their spouses offenses were and how it was all the other person's fault. I'm not saying that you and the other party both have done the same sin or that you both have done the same amount of sin. But no matter how unequal you and that other person are, the inequality between the amount of sin you have done and the amount of forgiveness offered to you in Christ makes the differences between you and that other person so tiny in comparison that you have to realize that how much more or less the other guy did wrong compared to you is not what it's all about – it's not worth arguing about. We're both wrong; God is right, and so we come to Him to make us right.

Conflict Management Choices

	ATTACK	WITHDRAW	PEACEMAKE
MOTIVE	Pride	Fear	Love
ULTIMATE	Self	Self	God
GOAL	Self-right	Self-peace	Reconcile to God
STRATEGY	Argue	Ignore	Dialogue
VERDICT	I'm right; He's wrong	I'm right; He's wrong	We're wrong; God's right
OUTCOME	Anger, Splits, Man-following	Resentment, Formality, Division	Glory to God Joy, Intimacy, Peace, Unity,

- Sometimes our attacking and withdrawing choices actually seem to work.
- The attacker may get the other person to agree that the attacker was all right and they were all wrong, but, of course, if the person attacked is a withdrawer, he is just saying this to put an end to the open conflict, and there is no real agreement. Or sometimes the person attacked is looking to follow a strong personality and doesn't want to think for themselves. (I think this is one reason why charismatic TV preachers gain so many followers.) A strong arguer can actually create a group of followers who look to him instead of to the Holy Spirit to decide when they are doing right and wrong and willingly allow themselves to be controlled by a controlling personality rather than controlled by the Holy Spirit.
- "But the peace that comes down from above" will go deeper than a surface-peace where you ask each other how you are doing and they say "Fine." Only when anger and resentment is repented of will people be willing to draw close to each other in fellowship, let their guard down, and trust each other to act in their best interests with love. This brings such joy. And when we experience that joy, let us be quick to praise God for the blessing of reconciled relationships!
- Now, after this overview chart, I said I would get to some more scriptures that give us commands as to how to address problems in our relationships, so let's move to that next:

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The 4 “G’s” of The Peacemaker

1. Glorify God (Pray & Gain God’s perspective)

Psalms 37:1-6 Do not fret because of evildoers, Nor be envious... For they shall soon be cut down like the grass... Trust in the LORD, and do good... Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD... He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, And your justice as the noonday. (NKJV)

Philippians 4:6-8 Be anxious for nothing... let your requests be made known to God... whatever things are true... meditate on these things.

Mark 11:25 "And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him..."

1 Cor. 10:31b ...whatever you do, do all to God’s glory

Colossians 3:2-3 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ...



Ken Sande’s book *The Peacemaker* highlights four sets of commands in the Bible related to peacemaking. First is “Glorify God” This includes:

- Trusting in God’s sovereignty
- Praying to God
- (*) Forgiving others in your heart
- Remembering who you are in Christ.

Say, for example, somebody insults you. How can you begin your response by Glorifying God?

- You can trust that God is in control of your reputation, not whoever it was that slandered you.
- You can tell God how much it hurts and ask Him to make it right.
- You can remember how much He has forgiven you and then decide to forgive that person.
- And you can remember that you are holy and precious and beloved in God’s sight and nothing - absolutely nothing - can separate you from God’s love for you in Christ Jesus!
- Now you have the right attitude and perspective to do something about that insult! But before you go to the person who insulted you, you need to think through what sins you are responsible for that might have led up to that insult...

The 4 “G’s” of The Peacemaker

1. Glorify God (Pray & Gain God’s perspective)
2. Get the log out of your own eye (Matt. 7:3-5)
 - a. Look in the right place (James 4:1-3 “What causes quarrels? Your desires...” & Psalm 139:23-24 – “Search me O God”)



Matt 7 (NAW) 3 Now, why are you seeing the splinter which is in the eye of your brother, yet you are not taking cognizance of the timber-beam in your eye! 4 Or how will you say to your brother, “Let me throw away the splinter from your eye,” and look, the timber-beam is in your eye! 5 Hypocrite! First throw away the timber-beam from your eye, and then you will see clearly to throw away the splinter from the eye of your brother.

•So many fights in my house would be avoided if my children would follow this rule. At least once a day a kid comes up to me and says, “So-and-so hit me!” Well, nine times out of 10, I discover that the tattler did something to offend the brother or sister, and so a fight ensued in which they got hit. Of course the offended party shouldn’t have hit them, but if the siblings had treated each other with patience, respectful dialogue, and apologies and restitution, they would not have come to blows and they wouldn’t have needed me to break up their fight!

(* A. Look in the right direction to detect the problem: your desires - James 4:1-4 NKJV

Where do wars and fights *come* from among you? Do *they* not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? 2 You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures. 4 Adulterers and adulteresses! ...

•Often you won’t be able to figure it out for yourself, so you should get outside help.

•You can do what David modeled in Psalm 139 and pray for the Holy Spirit to reveal your sin to you.

•The book of Proverbs also recommends gathering advice from wise counsel (Proverbs 19:20 “Listen to counsel and receive instruction”).

•Then, once you see what your sin is that is making you feel this conflict so keenly...

The 4 “G’s” of The Peacemaker

1. **Glorify God (Pray & Gain God’s perspective)**
2. **Get the log out of your own eye (Matt. 7:3-5)**
 - a. **Look in the right place (James 4:1-3 “What causes quarrels? Your desires...” & Psalm 139:23-24 – “Search me O God”)**
 - b. **Confess sin (Proverbs 28:13 “He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.” & 1 John 1:9)**
 - c. **Make restitution (Luke 19:8 “I will restore 4x”)**
 - d. **Repent (Ezekiel 14:6b “Repent, turn away from your idols...” & Matt. 4:17) Idols such as: Pleasure, Pride, Possessions, Fear of man, Immoderate behavior...**



(*) b. Confess the sins you discover.

• **Prov. 28:13** “He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes *them* will have mercy.” (NKJ)

• **1 John 1:9** If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

• “God I blew it. I broke your law by bearing false witness. Please forgive me through the blood that Jesus shed on the cross for me!”

(*) c. **Make restitution to those you’ve harmed. Luke 19:8** Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.”

(*) d. **Repent and put those things to death so you are unlikely to do them again. Col 3:5** “Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.”

• This will look different for different people, depending on the different things they are tempted by.

• If your temptation is coveting, it might look like unsubscribing to catalogues that invite you to covet (I have to throw Musician’s Friend catalogues directly into the trash or they will snag me with coveting their musical equipment!) or putting an end to browsing stores aimlessly, or getting an internet filter to limit your internet access, or getting rid of credit cards – it will look different for different people,

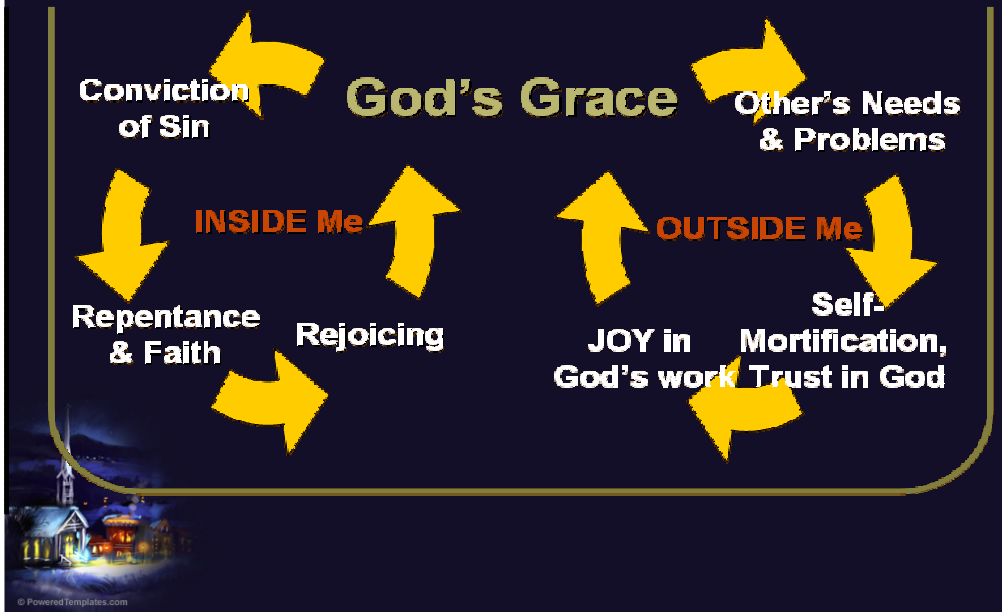
• but, as Jesus said, “If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out. Better to enter heaven with one eye (or without a credit card or with no friends on Facebook or without a smartphone, or whatever creates a temptation especially for you, than to enter hell and have it all!” (o.k. that’s a loose paraphrase, but I think that’s the gist...)



These first two steps of Glorifying God through Faith and Repenting as we recognize sin should be sounding familiar by now – they are the two steps to personal spiritual maturity we covered in the very first sermon in this series!

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3) Gently Restore & 4) Go Be Reconciled



- The next two steps are related to another one of the diagrams I shared with you a few weeks ago illustrating how God's grace overflows out of us.

The 4 “G’s” of The Peacemaker

1. **Glorify God (Pray & Gain God’s perspective)**
2. **Get the log out of your own eye**
3. **Gently Restore**

Galatians 6:1-2 NKJV Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Prov. 19:11 “overlook an offense”

Matt. 18:15 Privately confront

Eph. 4:29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.

2 Tim. 2:24-26 ...not quarrel but be gentle to all... patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth... come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil...



(* Option to Overlook - Pro 19:11 The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, And his glory is to overlook a transgression.

(* But if not addressing the problem will cause bigger problems, part of gentleness is to begin by speaking to him Privately - Mat 18:15 "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.

Don’t start by complaining about him or her to other people. James 5:9 warns “Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned.” Talking first to the offender privately, protects their reputation and makes it easy for them to deal with the problem without additional shame complicating things.

Things can escalate from there, of course, but most of the time they don’t have to go beyond that if you approach them gently, using gracious words that build them up. 2 Timothy 2:24 says not to be argumentative but gentle, patient, and humble, and going with a desire to see them find the joy of escaping from the devil’s traps of sin!

Practical Peacemaking

- Deal with the issue not the personality.
- Not to prove yourself right and them wrong. “Strong convictions are often infected with sinful attitudes.” ~Jack Miller
- Better to win the person than the argument.
- Ask Q’s rather than accuse.
- Listen. Be teachable.
- Don’t expect to change them through your argument. Patiently wait for the Holy Spirit to transform them.
- Replace lies (gossip/self-talk/hopelessness) with truth.
- Claim God’s promises
- Stand ready to forgive again.
- Hope for God’s best for the other person.



•Instead of saying, “You’re a jerk; you’re so mean,” address the issue: “I tripped and fell, and instead of helping me up, you just laughed at me. I was hurt and terribly embarrassed.” Now there is something specific to talk about.

•The point of a confrontation is not to stage a contest where you beat them into submission to your view of things. On the flip side, it is not to be a Marvin Milquetoast who will accept and affirm anything just to get people to like him. We have to strike a balance with love toward the other person and conviction of sin which comes from the authority of God’s word.

•Remember the way that Paul confronted Peter with a Question that made Peter think through his hypocrisy? Of course it has to be an honest question. “Why did you steal my scissors?” is really just an accusation with a question mark at the end of it and doesn’t open up a meaningful conversation! It may well be that they didn’t commit the sin you think they committed because there is another way of explaining what happened than the way you have conceived of it. Like the time I found my scissors on a shelf where I had laid them in the middle of a project and I felt really bad for accusing my children of stealing them... Listen and be willing to cut them some slack.

•You can’t force the other party to change. Only the Holy Spirit can change their hearts. Part of restoring gently is not pressing a point if it’s not working. Forcefulness doesn’t work very well at motivating someone else to change. It might make them relent for the moment, but it will destroy your relationship with them.

•When you’ve been offended by someone else, how easy it is to listen only to the bad things that other people have to say about that person and talk yourself into believing they are even worse and think of all sorts of evil motives you can pin on them such that by the time you get around to talking with them about the problem, you have convinced yourself that they are an absolute monster, full of evil, and hopelessly reprobate and impossible to reconcile. Those kinds of thoughts are also fed by the devil who slips some of those thoughts into our minds himself. Our hearts are easily deceived and desperately wicked, so we need to replace those lies with truth from God’s word, from Godly advice, and from the offender himself.

•The best outcome is when you forgive them and they experience God’s blessing. Are you ready for that to happen, or do you still want to see them suffer and be miserable for all that they have done to you? If that’s the case, you may have to go back to step one a couple times!

The 4 “G’s” of The Peacemaker

1. Glorify God (Pray & Gain God’s perspective)
2. Get the log out of your own eye
3. Gently Restore
4. Go & Be Reconciled (Mat. 5:24)

Ephesians 4:1-3 NKJV ...walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace... 32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

Philippians 2:3-4 NKJV Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

Romans 12:21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good”



The fourth “G” in the Peacemaker book comes from Matthew 5:23-24 (NAW) 23. If therefore, you are lifting your gift upon the altar, and there you happen to remember that your brother has something against you, 24. let go of your gift right there in front of the altar and start climbing down; first be reconciled to your brother, and then, when you come [back], start offering your gift.

(*) This is proactive peacemaking; it keeps the unity of the Spirit; it practices kindness toward others in obedience to the commands in Ephesians 4. It esteems others and actively looks out for the interests of others in obedience to the commands in Philippians 2. It takes the initiative to go to the brother or sister when you realize you have offended them and pre-emptively apologize and make things right. This is a way of overcoming evil with good. Then they don’t have to screw up the courage to confront you with your sin; you do it for them!

This kind of proactive love that reconciles comes from God who Himself took the initiative to come to us when we were dead in our sin and rebellion. Jesus Christ came to save sinners and reconcile us to God.

I’d like to close this sermon with a poem written by John Milton one Christmas almost 400 years ago that expresses God’s own initiative to “go and be reconciled: to us:



John Milton "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity" (1629)

This is the Month, and this the happy morn
Wherein the Son of Heav'ns eternal King,
Of wedded Maid, and Virgin Mother born,
Our great redemption from above did bring;
For so the holy sages once did sing,
That he our deadly forfeit should release,
And with his Father work us a perpetual peace.
That glorious Form, that Light unsufferable,
And that far-beaming blaze of Majesty,
Wherewith he wont at Heav'ns high Council-Table,
To sit the midst of Trinal Unity,
He laid aside; and here with us to be,
Forsook the Courts of everlasting Day,
And chose with us a darksome House of mortal Clay.