

Peacemaker Ministries

Some helpful nuggets from:

- Biblical Peacemaking – Building Real Relationships
- Judging Others – The Danger of Playing God
- Words That Cut – Learning to Take criticism in Light of the Gospel
- God’s Search and Rescue Plan – Church Discipline
- Transforming Workplace Disputes – The vital Role of Cristian Conciliation
- Guiding People Through Conflict

Biblical Peacemaking

1. Brian’s comments on preventative medicine: as we think about conflict management and reconciliation, we might be tempted to limit our discussion to the “process” we undertake when a conflict arises. However, when love dominates the culture of our relationships, forgiveness will more often accompany and the need for conflict management is reduced. So I’m wondering if part of our approach shouldn’t be to think about our training, and leadership coaching in helping teams to give some focus to community. This is in harmony with our stated values as well. Since our teams are managed by men, building community and relationships is not always going to be a strong suit left to themselves...
2. It seems to me that the “culture” of our reconciliation process is as or more important than our process. It can take on an atmosphere of negotiation, policy and legalism if we are not careful. Rather, we would want it to have the feel of lovingly pursuing, of looking for how the gospel of grace will have an opportunity to change lives, and of pleasing our heavenly Father with the love we have one for another.
 - It is an opportunity to see Jesus’s grace revealed. (1Pet. 2:12)
 - It is an opportunity for those who will be facilitating the process and those in the process to serve each other by sacrificially carrying each other’s burdens
 - We see working through conflict as an opportunity to grow personally.
3. Note: conflict resolution is a gospel and grace issue! Believing in love, the gospel and in grace is demonstrated by our willingness to lean into conflict, rather than ignoring it. (Unwillingness to lean into conflict is most often a product of fear and unbelief.)
4. Foundational Pattern of Peacemakers ministry:
 - Glorify God
 - Inspires us to trust God in the process
 - It motivates us to obey his commands
 - Helps us to imitate the character of Christ
 - Makes us less dependent or fearful of the results, or focused on other people’s behavior
 - Practically speaking, we can focus our eyes on Jesus by asking ourselves one central question during any kind of conflict: “How can I please and honor God in this situation?”

- Get the log out of your own eye (Matt 7:5) (PK's 90/10 rule)
 - Reconciliation should not be about self-defense or winning.
 - It enables us to more quickly face our contribution to a dispute
 - Can (though not always) help the other person to soften
 - The logs:
 1. Critical, negative or oversensitive attitudes
 2. Words that make things worse
 3. Brian: ill feelings that have been allowed to take root, hypocrisy, pride.
Key in dealing with the logs in our own eye is knowing that our righteousness is amen in Christ. Therefore we have nothing to prove and nothing to lose.
 - 7 A's of confession
 1. Address everyone involved or affected
 2. Avoid "If," "but," and maybe." – no excuses
 3. Admit specifically both attitudes and actions
 4. Acknowledge the hurt (Express sorrow for hurting someone)
 5. Accept consequences (by making right what you made wrong).
 6. Alter your behavior (Change your attitudes and actions.)
 7. Ask forgiveness. (Matt. 7:3-5; 1 John 1:8-9; Prov. 28:13)
 - Brian notes: In my experience, there are aspects of this process that must not be ignored. Sometimes Peacemakers can feel a bit going through a process toward a "decision" but without true healing.
 1. Going through this process will NOT NECESSARILY change the other person's behavior or result in true reconciliation. True confession and forgiveness WILL bring us closer to God and will often bring us closer to other people. However, where sin abounds, confession will sometimes even empower another's sin and ability to hurt. Being naïve about this reality leaves us open to deep wounds and attacks on our faith.
 2. "Altering behavior" is a gospel issue and not just a self-discipline issue. External promises and constraints might temporarily change behavior, but only the Holy Spirit can change the heart.
 3. So I would like to see more dialog about needing God to change us and admitting our inability to change ourselves.
- Gently restore (nurturing a loving relationship by having the courage to confront sin)
 - God uses relationship and community; therefore, we should not be offended when sin is addressed in the context of a loving, restorative relationship
 - Restoration often lifts a terrible burden and so is truly a gift
 - Restoration helps people grow
 - The pursuit of restoration (loving one another enough to be restored) is a visible testimony to the veracity of the Gospel.
 - Note: Before we approach someone about an offense; however, we should always consider overlooking the offense (Prov. 19:11) (Brian comment:

another weakness of Promise Keepers, and of PCA church discipline for that matter, is that people will run too quickly to start this process and ignore the Biblical emphasis on keeping short accounts and sincere private efforts. Process can usually be avoided where there is personal effort made in a spirit of brokenness and transparency.)

- Sometimes the first attempt to lovingly correct and restore does not work. Matt. 18 gives us guidelines within the church how to step up the efforts. (Note: MTW is an arm of the church, but is not a church. This must figure into how we approach church discipline, and how we understand our role as an employer, servant to the PCA through CMTW, and bothers/sisters in Christ.)
- Go and be reconciled
 - Forgiveness is first a process that happens as a spiritual event of us dealing with God, and then extending the forgiveness we have received to others. Reconciliation, has more to do with the response to giving or receiving forgiveness. While it is obvious that they go together, it is often not the case. One must understand this. First, our unwillingness to be reconciled calls into question whether or not we have truly forgiven. Secondly, even if we confess and forgive another, we cannot force them to receive it or to reconcile. Often enough, this is the case. Matt. 6:12; Col., 3:13)
 - We cannot decide to forgive others in our own strength, especially when the hurt or betrayal is serious. There is only one way you can overcome the barriers to forgiveness: admit to God that you cannot forgive unless he changes your heart.
 - Forgiveness is a decision to make the following four promises:
 1. I will not dwell on this incident.
 2. I will not bring up this incident again and use it against you
 3. I will not talk to others about this incident.
 4. I will not allow this incident to stand between us or hinder our personal relationship.
 - Brian's comments: It is interesting that they seem to camp on "forgiveness" as the sum total of restoration. In my experience, true restoration also involves an attempt to make things right. If one has stolen, he returns what he stole and goes the extra mile. If one has committed adultery, he seeks out all the offended parties inasmuch as that action will bless and not harm. If the offense is private, restoration is private. However, if it is a public sin, then restoration will likely involve some kind of public communication and actions. In my experience, people will sometimes voice "forgiveness", but restoration is another step. If we believe God to change us and enable us to forgive, but the other refuses, then there is a path of maturity that understands that we cannot force ourselves into another journey. Their path is God's to guide.

This booklet seems to advertise the effectiveness and need of Christian Conciliation ministry. It makes a good case for the fact that in many situations the people involved may not have the skills or maturity to lead to a good outcome. Also, there are situations where a person feels “trapped”, such as being in conflict with one’s superior, or sexual harassment without the support of line authority, etc. Although this booklet talks about avoiding the downside of legal action, this might have application for us since internal MTW conflict can sometimes become quite public and damaging. Therefore, as we think about when we need to intercede with a trained conciliation person, this might offer some insight as to when that line is in danger of being crossed.

- We would help them look for creative win/win resolution
- We would help them to not rely on courts of the church to bring about the broader goals of true reconciliation
- We would try to insure that the conflict isn’t simply passed over, pacified, or passed on to another team. We would provide more objective observance of our commitment to not “fake peace.”
- We would help to maintain appropriate confidentiality for the parties involved but also for the mission.
- Through intervention we might be used of God to:
 - Resolve conflict in a shorter period of time.
 - Avoid the tremendous cost to MTW, the team, and the Kingdom, of losing missionaries in whom the church and made a tremendous investment.
 - Insert more objective, trained people into the situation.
 - If there is injustice or pervasive sin, intervention will help insure that the damaging sin is not allowed to continue to poison the MTW community.
 - Present a good testimony of God’s commitment to loving relationships to others who are observing how the situation is being handled.

God’s Search and Rescue Plan

The value of this booklet is in setting the tone of why we do church discipline. Again, we are not a church and do not practice church discipline per se; however, the principles of church discipline can be helpful to us in crafting a process. The primary principle of this booklet is that we are lovingly seeking out lost and drowning people with the purpose of seeing them restored to life and hope – through the ministry of the gospel of grace, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Words That Cut

This booklet is about learning how to take criticism. “Criticism” is when another person judges you by declaring that you have fallen short of a particular standard, God’s or man’s. It is hard to take. We defend what we believe to be of great value. We believe something much larger will be lost if we do not defend ourselves: our name, our reputation, our honor. (Some would put it differently by saying that we respond with a great deal of energy, when one of our idols has been threatened.)

Interesting paragraph: “Have you ever claimed, ‘I have been crucified with Christ,’ and believed it for yourself? Part of what this entails is recognizing and agreeing with God’s judgment of each of us – that I have sinned against him. ... Knowing this permits us to respond to all other criticism leveled at us by saying, ‘That is just a fraction of it.’

Brian’s comment: It is a common expression in the church that a person is someone who understands “brokenness.” But this word can be a buzzword, christianese. But it should not be. We know when we are in the presence of someone who has been broken, or who has understood brokenness. They are more compassionate and empathetic, good listeners, ready to repent, loving, and open. They embrace sacrifice, suffering – even criticism as something sent into their lives meant by God for their good. “If suffering is like a knife, we are to kiss the blade. “ – Joe Novenson.

We are never completely broken, but there is a palatable break from the old man whose righteousness was in himself. A broken person, knows that he is fully known by God, and fully loved because of Christ.

I am often afraid of how people are going to respond to criticism. On one hand, there is good reason because it is often in the midst of receiving criticism that we see the worst part of people, the ugliness of an idol rising up, and that is a scary thing. But sometimes I am afraid to bring criticism because of my own idol – the idol of being liked by others. I believe that I will be hated and am fearful of rejection. However, to some the gospel is the aroma of life, and to others it is the stench of death. The difference lies in the source of our righteousness.

I’m not sure what the implication of this might be for our process, except that we need to continue to teach grace. Through grace alone we can respond to criticism with a spirit of thanksgiving; with humility; and surrender. Because of our love for the gospel of grace, we can see God’s hand in criticism and respond, with the help of the Holy Spirit, wisely.

Judging Others

Although judging is a normal and necessary part of life, Scripture warns us that we have a natural tendency to judge others in a wrong way.

Practical application for us: Because this is true, our process should emphasize early that we take the time to get the data, to hear everyone out before jumping to conclusions. A norm should be for us as we work in conflict resolution, and for those involved in conflict resolution, that we believe and hope the best. This is not to say that we are naïve, but it is speaking to a weakness in human nature that without God’s help, we naturally judge poorly.

This is not to say:

- That we are to believe that an actions is good when there is significant evidence to the contrary.
- That we are to accept without question everything that people tell us.
- That we can stifle appropriate discussion, questioning, and debate.
- That we can prevent the exercise of redemptive church discipline.

Warning signs of ungodly judgment:

- We find ourselves thinking negatively of the qualities of others.
- We find ourselves thinking the worst of a person's words or actions.
- We find ourselves thinking the worst of a person's motives.

Guiding People Through Conflict

This booklet seeks to outline what peacemaking looks like in everyday life.

Learn to recognize Escape or (peace-faking) responses (I would also say, not believing the gospel.)

- Escape
 - Denial
 - Flight
 - Suicide or self-sabotage
- Attack (peace-breaking) responses (stemming from a lack of brokenness and humility)
 - Assault: intimidation, verbal attacks like gossip and slander, physical violence, efforts to damage a person financially or professionally.
 - Litigation
 - Murder – is not restricted to actual murder, but setting out to destroy

Seek out Peacemaking responses:

- Overlooking an offense Prov. 12:16
- Reconciliation
- Negotiation – having to do with substantive issues such as money, property, one's future etc.
- Mediation – when it cannot be adequately resolved, privately, between two people.
- Arbitration – when parties agree to allow a third party to make objective decisions on substantive issues.
- Accountability

Things that we can do to help in conflict

I. Coaching from the sidelines:

When it becomes evident that help is needed, we can to a great deal of good without getting directly involved in the dispute. Instead, we can offer counsel on how that individually might be able to go back to the other person and attempt to resolve their difference in private. We counsel the person to pursue the 4 G's. Glorify God, Get the log out of your own eye, Gently restore, and go and be reconciled. The booklet offers more step by step actions we can take from a coaching posture.

II. Mediation

Going further than a coaching role, who works only with one party, a mediator works with both sides to help them move toward a voluntary agreement. (The parties are still responsible for deciding on a final agreement.) Mediation can be as simple as sitting down with the two people over a cup of coffee or as complicated as arranging an all-day meeting with several parties and a panel of mediators.

Key in mediation is knowing when to step in.

Also, a good mediator will be able to take several roles: Intercessor, Convener; facilitator of communication and understanding; model; referee and protector; trust builder; resource expander; generator of alternatives; reality tester; teacher and counselor; encourager and coach; confronter and exhorter; proclaimer of forgiveness; closer; witness.

Mediation must be biblically based.

A mediator must build trust.

A mediator must strive for a win/win atmosphere.

Use a simple mediation process highlighted by the acrostic "GOSPEL"

- Greeting and ground rules (we call them "norms")
- Opening statements – ask each person to briefly explain what they hope to accomplish. (A good time to help them to learn effective listening skills such as remaining silent until a person has finished speaking, with the promise that you will have similar opportunity.)
- Story telling – help them to get the relevant information on the table.
- Problem identification and clarification
- Explore solutions – brainstorm options, evaluate them reasonably and objectively
- Lead to agreement – strive for win/win or no deal. Document the final agreement.

The booklet gives much more detail on each of the above steps.

III. Basic Arbitration Principles

The vast majority of disputes between Christians can be resolved through conflict coaching (working with only one party) or mediation, especially if the church gets involved at an early stage. But occasionally people simply will not be able to reach an agreement. When this happens, God call the church to take jurisdiction over the conflict and provide a decision that will settle the matter once and for all. This process of providing a binding decision is sometimes referred to as arbitration.

Brian: I'm not too sure how this section could help us. There is a sense in which we always have the option of applying a binding decision, because we are the employer. However, it might be a helpful concept in getting agreement from the parties on how a decision will be made, who will be involved, who makes the final decision, who will be consulted, etc. I do see a difference in coaching, mediation, and arbitration. Each is stepping it up. For instance, looking at a particular field, we tried to help

through coaching, then a mediator was sent in and unsuccessful, then a single arbitrator appointed himself to make final decisions. That didn't work too well, seldom does. So perhaps the defining the process of how decisions are run up the line authority.....