

DATE: June 29, 2008

TEXT: Galatians 5:22-26 and Phillip. 2:1-5

TITLE: "A Full Life in Christ III: Peace"



We are continuing to look at the fruits of the Spirit. These are character changes the Holy Spirit brings to our lives when we are surrendered to our Lord Jesus. These are empowerments of the Holy Spirit. We have seen the Holy Spirit empowering us with love and with joy. This morning we will see that the Spirit gives his children peace. Jesus said **"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God."** Being people of peace brings us into a close relationship with the Lord. We become his sons and daughters.

I want to begin by stating two things that peacemaking is not. **First**, peacemaking is not avoiding a problem. Running away or hiding from a problem is not an act of peace. **Second**, always appeasing or giving in is not peacemaking. We are not called as Christians to always surrender and seek peace at all costs. We see these truths in the life of our Lord. Jesus was a peacemaker; but he never ran away from a problem and he did not give in and always appease his adversaries. On the contrary, Jesus faced his adversaries and stood up for the truth.

We are called to be men and women of peace. Conflict is a sign of immaturity in Christ.

This is true on the national level and this is true on the personal level. What I am going to do this morning is concentrate on the personal level. How are we to be peacemakers in our own life?

When there is a personal conflict, how do we bring about peace? I want to share 3 steps we must take in order to bring peace.

Step # 1 Communicate with the person you are experiencing conflict with. I believe this is one of the hardest steps to take. We often live to avoid conflict. If someone makes us angry, we will choose to just avoid that person, sometimes for days, sometimes for months, sometimes for years. We have all seen husbands or wives who avoid their spouse, sometimes to the point that avoidance become the norm. I have seen a number of parents who avoid their children. They are tired of conflict. And in churches I have seen again and again people avoid other people. Again and again I have heard... 'no you can't ask so and so to be on that committee, so and so is on it and they will not serve together.' Jesus gave this command in *Matthew 5*:

"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift. Settle matters quickly with your adversary

The "offering of your gift" is an act of worship. In other words before we worship, we are to be reconciled. This is not saying we need to be close friends with everyone. We all have a series of different levels of friendship... we have a small number of very close intimate friends. I would hope your spouse is in that number. We have a number of good friendships, a number of social friendships, a large number of acquaintances. That is normal. With brothers and sisters in Christ there should be unity of the Spirit.

If you have a broken relationship with someone, arrange a time to sit down and talk. If it is a spouse, choose a good time; often bedtime is not the best time. The first step in being a peacemaker is communication.

Step # 2 is Empathize with feelings. True communication does not occur at the level of the intellect; it occurs at the level of the emotion. Allow me to share a number of scripture verses that teach us how to interact with others:

1 Peter 3:8 teaches **“Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble”**

James 3 states **“wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.**

Philip. 2:4... **“Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:**

We are called to be compassionate people. People who care. When you meet with people you need to restore peace with, listen. Let me say that again, listen. Don't talk, don't argue... listen. And primarily listen for feelings.

I want to take a little time here and get very practical. When people come to me for counseling, the # 1 goal I have at first is to teach listening skills, to teach people proper ways to share that enhance listening rather than hurt sharing. Larry Crabb has written a number of books on counseling. Allow me to share these lessons on communication. Crabb begins with these instructions:

Read through the following interactions between a husband and a wife in which one partner shares a feeling and the other responds. In each case decide whether the partner who responds really communicates acceptance of the feeling.

Interaction # 1

Wife: **“I really felt hurt last night because you demanded that we go out whether I wanted**

to go out or not. I just didn't feel very important to you."

Husband **"Honey, I really didn't intend to make you go out. I thought you wanted to go out."**

Do you want to vote? Was that acceptance of her feeling or rejection? That was rejection. The

reaction of the husband was to defend his actions. So many times our first reaction is to

defend rather than listen. Here is Crabb's recommended answer:

Husband: **"Honey I guess I really seemed selfish to you, as if all I cared about was what I wanted."**

Interaction # 2

Husband **"At the bible study last night when I said what I thought that verse meant, you frowned and said "Oh, I don't think it means that" I felt like walking out and never coming back. I'm still mad about it."**

Wife **"Oh honey, I'm so sorry, I feel badly that I did that to you."**

Acceptance or rejection? Rejection. Crabb states: **"Apologies offered too quickly before you let your spouse know that you understand the feelings that were shared usually mean nothing."**

Have you ever seen your child hurt their brother or sister and you demand that they apologize?

The child will say, "I'm sorry" and you know it meant nothing.

Crabb recommends this response from the wife, **"I'm not sure I understand what made you feel so angry? Did you feel that I was putting you down?"**

This is the response of exploring what was meant by asking questions.

Interaction # 3

Wife: **Every time you mention my weight, I just get so frustrated that I feel like eating more, especially when you say something in front of others. I feel absolutely crushed when you say anything about my weight. I already feel bad enough about it.**

Husband **I think I sometimes say things like that just to get even for your remarks about our finances. When you tell people that we drive an old car because we can't afford a new one, I feel like it's a slam on me, and I get mad."**

Accept or reject. Reject. Have you noticed a pattern? This is the response of attacking.

When your spouse tells you something that made you mad, you respond by telling her

something that made you mad. That is to attack.

Here is Crabs' suggested response: **The husband says, "Honey, it sounds to me that you really feel hurt that I don't accept and love you as you are. Is that right?"**

This is the responds to clarify and feedback.

Interaction # 4

Husband: **"Business pressures are really worrying me. I'm sick and tired of going to work. All I do is worry all day whether I'm going to make all the sales. It's just too much pressure."**

Wife: **"Dear, maybe you should look for a job where their aren't so many pressures."**

Again that is to reject the feeling of the husband. Advice should not be the first response.

What the husband hears is this: **Listen you weakling... I'll tell you how to handle the pressure."**

Here is Crabbs' suggestion for an accepting response:

Wife **"Honey, the pressures must be really difficult. I remember that you once told**

me that this isn't the job you really wanted. I wonder if some of the problem isn't frustration over being stuck in this line of work?"

This is extending what you have heard by suggesting other feelings. Allow other feelings to come up for discussion.

Allow me to share with you two more negative examples of rejecting feelings:

Interaction # 5

Wife: **"Tomorrow I have to get up and address our woman's group to give a report on our project. I'm really a nervous wreck about it."**

Husband: **"Honey, you'll do great. You always get nervous before something like this, but you always do super. You don't need to be afraid."**

Sounds good doesn't it. But that is telling your spouse to "not feel that way". That is a rejection for the feeling.

Finally, Interaction # 6

Husband: **"I'm really feeling guilty about the amount of time I'm away from the family. I haven't sat down to play a game with you and the kids for months."**

Wife: **"I think the real problem is that you worry too much about our financial situation. That's what keeps you working so many hours. We'd rather have less money and more of you."**

This is a rejection because it tries to correct the feelings of the husband.

In summary these are the six responses that do not expand peacemaking and healing:

1. Defend or explaining "What I meant was....."
2. Apologizing "I'm really sorry I said that..."
3. Attack "I admit I was wrong, but you...."
4. Advise "Maybe you should..."
5. Disdain. "I don't really see why you feel...."
6. Correct. "What I think you really mean is...."

The 4 ways to promote communication are:

1. **Reflect** “It sounds as if you feel...”
2. **Clarify** “Are you saying that...”
3. **Explore.** “I’m not sure what you mean...”
4. **Extend** “I see that you feel this... If I were in your shoes I might also feel... do you feel like that?”

The lesson is this.... listen to a person’s feelings. This makes you a peacemaker and resolves conflicts.

Step # 3 Use compromise to move to resolution. Often in any relationship a compromise is needed to bring peace. Inflexibility will cause either anger or breaking of relationships. We must learn to be flexible and realize that a middle path is often necessary.

But we must also realize that compromise is not the ultimate solution. Compromise is often a lose, lose situation. And sometimes compromise, because it is an ethical issue, is not possible.

Resolution is the goal in marriage. Resolution occurs when hearts and minds are changed by the Holy Spirit in our lives. This takes time... and this takes moving toward the same goal.... obedience to Jesus Christ. Resolution of conflict occurs when both people are walking on the

same path toward Christ.

Col 3:15 states.... **“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace.”**

We are given the promise of peace... the peace of Christ . We are called to be peacemakers sharing with others the peace Christ gives to us. Again, as with all the fruits of the Spirit we receive this peace, and we are able to share this peace by growing closer, and closer to Christ. “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.”

AMEN