

TRAINING GUIDE

How to be a Peacemaker



PREPARATION OF A PEACEMAKER

Conflict is our constant opportunity. Harris Creek is committed to resolving conflict in a way that glorifies God, edifies the body of Christ, and reflects the principles laid out in Scripture. Since all healthy relationships—including those among believers—are marked with conflict, all Harris Creek Covenant Members commit to the following biblical principles as a path for resolving conflict. As followers of Jesus, we will be people who talk TO others, not ABOUT others. We trust the following information will serve as a continual training guide for you as you make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

Scriptures to read and remember when preparing to handle conflict:

Matthew 5:21-25

Matthew 7:3-5

Ephesians 4:26

Matthew 5:9

Ephesians 4:1-3

John 17:20-23

Proverbs 19:11

Matthew 18:15-17

Romans 12:18

POSTURE OF A PEACEMAKER

“As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

Ephesians 4:1-6



Adapted from Ken Sande and Peacemaker Ministries

As peacemakers, we strive to stay in balance in our pursuit of unity. We do not want to be peace-fakers who avoid conflict or peace-breakers who seek to “get even” and hurt those who hurt us. A peacemaker balanced in conflict will appear imbalanced to the world in our display of commitment to keeping short accounts, our surrender to God, and our diligence in pursuing unity.

Be balanced in attitude. Humble, gentle, patient, bearing in love. Being balanced in attitude means falling fully into humility.

Be balanced in effort. This comes not from a striving, but from a surrender to the Holy Spirit and His power that is at work within us (Eph. 3:20). Being balanced in effort looks like relying fully on God's strength.

Be balanced in unity. We have one God who is our leader—your leader and the Christian you're in conflict with. Being balanced in unity is to understand you have more in common with any believer than any unbeliever.

PATHWAY OF A PEACEMAKER

1. See conflict as an opportunity.

As people reconciled to God by the death and resurrection of Jesus, we believe we are called to see conflict as an opportunity and respond to conflict in a way that is remarkably different from the way the world deals with conflict. Conflict is not necessarily bad or destructive. It is an opportunity to show the world who you belong to.

Jesus said in Matthew 5:9, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." Through Jesus, we become a part of God's family and share in His characteristics. We are His children. In the same way that children resemble their parents, God's children make peace. We work diligently to see conflict as an opportunity to glorify God, grow as a Christian, and heal relationships. We are living out the gospel when peace marks our lives.

2. Own your part.

The most challenging part to peace-making is determining what part of the conflict you need to own. If you are part of the conflict, you have a part to own in the conflict. Your part to own may only be 2%. Own 100% of your 2%. It will take effort and hard work to figure out your part. The church understands that sometimes boundaries are important in some unhealthy relationships. We would never advocate that someone remain unprotected in an abusive situation. Harris Creek seeks to help protect people from further hurt by helping to establish those boundaries when necessary.

Before you lash out, look in. Ask God to help you determine what part you need to own (Psalm 139:23-24). Jesus admonishes us to do this in Matthew 7:5, "...first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's or sister's eye."

As God guides and empowers this effort, seek forgiveness in your conflict by asking, "Will you please forgive me for _____?" Clearly state your part of the conflict to own. You can also ask, "Are there any other ways I've hurt you that I haven't owned?"

"If you are part
of the conflict,
you have a
part to own in
the conflict."

3. Know it's pressing.

Jesus gives clear instruction in Matthew 5:23-25, "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift. Settle matters quickly..."

Do all that it takes. Make EVERY EFFORT. Try. Try again. It may not go well, but that does not mean you did anything wrong. You cannot measure obedience by the outcome. Obedience is measured by whether or not you do what God calls you to do. Hard conversations are not fun, but they are not optional either. As far as it depends on you, live at peace with one another (Rom. 12:18).

Talk to
people.
Not about
people.

SETTLE MATTERS QUICKLY. This might mean going to the other person before you feel like it. Keep in mind that "giving space" is not a path to peace. Giving a person "space" is not a biblical concept and is often an avenue of avoidance and eventually neglect.

Instead of pretending conflict doesn't exist, allowing relationships to wither, or strategizing a victory, quickly choose to talk to the person, not about them. Under no circumstances talk about a person with another. Talk with the offender privately about the situation. Talk to people. Not about people. With a sense of great urgency, settle matters quickly. Make every effort to keep unity (Ephesians 4:3).

4. Overlook a small offense.

"A person's wisdom yields patience; it is to one's glory to overlook an offense." Proverbs 19:11.

If you can overlook an offense, then choose to overlook it. How do you know if you can overlook an offense? Simply put, you overlook it. If you are having conversations in your head; if you feel the need to tell someone of the hurt; if the hurt continues to impact your mood and rule your thoughts, you may not be able to overlook the offense and you need to talk with the offender privately and lovingly with humility.

5. Clearly express your hurt.

A key principle in peacemaking involves an effort to help others understand how they have contributed to a conflict. In Matthew 18:15, Jesus gives specific directions for us: "If your brother or sister sins (or sins against you) go and point out their fault, just between the two of you..."

When someone hurts you, go and tell them. Say to them, "I was hurt when you _____." Clearly express your hurt just between the two of you. Go slow. Listen. Repeat back what you've heard. It is not easy, but it is a mark of faithfulness.

If the initial confrontation does not resolve a conflict, do not give up. Review and pray about what was said and done, and look for ways to approach the other person more effectively. Then try again.

When we remember that we are fully loved and secure in our relationship with the Lord, we will not fear rejection from Him or from others. Rather, in our efforts to preserve the peace, we persevere in addressing hurts for the glory of God and the good of others. (Credit to Pastor and author Scott Sauls (<https://scottsauls.com/blog/2020/08/21/conflict-that-builds-up/>)).

6. Widen the circle.

If you have done all you can to share your concern with the other person, there are times when the only solution is to widen the circle. Jesus addresses this in Mathew 18:16-17, “But if they will not listen, take one or two others along so that every matter may be established...if they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or tax collector.”

Ask one or two people to go with you and meet with the person. Include people who are part of the problem or part of the solution. The goal is reconciliation and forgiveness. Ask them to help you dwell in unity with each other.

If the conflict cannot be resolved, we may need to involve church leadership. The church comes alongside a member to offer a clear path to reconciliation. Every step on the path to peacemaking is restorative. We believe God supernaturally honors the process He has given us.

In the event that a person does not respond well to their Life Group and church leadership, we are told to treat them as a pagan and tax collector (Matthew 18:17). This means we will love them, share the gospel with them, and outline a clear path for them to walk if they desire to pursue unity and restoration.

FAQS

Q: What if my conflict is with a non-believer?

A: It's unrealistic to hold people without the Holy Spirit (non-believers) to the same standard we hold believers. When addressing a conflict with someone who isn't a Christian we have an opportunity to express a hurt, but more importantly we have an opportunity to share the Gospel with them. We get to display Jesus and talk about what He has done in our lives.

As Christians, we have been reconciled to God through Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. Conflict is an opportunity to share the gospel with non-believers:

We have sinned against God (Romans 3:23)

We deserve death (Romans 6:23)

But Christ died for all of us (Romans 5:8)

“God doesn't
ignore our sin;
He took an
account of it and
He paid for it.”

If we believe that truth, scripture tells us we will be saved (Romans 10:9).

Because of that, we have peace with God and get to be reconciled to Him (Romans 5:1)

Q: What is forgiveness? What if I'm not ready to forgive the other person for how they hurt me?

A: To rightly understand forgiveness, we need to start with Jesus. God doesn't ignore our sin; He took an account of it and He paid for it.

To forgive someone in your life, you start by taking an account of the cost of the emotional damage done to you by

saying, “This is how you’ve hurt me and I’m no longer going to hold you accountable for that. You don’t have to pay me back for that.”

Forgiveness doesn’t mean forgetting. It’s naive to think you can just automatically forget what someone has done to you. But you can release their emotional debt against you.

If you feel like you’re not ready to forgive yet, it’s important to come back to our relationship with God. We’ve sinned against a perfect God time and time again. But He forgives us each and every time we ask for it. If we center our hearts and minds around our transgressions against God, it reminds us that we have been repeatedly forgiven and we should do the same.

Q: Is it ever appropriate to give someone space? Is it okay if I need space before I confront someone else?

A: Space is common language in our culture today. This concept of giving someone space or needing space is not found in Scripture. Matthew 5:25 reads, “Settle matters quickly... while you are still together.” There are some instances when the situation is too heated and one or both parties need to calm down. In this case, before you leave, make plans to meet again quickly. Do this with urgency. Make every effort to pursue unity. It’s unloving to leave it open-ended.

Q: Can I discuss with my spouse or someone in my Life Group before I confront the other person?

A: Too often we want to run our thoughts by others (like our spouse or someone in our Life Group) before we directly confront the other person. It’s very natural to want to get input from others or seek validation from them.

We need to turn to the conflict resolution model described and prescribed in Matthew 18:15-17. Matthew 18:15 says, “If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over.” We are to go the other person, “just between the two of you.”

We will only involve others if they are a part of the problem or a part of the solution. Telling someone else in your Life Group is gossip and breaks trust. Proverbs 16:28 says, “A perverse person stirs up conflict, and a gossip separates close friends.” While a husband and wife are one flesh with each other (Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:5-6), it’s still best not to widen the circle to them until you directly engage with the other person.

Q: What if the person who hurt you is your boss/parent/in-laws (someone in authority over you)?

A: If the person who hurt you is a Christian:

See Conflict as an opportunity

Own your part

Know it’s pressing

Overlook a small offense

Clearly express your hurt

Widen the circle

Titus 2:10 instructs us to make the teaching about God attractive in every way. So, with much prayer and humility, we approach those in authority and clearly express our hurt.

We cannot determine obedience by the outcome. Walk in faithfulness and obedience to what God outlines for us to do.

If the person who hurt you is not a Christian, forgiving them is an opportunity to share the gospel. Conflict is a God-given opportunity to point them to Jesus.

CLOSING

Remember that forgiveness and reconciliation are spiritual processes that you cannot fully accomplish on your own. Through prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit, we will be people who pursue peacemaking. At Harris Creek, we don't want this to be an aspirational goal, but a normative practice. As you change your perspective, conflict becomes one of the greatest opportunities for growth, sanctification, and reconciliation of relationships.

If there is any way we can serve you or help you apply these principles to your relationships, please let us know. You can always email hello@harriscreek.org to connect with us.

You can view our "Conflicted" series on being a peacemaker at harriscreek.org/sermons.