

October 11, 2009

**THE LIFE OF FORGIVENESS:
PURSUE PEACE: PART 2
MATTHEW 18.1-14; ROMANS 12.9-21**

Christians must take a proactive approach to their relationships and seek and pursue peace, making every effort to avoid sinning against one another.

3. A peacemaker seeks to cover or overlook as many of the sins of others as possible, absorbing the cost himself as much as possible.

Form of forgiveness. Sande, *The Peacemaker*, "Overlooking is not a *passive* process in which you simply remain silent for the moment but file away the offense for later use against someone. That is actually a form of denial that can easily lead to brooding over the offense and building up internal bitterness and resentment that will eventually explode in anger. Instead, overlooking is an *active* process that is inspired by God's mercy through the gospel. To truly overlook an offense means to deliberately decide not to talk about it, dwell on it, or let it grow into pent-up bitterness."

Can't be done with every offense, but can be done. Cf. Prov 19.11

General guidelines: (1) if it does not create a wall between you and the other person or caused you to feel differently toward the other person for more than a short period of time.

(2) if it is not causing serious harm to God's reputation, to others, or to the offender himself.

Asking questions about what might have contributed to his offense. "I wonder what is making him so irritable today that he would say or do something like that? I wonder how I might be able to help?"

The **peace-breaker** demands payment of every little sin that anyone commits against him.

Concerned about the "unvarnished truth;" i.e., telling all the facts about someone whether it is useful or not.

Questions: Is this action harming the reputation of God? Is this action harming others? Is this action harming this person?

Questions for self-examination: Am I bothered by what people do or don't do all of the time? Do I have my feelings hurt or become angry often with others? Do I consider the other person's situation before jumping to conclusions and confronting the person? Am I being too sensitive?

4. A peacemaker asks for forgiveness and provides restitution without having it "forced" on him.

Cf. Mt 5.23-26. Go to someone when you know there is something that has come between you and seek to make it right.

A **peace-breaker** keep hiding your sin by ignoring it, being stubborn, or excusing it until it can't be avoided any longer.

A peace-breaker is not concerned about the health and wholeness of his relationship and is concerned more about what it will cost him.

Stubborn: "She knows where I am. If she wants to make it right, she can come to me."

Excusing: "I only acted this way b/c he did this to me. It is not my fault, and, therefore, it is not my responsibility to seek reconciliation."

5. Peacemaker refuses to pay back wrong for wrong but returns good for evil.

Cf. Rom 12.19-21. 1Pt 3.8-12 (followed by Christ's own example).

This is similar to covering offenses, but is even more active. When you have been wronged, you don't return the wrong. Rather, you return good for evil.

A **peace-breaker** always seeks to get even. He is not satisfied until the wrong has been righted in his mind.

The peace-breaker can't live by faith, believing that God will take vengeance at the proper time and proper way. Everything must be dealt with now. The person must pay. Insult for insult. Hit for hit.

Questions: What is more important to me: my relationship with this person or the things of which I being deprived? Do I want peace with this person more than I want to save face?

6. A *peacemaker* speaks words that minister grace to hearers, building them up instead of unnecessarily tearing them down.

Cf. Eph 4.29. Eph 4 concerns living as God's new humanity/image of God.

"Grace words" are words that appropriate for the situation.

A *peace-breaker* tears others down with words unnecessarily in order to exalt himself.

Cf. Prov 12.18

"Joking." Gossip. Direct falsehood. Slander. Libel. Trying to make people look stupid.

Questions: Do I really need to say anything at this point in time? What would be the appropriate word to speak that will build this person up? What does this person really need to hear? Am I speaking words that intentionally belittle him so that I can look better?

7. A *peacemaker* is one who learns to how to be submissive to others.

Cf. Eph 5.21. Extension of the discussion from Eph 4 re new humanity.

Here he is speaking about learning to defer to one another. We show deference to others' gifts, abilities, authority, and such the like. The one who pursues peace learns how to submit in this way to others.

The ***peace-breaker*** is one who must control others.

Domineering people tyrannize people and try to hold things together with some type of fear or intimidation. This may produce what looks like peace for a while. But it is peace-faking, not peacemaking. Tyranny is the enemy of peace.

8. The *peacemaker* is one who keeps his commitments. Integral to peace in relationships is each person in the relationship fulfilling his or her responsibilities to the other(s). This can be summed up in words like being *faithful* or being *trustworthy*.

Cf. Eph 4; also Ps 15.4

A *peace-breaker* neglects his commitments. (Prov 25.19).

Questions: Have I counted the cost of the commitment I am making in terms of time and resources? Am I willing to follow through with this commitment even when it is not fun anymore? Do I fulfill my commitments to others, or am I always finding ways to get out of or make excuses as to why I don't have to fulfill my commitments?

9. A *peacemaker* is one who is quick to hear and slow to speak. (Jms 1.19; cf. also Prov 10.19)

A *peace-breaker* speak quickly and often. Don't think about what you have to say. Talk all the time. Interrupt others when they are speaking b/c what you have to say is much more important than what that dope has to say.

Questions: Do I talk too much and too often? Do I really listen to people, or am I always thinking of the next thing I want to say? Do I seek understanding through clarifying what people say, or do I jump to conclusions?

10. A *peacemaker* is one who shows hospitality.

The ***peace-breaker*** is one who is closed in on himself and his own.