

Becoming a Peacemaker Series

Peacemaking Skills Part 3 (Lk. 6:27-28)

By
Andy Davis

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These sermon study notes are designed to be a tool used after listening to the sermon. This resource is a guide to help deepen understanding regarding the Scriptures and ideas presented in the sermon. Those who use these study notes are encouraged to look up, read through, and think about Scripture references in this guide. There is more information in these notes than what is presented in the sermon. These study notes are designed to be used as an independent study tool to help the formation of Biblical convictions, character, and conduct.

Peacemaking Skills Part 3

I. Introduction

A. Illustration: Changing a Spark Plug

1. In preparation for winter, I was attempting to change the spark plug on the snowblower. It had been increasingly difficult to start for a few winters. For most people, that sounds easy enough. Changing spark plugs isn't a very complicated job. Completing this repair shouldn't take very long.
2. However, those of you who know me know that I can make the simplest repair difficult and time consuming. In this case, it took me a long time to change the spark plug. I began by attempting to use my ratchet wrench and socket set, but the sockets weren't long enough to reach the base of the spark plug. I couldn't grip the spark plug to twist it out. The socket just spun around on the top of the spark plug.
3. Next, I tried my hand and brute force to twist the spark plug out of place. I didn't think this strategy would work, but I had a sliver of hope that this quick and easy solution would get the job done. Well, that didn't work as I couldn't generate enough torque; that technique was quickly abandoned.
4. I then tried using an adjustable wrench to remove the spark plug, but there wasn't enough room between the spark plug and the engine for the wrench to fit. I looked at my ring wrenches, combination wrenches, and open-end wrenches and quickly realized none of them would work, either.
5. I had gone through my entire list of limited tools and realized none of them were going to work. I was going to have to go to the store and do what I strongly disliked doing: I needed to buy a new tool to complete the job. I needed a deep socket set for my ratchet wrench that would reach to the bottom of the spark plug so I could twist it loose.

B. Any craftsman knows, having the right tool makes all the difference. The more tools a person has, the more effective and the easier the job will be. The greater the number of tools, the greater the variety of jobs that can be handled. While some handy and creative individuals can use what they have at their disposal and figure out a way to complete a variety of jobs, that isn't me. I need to follow the instructions step by step, and even that isn't always successful. When it comes to finding creative solutions to fix something mechanical, I'm usually at a loss. I couldn't find a way, without the proper tool, to get the job done.

C. Having the right tool to make a repair is like having the right set of skills to apply to different types of conflict. The more peacemaking skills we have available to us, the greater our success rate will be at creating peace with those around us. The longer our list of peacemaking skills is, the larger our "toolbox" and the greater the variety of conflict we will be able to resolve. Toward that end, we are going to explain five more peacemaking skills to our list which will provide us with a total of fifteen peacemaking skills that, when learned, can be used in our lives to respond to conflict in healthy ways that promote peace.

II. Pray for Others (Lk. 6:27-28)

- A. An often overlooked and undervalued peacemaking skill is developing the habit of naturally turning to God in prayer, even for those difficult people in our lives:

²⁷ But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who are abusive to you. (Lk. 6:27-28)
- B. Jesus offers us the wise advice that we should pray for those with whom we are at odds, even those who are mistreating us (“pray for those who are abusive to you”, v. 28). There may be times when it is appropriate to pray condemnation on others, like we see in the Psalms (called imprecatory Psalms), when God is asked to punish others. However, this type of prayer should never be offered when dealing with a person who is part of our spiritual family—the church. Further, this is not the type of prayer Jesus has in mind here. Jesus wants our prayers to align with our actions and the way we treat our enemies. We are to love them and do good for them (v. 27). Therefore, Jesus wants us to pray with the motivation and intended outcome of love and the other person’s good. These prayers should be a reflection and imitation of God’s kind and merciful character (Lk. 6:35-36).
- C. While praying good for our enemies is a noble goal, the reality is that this will probably be a mixed pursuit with both success and failures. James gives us an accurate picture of the difficulty of controlling our tongue. At times we will bless God, and in different circumstances we may speak negatively of others (Jas. 3:8-12). Our words and language reflect our heart (Mt. 12:34). If we are going to consistently bless others with our words and prayers, we need God’s Spirit to purify our hearts. Even though praying for the good of our enemies will be a struggle, we can make progress and grow into it. We do this as disciples because being a blessing and inheriting a blessing is part of our identity and future (1 Pet. 3:8-12). It is who we are as Jesus followers.
- D. Those who learn to naturally react to conflict with prayer will experience that consistent prayer for those we are having difficulties with will change our heart, thoughts, and feelings toward that person. Prayer forces us to think about the other person, their circumstances, and their interests, in the presence of God. This either creates or maintains an open and soft heart toward the other person. God changes us through praying these types of prayers.
- E. How can the peacemaking skill of praying for others be used during conflict? Instead of thinking about how right you are, how wrong the other person is, or the wrongs the other person has done to you, let prayer determine your focus. Think about the other person’s good and how you can love them the way Jesus loves you. As prayer realigns our thoughts, it will also change our attitudes and feelings toward the other person in ways that are good.

III. Speak the Truth in Love (Eph. 4:14-15)

- A. As we pray for the good of those we have tension with, we will be better positioned to be able to actively engage with peacemaking behavior by implementing the next peacemaking skill:

¹⁴ As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of people, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; ¹⁵ but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *that is*, Christ, (Eph. 4:14-15)

- B. Some people abuse this peacemaking skill in illegitimate ways. I have experienced others saying something rude, negative, and hurtful about others and then justifying it by saying, “I’m just speaking the truth.” Not every truth needs to be spoken. The truth should never be used as a weapon to manipulate, punish, demean, insult, damage reputation, or hurt. Speaking the truth should never be done in a destructive way. Just because a statement is true doesn’t mean it is right to share with others.
- C. Instead, disciples realize truth is only spoken with good intentions (“speaking the truth in love”, v. 15).¹ Honesty is shared directly and accurately with the other person. The end goal of this truth speaking is the spiritual growth and development of the other person—edification (“we are to grow up in all aspects into Him [Jesus]”, v. 15). This important principle is repeatedly emphasized in the New Testament; everything that happens in the church should be done for edification. As disciples imitate Jesus, we only speak truth that meets the needs of others so they can grow in the undeserved benefits and resources of God—called grace. Paul further explains what he means by speaking the truth later in this same chapter:

²⁹ Let no unwholesome word come out of your mouth, but if *there is any good word* for edification according to the need *of the moment*, say that, so that it will give grace to those who hear. ³⁰ Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (Eph. 4:29-30)
- D. Only good words are spoken that have desirable and positive qualities that provide what is lacking in another person’s growth to be like Jesus.² Any words that are unsound and useless toward this end are not shared.³ Disciples speak words to one another that encourage and align with the other person’s sanctification and nothing else. Any words that do not assist God’s work in their life aren’t shared.
- E. As disciples, we need to learn to be gatekeepers of our lips and watch our words carefully. Our words and the language we use should only be used for good and for the benefit of others. We encourage and build up with the things we say. We help, not hurt. We strive to never tear another person down, but only say what is good and beneficial for them. This takes practice, determination, and discipline, but with God’s help we can make significant progress. Venting and complaining can decrease.

IV. Ask For and Extend Forgiveness (Eph. 4:32)

- A. Another critical peacemaking skill that is also frequently neglected is giving and receiving forgiveness. When someone else apologizes, instead of saying, “That’s okay” we should:

³² Be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. (Eph. 4:32)
- B. As disciples who have experienced the forgiveness of God, we know what forgiveness is and how it works. Therefore, forgiveness becomes a relational habit in the way we interact with one another (“forgiving each other”, v. 32). We willingly freely pardon those who have wronged us

¹ This is an intertestamental moral principle (Zech. 8:16). Speaking the truth is a universal moral principle that is appropriate, although not always mandatory, across time and cultures. Lying is only permissible under specific conditions where a greater more important good is being protected.

² Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Ephesians 4:29 “good word” and “edification” and “need”

³ Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Ephesians 4:29 “unwholesome word”

because of the goodwill we have toward them.⁴ This relational dynamic is so important that Paul repeats it (Col. 3:13). Forgiveness should even be a regular part of our prayer life (Lk. 11:4). Those who refuse to let things go, allow others off the hook and back into their good graces, and keep a record of the wrongs they experience will never experience the depth of peace that might be theirs through Jesus. Those who ignore or neglect forgiveness will have relationships filled with anger, resentment, and bitterness.

- C. Forgiveness isn't exchanged reluctantly, half-heartedly, insincerely, or reservedly, but in the same manner as God forgives us ("just as God in Christ also has forgiven you", v. 32). This willingness to forgive comes from the heart (Mt. 18:35). Jesus masterfully explained this forgiving attitude and posture along with its significance in Matthew 18:21-35. God's perspective on our willingness or unwillingness to forgive others is unique and must be learned. Simply put, those who refuse to forgive are outside the kingdom of God. Only those who have received and understand God's forgiveness can develop a forgiving lifestyle with those who wrong and hurt them.
- D. Does this mean people who do wrong get away with it? Certainly not! God is morally perfect, and He loves justice. Nothing escapes His notice, and every wrong committed that is not dealt with on the cross will be properly and appropriately punished. As disciples, we continue to do what is good and right as we trust God to deal with those who hurt us (Rm. 12:17-21). God will take care of determining and executing justice. Let God be the Judge so we can focus our attention on obedient living.
- E. Is there anyone you refuse to forgive and release from the wrongs or hurt they have caused you? Do you trust God enough to do what is good and right in the life of the other person, including punishing them as appropriate? There is tremendous benefit in an internal willingness to forgive others, if they repent. While full reconciliation and extending forgiveness externally to the other person may not be possible, our attitude and willingness to pardon others heals our soul. We might need to feel the weight and extent of our own need for forgiveness before we are able or motivated enough to forgive others. The greater our awareness of our own moral failings toward God and others the more capacity we will have to forgive others. Realizing how much God has forgiven us leads to a greater willingness to forgive others. Regarding forgiveness, our spiritual condition and our salvation may be at stake. Those who refuse to forgive for years or even decades will do great harm to the health of their soul.

V. Be Slow to Anger (Pr. 15:18)

- A. As disciples adopt and grow into the character, habits, and actions of God, they will also respond to their anger in a specific way,

¹⁸ A hot-tempered person stirs up strife, But the slow to anger calms a dispute.
(Pr. 15:18)

- B. Here we are provided with two different responses to conflict: one is healthy, while the other one is not. The unhealthy response to conflict comes from a person who is easily angered at others. This is called escalation—a person makes the situation or conflict worse by how they

⁴ Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Ephesians 4:32 "forgiving"

are responding to it (“A hot-tempered person stirs up strife”, v. 18). The emotion of anger is very destructive to peacemaking. The faster a person becomes angry and the stronger a person’s anger, the more difficult healthy responses and conflict resolution become. The person in this proverb is experiencing a feeling of intense anger.⁵ It does not take a lot to get a hot-tempered person angry; even small, unimportant offenses get them riled up. Some people are so hot-tempered that those around them are walking on eggshells, unsure of what will upset them next because they get angry at anything and everything.

- C. Contrary to this response is a person who takes a long time to get angry (“the slow to anger calms a dispute”, v. 18). While intense anger creates and escalates conflict, someone who is slow to become angry and agitated can calm or de-escalate conflict. Conflicts are quieted down by people who are slow to anger. To be slow to anger means it takes a lot of difficulty, frustration, and inappropriate behavior to get a person upset. God describes Himself this way many times (Ex. 34:6, Num. 14:18). Those who know God know this is a quality of His (Neh. 9:17, Ps. 86:15, 103:8). If God is angry, He has a good reason (probably many) to be justified in His anger because He has already been patient for a long time. He’s already overlooked offenses for a while. He hasn’t punished people as they deserve in the moment. God gives people a lot of rope to repent (Rm. 2:4).
- D. If we are going to be slow to anger, like God, we need to learn how to suffer well without reacting negatively as we develop and increase our self-control. Disciples need to develop a mentality that expects and accepts suffering and mistreatment at the hands of others. Being treated poorly in undeserved ways is the normal expectation and reality of the Christian life. As Jesus said, the world will hate us just as it hated Him (Jn. 15:18-21). Do good and endure suffering (1 Pet. 2:20). Those who go through life with the perspective and expectation that they should never have to be uncomfortable, suffer, hurt, or be in pain will also probably be quick to be angry. Pride leads to anger while humility leads to patience.

VI. Communicate Kindly (Pr. 15:1-2)

- A. Another peacemaking skill involves learning how to communicate in an effective way so the other person will hear and accept what you have to say, even in times of conflict:

¹ A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger. ² The tongue of the wise makes knowledge pleasant, But the mouth of fools spouts foolishness.
(Pr. 15:1-2)

- B. Peacemakers make statements that show kindness and are of a tender nature (“A gentle answer turns away wrath”, v. 1).⁶ This doesn’t mean to communicate in weakness, but in a tone consistent with the character of Jesus. Remember our description of gentleness. The way that peacemakers communicate with others during conflict calms the situation down rather than stirring up someone’s anger. The opposite of gentle statements are those that cause a sensation of discomfort in others (“But a harsh word stirs up anger”, v. 1).⁷ These two types of responses are being contrasted from one another.

⁵ Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Proverbs 15:18 “hot-tempered”

⁶ Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Proverbs 15:1 “gentle answer”

⁷ Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Proverbs 15:1 “a harsh word”

- C. Further, the communication style of peacemakers makes their message appealing and desirable (“The tongue of the wise makes knowledge pleasant”, v. 2). The style of communication is not an obstacle that creates resistance. Peacemakers communicate in the right way with the right words. Having truth and the right perspective is not enough; we must also communicate in an acceptable manner too.
- D. The idea behind this communication strategy is further explained in another proverb:
²³ The heart of the wise instructs his mouth And adds persuasiveness to his lips.
 (Pr. 16:23)
- E. Disciples use their words in such a way that their tone, delivery, body language, and facial expressions are persuasive and encourage the other person to accept what they have to say (“adds persuasiveness to his lips”, v. 23). The way the words and message are being communicated is persuasive and appealing. Speaking truth and being right is not enough for the person who is wise; how they deliver the truth is just as important as being on the side of truth. Thought and consideration are given to the way our perspective is communicated to others so that we are best positioned to be heard and accepted. Condescending, rude, unkind, and angry words are avoided, knowing this hinders communication and receptivity.
- F. Do you ever ask others how you can improve and become a better communicator? Wise disciples, and communicators, will pay attention to instances when other people misunderstand what they say as they seek to know what went wrong and why. In this way, future miscommunications might be avoided. We can also learn from other people’s miscommunications and ineffective speaking methods. When confusion happens, it is good to pay attention to the reasons for it so that we can learn to communicate more clearly ourselves. With time and practice, we can become more persuasive.

VII. List of Peacemaking Skills

- A. The more peacemaking skills we have, the better we will be at resolving various types of conflict. The greater the number of tools in our toolbox, the easier it will be to fix a variety of relational problems. Here is the full list of peacemaking skills we have learned in the last few weeks:
 1. Learn to Respect God: Desire to honor, please, and glorify God in all situations as you bring God’s presence into every circumstance.
 2. Ability to Listen Well: Use active listening to make sure you correctly understand the other person, their perspective, their needs, their interests, and their desires.
 3. Confront with Gentleness: When necessary, problems need to be directly addressed with an even tempered and calm disposition.
 4. Use Godly Wisdom: Spend time regularly learning from the Bible to assimilate the perspective and priorities of God and connect them to my life.
 5. Accept One Another: Welcome others into your life and care for them right where they are, just as Jesus treated you.
 6. Let Go of Selfishness: Instead of focusing exclusively on ourselves, we intentionally think about others.

7. Consider Others as More Important: In humility, we prioritize the preferences, needs, desires, and interests of others ahead of our own.
 8. Identify and Pursue the Interests of Others: As we think about others, we learn about, show interest in, and actively bring about the good of others.
 9. Patient When Wronged: Trust the wrongs and hurts of others to God without seeking revenge.
 10. Bear with One Another in Love: Endure the faults and weaknesses of others as they grow to become like Jesus and help them when you are able.
 11. Pray for Others: Talk to God about others while desiring their good with the motive of love.
 12. Speak the Truth in Love: Communicate honestly and openly, for the best interest of others, so that the other person will be built up spiritually to be like Jesus.
 13. Ask For and Extend Forgiveness: In dealing with the hurts and wrongs of others, we release our desire for revenge and punishment, and seek forgiveness for the ones we cause.
 14. Be Slow to Anger: Learning to be non-reactive when we are mistreated by others increases our tolerance for patience and self-control.
 15. Communicate Kindly: Just as important as having the right and true perspective is the ability to communicate persuasively to others so our message will be received.
- B. A take-home handout has been created to help remind you of these peacemaking skills. You can find this handout on the back table. Be encouraged to grab a copy, take it home with you, and put it in a prominent place where you will see it often as you continue to develop these peacemaking skills. A good place in most homes will be to put it on your refrigerator as a constant reminder about how to navigate the conflict in your home. Allow these fifteen peacemaking skills to become the ground rules by which you will communicate and deal with differences and disagreements within your family. Hold one another accountable. If someone says or does something that is out of step with these skills, draw their attention to it. Use these skills as an agreed-on standard by which you will respond to conflict.

VIII. Conclusion

- A. Learning to use these peacemaking skills in practical ways will equip us to become peacemakers. God's word, the Bible, is full of wisdom that can enhance the quality of our lives in every area. Although it takes some time and effort to dig this wisdom out, the time and energy is well worth it. Happiness and joy follow the pursuit of peace.
- B. As we learn to apply these skills in our lives, let's be prepared to work hard at creating and living in peace:

¹⁴ Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found spotless and blameless by Him, at peace, (2 Pet. 3:14)