



WEEK 7: **FIGHT CLEANLY**

Key Scripture: *Matthew 5:9, Matthew 10:34, Ephesians 4:26-27*

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”

– Jesus (*Matthew 5:9*)

“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.”

– Jesus (*Matthew 10:34*)

Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.

– Paul (*Ephesians 4:26-27*)



WEEK 7: PRE-GROUP READING

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."

– Jesus (Matthew 5:9)

"Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword."

– Jesus (Matthew 10:34)

Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.

– Paul (Ephesians 4:26-27)

"Most Christians we meet are poor at resolving conflict. There are at least two reasons for this: the first relates to wrong beliefs about peacemaking and the second relates to a lack of training and equipping in this area." –Peter & Geri Scazzero

Many people think that Jesus calls us to be pacifiers and appeasers who work to ensure nobody gets upset, but when we avoid conflict and appease people, we are actually what author Ken Sande calls "peace-fakers" (Resolving Everyday Conflict, Sande, 2011).

Unresolved conflicts produce some of the greatest tensions in our lives. We hate them, and often do not know what to do about them. Instead of risking a broken relationship, we prefer to settle for a "false peace."

But we can't have the true peace of Christ's kingdom with lies and pretense. They must be exposed to the light and replaced with the truth. The way of true peace will never come through pretending what is wrong is right. True peacemakers love God, others, and themselves enough to disrupt false peace. This is the mature, loving thing to do.

Unfortunately, fighting for true peace requires skills we do not possess. We end up in conflict that spirals out of control with "dirty fighting tactics." Even with good intentions, in our anger, we sin, or we fake peace by pretending that everything is alright in the presence of sin and injustice.

While we must not fake peace, God cares deeply about the way that we have conflict with other people. He calls us to *Fight Cleanly*.



WEEK 7: GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Take some time to catch up and connect as a group. Pray to transition into discussion.

Growing Connected

Last week we talked about listening incarnationally and the power of being truly heard. Did anyone have the chance to listen to someone else this week? What were the results? Did anyone listen to you? What was that like?

Bible Study

Have someone read aloud for the group Matthew 5:9 and Matthew 10:34 (found also under this week's Key Scriptures).

1. How do you understand these two contrasting teachings of Jesus? If Jesus blesses the peacemakers, why does he come to bring a sword?

Jesus' Model of Peacemaking:

- He brought disruption in order to bring peace.
- He did not avoid conflict or appease people.
- He did not ignore tensions or differences.

Key Principle: True peace will never come by pretending that what is wrong is right.

We do not grow up knowing Jesus' model of true peacemaking. Most of us learned one of two ways to deal with conflict: fight or flight.

- **Fight:** In conflict I become aggressive and dig in. I won't let people walk all over me.
- **Flight:** In conflict I become passive and seek escape. I don't want to get hurt.

2. Which of these two do you default to in conflict? How did your family handle conflict when you were young? What "unspoken commandments" might you hold about the right and wrong way to deal with conflict.

These two broad conflict strategies give rise to **dirty fighting tactics**:

Silent treatment	Lecturing	Blaming	Condescension	Threatening
Name-calling	Criticizing	Sarcasm	Complaining	Denying
Passive-aggressive behavior	Shouting	Avoiding	Using "always" and "never"	Rage
Walking away	Lying	Hitting/Violence	Contempt	Placating

***Put a checkmark next to any of these tactics that you tend to use.**



WEEK 7: TOOL OF THE WEEK

This week we will combine the skills of all of the previous weeks. We carry all of these relational tools with us into the most complicated relational situation of all: open conflict. This week's tool is called **Fighting Cleanly**.

On the next page you will find a 5-Step process for having a Clean Fight. Review that process now.

Follow-up Questions:

3. In what relationship in your life could a clean fight help you pursue true peace?
4. Answer each of the four prompts below as if you were going to speak to that person:
 1. **Ask permission.**
 2. **State the problem** ("I notice...").
When stating the problem, you must describe a behavior, not just an emotion. "I notice you got mad at me" describes an emotion. "I notice you got up and walked away" describes a behavior.
 3. **State why it matters** ("I value...").
 4. **Complete the sentence:** "When you _____, I feel _____."
 5. **State your request:** clearly, respectfully and specifically.
5. What do you find most helpful in this Clean Fight process? Where do you expect difficulty?
6. Jesus said, "blessed are the peacemakers". What blessings might there be on the other side of learning this very important skill – in your personal life, relationships, work, school or church?

Conclusion

Take a moment to decide whether you would be willing to pursue a clean fight with your example person. Either way, take a moment to ask God to bring you true peace in that relationship.

Fighting Cleanly: A Clean Fight is a negotiation for the sake of the relationship.

A Clean Fight is about a single issue or behavior. While two people may have many sources of disagreement, they cannot be handled all at once. One obvious sign of a dirty fight is the way they tend to introduce new issues in the middle of the fight (e.g. “don’t bring my mother into this!” or “this coming from someone who has never...”). This is caused by both parties triggering and reacting to iceberg moments in the other person. Soon the original issue is lost, nothing is resolved, and often both parties suffer wounds from the dirty fight.

Clean Fight Step	Family Example: A college student home from school disagrees about curfew.	Professional Example: A teacher or boss has been hard to reach during an important assignment
1. Ask permission.	Mom, something has been bothering me. Is now a good time to talk about it?	Boss/Teacher, I'm having a problem. Would now be a good time to discuss it with you?
2. Clearly and specifically state the problem.	When I came back from college I assumed I would not have a curfew, and I was surprised that you assumed I would.	While working on this assignment, I was missing key information I needed. I tried to get the information but couldn't because...
3. State why it is important to you.	I value having an adult to adult relationship with you, rather than an adult-to-child relationship.	I value doing good work in this job/class and I wasn't able to do that this time.
4. Fill in the following sentence: “When you. . . I feel . . .”	When you called me last night upset that I was missing curfew, I felt embarrassed.	When you didn't respond to my emails and you weren't in your office at lunch, I felt helpless.
5. State your request clearly, respectfully, specifically.	I would like us to agree that I am an adult and no longer have a curfew.	I would like an extra week to complete this project.

Hopefully, when you initiate a Clean Fight the other person will either accept your request or propose a reasonable alternative. Having climbed the Ladder of Integrity, you will know what you are and are not willing to accept yourself in this Clean Fight.

Initiating a clean fight doesn't guarantee the other person will cooperate. In fact, they may continue to “fight dirty.” If not, don't give up, react or engage in dirty fighting tactics yourself.

Sometimes it can take time or more than one Clean Fight to reach an agreement and achieve true relational peace.