

Apr 22, 2017

1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1, Luke 6:41-42

Conflict & Peacemaking: G1-G2: A Peacemaking Process

Jonathan M. Romig
CornerstoneWestford.com

Why are we as a church going through a sermon series on Conflict & Peacemaking? I brought this series to our leadership team and am bringing it to you for two reasons:

- 1) **Autonomy:** For those of you who don't know, Cornerstone is the daughter church of Immanuel in Chelmsford. This summer, we're hoping to become our own legally autonomous non-profit church. We'll have more ownership and more responsibility, which are both good, but can produce conflict because we're just that much more invested in this ministry. This transition is like **giving birth**. Pain in childbirth is natural. Jennie, who worked as a nurse, told me that those moms who go to birthing class manage the pain of childbirth better. I want this series to help us deal with change in a healthy way.
- 2) **Foundation:** I want us to be a church that builds on a foundation of peace. We're a church of about 70 people. We're the size of a **big family** with lots of brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins, moms, dads, and grandparents. What I know about family, is that families love each other, but family members sometimes hurt each other. As conflict arises, I want us to be a place where it's safe to work through our problems, and where we can take what we learn in here and apply it to our lives and relationships.

Ken Sande's book The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict inspired this series. Ken is a lawyer who works to reconcile people and businesses who are in conflict. He took what he learned from the Bible and put it into practice. He gives four Biblical stages of the peacemaking process (4Gs):

G1: Glorify God

G2: Get the Log Out of Your Eye

G3: Gently Restore

G4: Go and Be Reconciled

This week, I'm going to give you the first two Gs, glorify God and get the log out. Bernie Michaud is preaching next week, but then the following two weeks I'll go through G3 and G4. Usually I try to focus on one Scripture passage each week. But this week, I really want to give you a broader overview of what the Scripture has to say about the first two Gs of peacemaking. In **topical sermons**, there's always a greater risk of taking Bible verses out of context to prove a point. Although we're not going to look at each passage as slowly as I'd like, I'm going to try and preach each passage true to its meaning. If you feel you'd like to slow down and look at the texts or peacemaking points further, you can review the sermon online or join our peacemaking small group starting in just a few weeks to go deeper. Let's **pray** and get started.

G1: Glorify God (1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1)

The Apostle Paul wrote several letters to the church at Corinth. They are famous for all their problems. There was a lot of division and conflict within the church. One of the things they argued over is whether or not a Christian should eat food that may have been sacrificed to idols. Paul writes in **1 Corinthians 10:31**, "So All Scriptures are quoted from the New International Version (NIV®) unless otherwise noted.

whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." (NIV®) Paul is urging the Corinthians that no matter what they do, they should seek to glorify God in all of it. Our **mission** is to glorify God in conflict. That mission will take us down a much different path than glorifying self. It leads to an entirely different destination. So how do we glorify God?

a. We glorify God by honoring his reputation. (1 Cor. 10:31)

The word for "glory" in 1 Corinthians 10:31 is the Greek word "doxa" (δόξα), which can mean glory, honor, reputation, or praise. A doxology is a song or formula of praise. *We bring God glory by praising him, honoring him, and upholding his reputation in the midst of our conflict.*

When we get into conflict, usually the first question we ask is, "How does this affect my **reputation**? How does this make me look? What will people say about me?" But Paul wants us to ask, "How does this affect God's reputation? How does this make God look? How can I act so that others admire Jesus?"

For example, your co-worker sends you a **harsh email** and copies your whole team. If your team knows you are a Christian, you have an opportunity to honor Christ's reputation. Will you fire back or will you find the truth in their email and humbly apologize? Or maybe they're wrong but instead of getting defensive, you call them or go to them face-to-face and explain yourself. Or what if the **cashier** rings you up wrong at the grocery store or the opposing team at your children's **soccer** match is playing dirty. Conflict gives us the opportunity to honor Christ with how we handle ourselves. *We glorify God by honoring his reputation.*

b. We glorify God by seeking what's best for others. (1 Cor. 10:32-33)

Paul, as he writes to the Corinthians, says they should eat meat sold in the market or offered to them at the house of a nonbeliever without asking if it was used as an offering to idols (v. 25-27). But if they do find out the meat was offered to an idol, they shouldn't eat it (v. 28). There's nothing actually wrong with the meat, but the act of knowingly eating food offered to an idol was an act of accepting the idol itself. So if another Christian or even non-Christian sees them eating it, it could cause confusion. So Paul says they can eat the meat as long as it doesn't offend the other person's conscience (v. 29-30). It's in this **context** that Paul writes in **1 Corinthians 10:32-33**, "Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God—even as I try to please everyone in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved." *The principle here is to put others' needs before our own.*

When I was in college, some local churches hosted a **Halo** video game tournament at the local movie theater. It was designed as an outreach event to the local teenagers. Halo is a shooting game. It's not very graphic, but you do shoot aliens and you can shoot each other. A family came to the leadership and said, "We don't want our kids playing this game and we don't think it's good for outreach." Now I wasn't behind the closed doors that debated this issue. If I'd been a part of the conversation, I probably would have given the family this principle and ignored them, thus not putting the principle into practice in my own life. But the leadership decided to put the needs of this family first and to do outreach other ways. The leadership was trying to glorify God by seeking what was best for others. Now I've been in similar situations where we made essentially the opposite decision. However, if we try to seek what's best for others in the midst of conflict, I think that honors God. *We glorify God by seeking what's best for others.*

c. We glorify God by imitating Jesus. (1 Cor. 11:1)

Paul ends this section with a call to follow his example. **1 Corinthians 11:1** says, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ." The Greek word for "follow" is "mimetes" (μιμητή), which means "mimic."

We're to copy the life of Jesus. *Jesus responded to different people and situations in different ways.* As we learned last week in the story of the **Prodigal Son**, he dealt with the sins of tax collectors and prostitutes by spending time with them and teaching them about God; while on the other hand he aggressively confronted the self-righteousness of the Pharisees and experts in the law.

Sometimes Jesus will want us to be silent. He was silent on the way to the cross, not putting up a fight because he knew this would further the kingdom of God in this world. If it will further God's kingdom to stay silent, then that's the right call. But at the same time, Jesus didn't have a **martyr complex**. He's didn't feel noble because of his suffering, nor did he just want to avoid conflict. He went to the cross to save sinners. *Other times Jesus will want us to speak up.* He'll call us to sacrifice what makes us comfortable and go and address a problem because that will further God's kingdom. *We glorify God by imitating Jesus.*

The Gospel gives us the desire to glorify God.

As the Holy Spirit applies the Gospel to our hearts, he gives us the desire to glorify God in conflict (1 Cor 6:20). The BBC show **Sherlock** features Watson and Sherlock. In one season, a female character jumps in front of a bullet to save Sherlock. When Watson tells Sherlock it's not his fault, Sherlock says that's not the issue. He's struggling because, I quote, "In saving my life she conferred a value on it. It is a currency I do not know how to spend." Her sacrifice helps change Sherlock from the inside out. Jesus conferred value on our lives when he died for us. As we come to understand that value, it changes us. As we appreciate the gospel, how Jesus paid the ultimate price not just to forgive us, but to make us holy, it changes our desires. "Christ put me first, now I want to put others first. Christ died for me, I want to put to death my selfishness. Christ gave away his rights, I can give away mine." *The Gospel gives us the desire to glorify God.*

It's the Gospel that links G1 to G2. We glorify God because he's forgiven us. Because we're forgiven, we can honestly examine our own lives. *We glorify God through humble Christ-dependent self examination.*

G2: Get the Log Out of Your Eye (Luke 6:41-42)

In the sermon on the plain, which is very similar to Jesus' sermon on the mount, but appears in Luke instead of Matthew, Jesus gives us this parable. **Luke 6:41-42** "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,' when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye." (NIV®) Jesus is using **hyperbole**, which is an exaggerated statement, to prove a point. *Don't try to fix someone else of a sin you're also committing.*

If you've ever had a parent or a friend talk to you about your sins, one of the first things you think is, "Well you're just as bad. Look at all your sins. You're a hypocrite." The Greek for hypocrite is "hypokrites" (ὕποκριτή) and it means an "actor." It's someone who acts one way but in reality they're someone else. In Jesus' parable a hypocrite is someone who acts innocent but is a worse sinner.

A few verses before this parable, Jesus says, "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you." (v. 37-38) Jesus is warning us not to examine the sins of others without first examining ourselves. This is the **negative**. But on the **positive** end, Jesus is encouraging us to forgive and give grace.

Jesus goes on to explain that the blind can't lead the blind (v. 39). He is teaching us this: 1) We must examine our own sins before examining the sins of others; and 2) when we do correct others, it's not to be vindictive

or right, but to bring about forgiveness and grace. We want to help others see the light by getting the sin out of their eyes, which is much different than just pointing out the problem. We truly have to have their best at heart and have examined our own hearts first. So what are the types of logs we encounter? Ken lists two:

Log #1: Overly sensitive attitude (Proverbs 19:11)

Before we confront the sins of others, we need to make sure they've actually sinned against us, and not just **offended** us. Sins are not the same as preferences or cultural norms. Someone may offend my sense of what is good, but not actually sin. We discern what is sin through studying the Scriptures, praying, and asking God for guidance. Even if we do discern some level of sin, it may be better to forgive and let it go. It's not our job to make people feel ashamed, we don't play the role of the Holy Spirit.

Proverbs 19:11 says, "A person's wisdom yields patience; it is to one's glory to overlook an offense." **Overlooking** sin is hard work. It's different than not thinking about it or avoiding confrontation. It is intentionally forgiving someone and moving on. If we just don't think about it, we haven't really forgiven, but are storing it for later. *If we forgive, we actively choose not to bring it up later.*

The gospel helps us do this. As we realize how much Christ has overlooked, we overlook the sins of others. I'm forgiven so I want to forgive. *Log #1 is an overly sensitive attitude.*

Log #2: Sinful behavior (James 4:1)

We're sometimes the cause of our own problems. It's much easier to say it's someone else's fault, but it may not be true. **James 4:1** says, "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?" We experience conflict because our hearts want it. It's easy to blame conflict on circumstances and other people, but really, conflict just reveals the sin already there, it doesn't create it. Conflict reveals our idols, those things that matter more than us to God. Sin is not so much "out there" as it is "in here"—in our hearts. Conflict doesn't create the sin in us, it just reveals the sin that's already there. *We glorify God through humble Christ-dependent self examination.*

The Gospel gives us courage to confess sin.

As we realize we're already forgiven and already holy, the Holy Spirit gives us courage to confess our sins to our heavenly father and to others. *If we're already forgiven by God, why do we confess our sins to him?* Sin creates a barrier in our relationship between us and God. It creates that **elephant in the room** that needs to be addressed. God loves us and our confession of our sin helps us receive and experience that love. This is also why we should address sin in relationships with others. In the bulletin you'll find Ken Sande's [Seven A's of Confession](#). These are seven simple but challenging principles for confessing sin:

1. **Address everyone involved (All those whom you affected)** / If minor/unknown, only confess to God
2. **Avoid if, but, and maybe (Do not try to excuse your wrongs)** / "I'm sorry if I did something wrong."
3. **Admit specifically (Both attitudes and actions)** / Growing up my parents wouldn't let my brothers and I just say, "I'm sorry." We had to say, "I apologize for..." and then we had to name what we did wrong. Although I never liked it, it taught me to recognize my sin and take responsibility.
4. **Acknowledge the hurt (Express sorrow for hurting someone)** / "I'm really sorry that I hurt you."
5. **Accept the consequences (Such as making restitution)** / "Let me make it up to you by..."

6. **Alter your behavior (Change your attitude and actions)** / Show your repentance.
7. **Ask for forgiveness** / We can't control if someone does forgive us, but we can try.

As we experience forgiveness from Christ, and forgiveness from those we've hurt, the longterm fix is found not in behavior, but in a changed heart. *The Gospel gives us courage to confess sin.*

We glorify God through humble Christ-dependent self examination.

In his book, Sande tells the true story of Ted. I told this story a year ago from memory and got a few of the details wrong (just trying to be specific in admitting sins), so I'm going to read some of it today as we close.

Ted worked for a government agency. As a new believer, he was excited about his salvation and wanted to have a positive witness for Christ among his coworkers. Ted and his supervisor, Joan, had never gotten along well, partly because Ted continually tried to tell her how to run her department. His enthusiasm for Christ provoked her further. As her frustration toward Ted increased, Joan gave him particularly difficult work assignments, even though she knew he had a back problem. Eventually he injured his back and had to leave work for several months. Although he received some disability benefits, Ted lost several thousand dollars due to missed wages and additional medical expenses. As a result, he filed a lawsuit against Joan and the agency.

By the time Ted came to see me, he had returned to work and the lawsuit was moving slowly through the court system. During our first conversation, Ted and I identified several ways he had contributed to the conflict with Joan. Seeing his own fault more clearly, Ted began to consider settling the lawsuit by accepting the five thousand dollars the agency had offered him a few days earlier. Although his damages exceeded that amount, his attorney advised him to accept the settlement. On the other hand, several of Ted's friends were encouraging him to demand more money or continue the litigation.

A few days later Ted surprised me by saying that he was going to drop his lawsuit without accepting the settlement offer. The more he had reflected on his own fault in the matter, the less comfortable he felt about accepting money from the agency. At the same time, he had concluded that laying down his right to restitution would be an effective way to demonstrate the mercy and forgiveness that he himself had received from God.

The next morning, Ted went to talk with Joan. He admitted that he had been disrespectful, arrogant, and rude, and he asked for her forgiveness. Joan seemed suspicious of his motives and said little in response. Ted went on to explain that he had forgiven her for ordering him to move the heavy boxes and that he was dropping his lawsuit. Finally, he said he hoped they could start over in their relationship and learn to work together in the future.

More suspicious than ever, Joan asked why he was doing this. He replied, "I became a Christian a year ago, and God is slowly helping me to face up to a lot of my faults, including those that contributed to the problems between you and me. God has also shown me that his love and forgiveness for me is absolutely free and that I can do nothing to earn or deserve it. Since he has done that for me, I decided I want to act the same way toward you."

Amazed by his answer, Joan mumbled something like, "Oh, I see. Well, let's let bygones be bygones. Thanks for coming in."

Although Joan's response wasn't quite what Ted had hoped for, he walked out of her office knowing that God had forgiven him and that he had at least given Joan a glimpse of that forgiveness. Ted soon discovered that Joan was telling others about their meeting. The next day a union representative who had heartily supported the lawsuit against Joan confronted Ted and asked whether he had really dropped the lawsuit. When Ted said yes, the man asked, "Is it true that you did it because you're a Christian?" Ted again said yes, and the man's scowl turned to a look of puzzlement. As the man walked away, Ted heard him say to a bystander, "Well, that's the first time I've ever seen a Christian's faith cost him anything."

Like ripples in a pond, word of Ted's actions spread throughout the department. A few days later, two coworkers asked to meet with him over lunch once a week to discuss the Bible. Later, other coworkers asked him questions about his faith. For the first time since Ted's conversion, he felt he was really helping people to learn about God's love.

Although Joan continued to treat Ted rudely at times, he learned to submit to her authority and to use her provocations as further opportunities to show God's work in his life. When she was replaced a few months later, there was no doubt in Ted's mind who had arranged for him to have a more pleasant and supportive boss.

*Three years later I asked Ted whether he regretted his decision to give up the settlement. "No," he replied, "That was the best five thousand dollars I ever spent. God used those events to bring several people to Christ. He also helped me to overcome some major sins in my life. I only wish I had settled it more quickly." (*The Peacemaker* by Ken Sande, pages 97-98)*

The first two Gs of peacemaking teach us to glorify God and to get the log out of our own eyes. *We glorify God through humble Christ-dependent self examination.*

Pastor [Jonathan Romig](#) wrote and preached this message for the people of Cornerstone Congregational Church. [Click here to listen to more sermons](#) or [click here to read our story](#).