

Spiritual Mountain Climbing – Level Eight
“Peace Making”
Pastor Dale Campfield – Eastgate Community Church
June 7th, 2009

Intro:

Matt 28:19 “Go and make disciples of all nations...”

ECC Process of Discipleship: Making an IMPACT...To Love...To Grow...To Serve

We have 3 priorities – To love...which is expressed in our Sunday morning celebration. To grow...which is expressed in our Connection Groups. To serve...which is expressed in our daily lives in the places we live, work and play; as well as through the local church. The vision of E.C.C. is to gather together weekly for corporate worship, loving God and each other; then to come together in small Connection Groups for discipleship and fellowship, and are regularly involved in reaching out to others with the love, acceptance, and forgiveness of Jesus Christ through community outreach. To Love...To Grow...To Serve!

Series Title: SPIRITUAL MOUNTAIN CLIMBING

Premise of Series: EIGHT UPWARD STEPS IN THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN, BASED ON THE BEATITUDES, LEADING TO A LIFE OF IMPACT FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

THE EIGHTH STEP UP THE MOUNTAIN: PEACEMAKING - A Christlike influence, calming the Storms of Life.

Matt 5:9

9 Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.

The word “**Blessed**” in the Greek means (happy, to be envied, and spiritually prosperous — with life-joy and satisfaction in God's favor and salvation, regardless of their outward conditions)

The Old Testament meaning of peace was completeness, soundness, and well-being of the total person. This peace was considered God-given and was obtained by following the Law. It also sometimes had a physical meaning that suggested security or contentment or prosperity. It also at times meant the absence of war. As many of you know, the traditional Jewish greeting, shalom, was a wish for peace.

In the New Testament, peace often refers to the inner tranquility of the Christian whose trust is in God through Christ. The peace that Jesus spoke about was a combination of hope, trust, and the quiet within the soul brought about by a person's reconciliation with God.

Illus: Flowers from 4 year old to mom... rest in peace.

Todd Coget tells the story of a four-year-old and a six-year-old presented their mom with a houseplant. They had used their own money to buy it and she was thrilled. The older of them said with a sad face, "There was a bouquet at the flower shop that we wanted to give you. It was real pretty but it was too expensive. It had a ribbon on it that said 'Rest In Peace,' and we thought it would be just perfect since you are always asking for a little peace so that you can rest.

Our world is full of those who desire peace.

In the over 3100 years of recorded world history, the world has only been at peace 8% of the time or a total of 286 years and 8000 treaties have been made and broken.

- **3100 years of recorded world history.**
- **Only 8% of the time has the world been in peace – 286 years.**
- **8000 peace treaties have been made and broken during that time.**

Illus: pictures of peace rally's or pictures of chaos situations where peace is needed.

As well as individuals in family's, churches, etc. that need peace.

Illus: pictures of families and individuals who need peace.

We need to note, this morning, as we consider this verse, that there are FOUR TYPES OF PEOPLE...and these are people in the church. For if there is going to be peace in the world, there must be peace that comes from the body of Christ – the church! We must be setting the example of Christ's peace that is available to the world.

FOUR TYPES OF PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH

1. PEACE-BREAKERS.

Peace-breakers are those people who go out of their way to break down relationships; to cause trouble and division. They're the **deliberately confrontive people** - they have to confront, disagree with everything. But their motivation is self; they are manipulative, self-seeking. They often use the phrase, "Let me play the devil's advocate here." Why would we ever want to be an advocate of the devil? I know it's just a phrase that we use too often and too easily, but should we really be saying that? Some people, they always want to be that, especially if the conversation is one of peace. They seem to have to add the conflict and strife.

For such people, the Bible has strong words...

ROMANS 16:17-18

"My friends, I beg you to watch out for anyone who causes trouble and divides the church by refusing to do what all of you were taught. Stay away from them! They want to serve themselves and not Christ the Lord. Their flattery and fancy talk fool people who don't know any better."

We can't AFFORD to have peace-breakers in the church, for divisive people cut away the very life principles of the local assembly. They staunch the move of God; they will destroy revival.

PSALM 133. Where does the Lord command the blessing?

But, before we go riding off on a witch-hunt to find the "troublemakers", and 'deal with them', we each need to examine our own hearts. Because you can be a peace-breaker without even knowing it! Most peace-breakers don't realize what they're doing - they feel justified in themselves.

Let me briefly elaborate on the EASIEST (most basic) way to be a peace-breaker.

YOU CAN BE A PEACE-BREAKER BY THE WAY YOU USE YOUR TONGUE!

Let me read to you what the Apostle James wrote about "Taming the Tongue".

JAMES 3:3-10

"It takes only a spark to start a forest fire! The tongue is like a spark. It is an evil power that dirties the rest of the body and sets a person's entire life on fire with flames that come from hell itself. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles, and sea creatures can be tamed and have been tamed. But our tongues get out of control. They are restless and evil, and always spreading deadly poison. My dear friends, with our tongues we speak both praises and curses. We praise our Lord and Father, and we curse people who were created to be like God, and this isn't right."

Gossip, slander, being a busy-body, being opinionated or judgmental. These things are a destructive force against the church of Jesus Christ. They tear down. They cause division and friction. Whenever God begins to do something good, the enemy will always try to interrupt it - and one of his biggest snares is THE TONGUE.

I have witnessed churches go through shattering times of opposition - the moral fall of a pastor; a media inquest against their administration; even a total financial wipe-out - yet they have stood strong, and God has brought them through it to great days of blessing. But I've also seen the most prosperous of churches shattered into a thousand pieces because people could not control their tongues!

Church, there's never a good enough reason for sins of the tongue. Not even the famous, "I'm just telling you this so that you can pray about it". I don't care if you feel so justified; the person you're talking about may be Attila the Hun! THERE'S NO EXCUSES - sins of the tongue grieve the Spirit of God.

OK - enough said. The first type of people around, unfortunately, are the peace-breakers. The second type of people in the church are:

2. PEACE-FAKERS.

What do I mean by 'PEACE-FAKERS'? Well, they're the ones (and I guess the truth is that we've all been involved in peace-faking at one time or another - it's a temptation I know I have to guard against every day of my life), **ones who prefer 'peace' over truth.** Peace-fakers see 'peace' as simply the absence of any kind of argument or discord. They will go to any lengths to avoid any kind of conflict/confrontation/unrest. In doing so they settle for a counterfeit peace that is based on avoiding the real issues.

Let me give you an example. You see a good friend taking a direction with their lives that you can see is leading them into trouble - they're becoming workaholics, or alcoholics. And so you want to shake them to their senses, but every time you broach the subject it

causes an argument and you'd rather just be at peace with your friend. So after a while you just let it go. You avoid the issue, and talk about more agreeable subjects.

Bill Hybels tells of a time that he did just that. He went to a close friend whose life was obviously taking a bad turn, and asked him to come to lunch so they could talk. When the time was right, over that meal together, Bill Hybels said to his friend: "I'm not trying to run your life, but I'm concerned about the direction it's taking". He said that friend of his got so mad, he just about jumped over the table and punched Bill's lights out. So, Bill backed off and said, "SORRY, I'll never mention this again." And he didn't mention it again, and his friend shipwrecked his life. Bill Hybels has seen that friend since, and he had to say to him, "I failed you. I should have said, 'Hit me if you have to, if it makes you feel better, but I'm going to stay on your case because I'm concerned about your future, my friend'".

In choosing "peace-faking" over truth-telling, people think they're being NOBLE, but in reality they're making a bad choice. Whatever has caused tension in a relationship, if left ignored, will come back again without ever being properly resolved.

Some people say they've had ten years experience in marriage, but in fact what they've had is one year's experience of marriage repeated ten times over! Because they've never properly resolved the conflicts of the first twelve months. They've never talked them through.

If things are not resolved, then that peace you're trying so very hard to maintain by avoiding the issues will get harder and harder to keep. Eventually there will come a total breakdown in the relationship. Relationships can die while everything on the surface looks peaceful.

Peace at any price is a form of deception. When you know you need to tell the truth the enemy will whisper in your ear, "Don't do it! Maintain the status quo".

The LORD gives a command in EPHESIANS 4:25 at which peace-fakers tremble . . .

EPHESIANS 4:25

"What this adds up to, then, is this: no more lies, no more pretense. Tell your neighbor the truth. In Christ's body we're all connected to each other, after all. When you lie to others, you end up lying to yourself."

Truth telling takes courage, but any other approach over time will undermine the integrity of our relationships.

So, the second type of people are PEACE-FAKERS.

The third is...

3. PEACE-KEEPERS.

Peace keeping is a whole lot different than peacemaking. There are some that think a truce is a peace treaty.

A peacekeeper is a person who enforces, by whatever means, by force of personality or by superior weapons, a truce.

Illus: "The Peacekeeper" by Samuel Colt in 1873

In 1873, Samuel Colt introduced a pistol that was named "The Peacekeeper." Because of its simple design, and the use of shell cartridges rather than older style loaders, anyone could learn to use this weapon. It was easy to load and the graduated sight made it simple to aim and fire. It was said that God made every man different but Sam Colt made them equal. The concept being that a larger, stronger man could no longer overpower a smaller, weaker man with impunity. What formerly depended on strength now depended on speed and accuracy.

Illus: 1982 President Ronald Reagan, new mobile M-X missile – “The Peacekeeper”.

In November of 1982, President Ronald Reagan dubbed the new mobile M-X missile “The Peacekeeper.” This missile, because of mobility and more modern guidance systems, would be a great deterrent to foreign aggression.

It is interesting that these references are made to weapons. In fact, if you make an internet search with the word “peacekeeper,” most of the references are to weapons, soldiers, wars, and the preventing of such thereof.

If a person is going to set about keeping the peace, it is evident that he or she is going to need weapons. Sometimes the more, the better. It appears that “peacekeeping” is at best, a stopgap measure that is fraught with danger. History has shown that most peacekeeping efforts have had only mixed results and by and large have failed.

In the over 3100 years of recorded world history, the world has only been at peace 8% of the time or a total of 286 years and 8000 treaties have been made and broken.

It appears that “peacekeeping” does not work very well. Not only does “peacekeeping” not offer any solutions to the conflict, quite often the “peacekeeper” themselves get shot.

What most people do not seem to understand is that peace is not something that can be imposed from the outside. You cannot “keep” a peace that isn’t there.

John MacArthur says, “A truce just says you don’t shoot for awhile. Peace comes when the truth is known, the issue is settled, and the parties embrace each other.”

This is the reason that Jesus, in this verse, did not use the word, “peacekeeper,” he used the word, “peacemaker.” There is a world of difference.

A peacekeeper is a person who enforces, by whatever means, by force of personality or by superior weapons, a truce. A peacemaker is one who actually discovers the origin of the conflict, and finds a way to resolve it, and helps the parties to restore a proper, loving relationship. This applies to individuals or nations. He or she actually “makes” or “constructs” peace.

Haden Robinson, writer of Salt and Light says, “No peace will exist between nations until peace reigns in each country. And no country will have peace until peace dwells with the people. And no people will have peace until they surrender to the prince of peace.”

Jesus says in **Matthew 7:3-5**, “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, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”

A young daughter was working so diligently on her homework that her father became curious and asked her what she was doing. She looked up at her dad and replied, “I’m writing a report on how to bring peace to the world.” The father smiled and said, “Isn’t that a pretty big order for a little girl?” The girl continued writing as she answered, “Oh, no. Don’t worry. There are three of us in the class working on it.”

It’s easy to be naïve about peace, because it is in fact, very elusive in our church, in our relationships, in our culture, and in the world today. I recently heard about a group of people who were walking across America on a mission of peace. Unfortunately, they couldn’t get along and divided into two groups in Arkansas! That reminds me of what one person said about Christians who quarrel: “Where two or three come together in Jesus’ name...there will eventually be conflict.”

The forth and last type of people are the ones mentioned in our text as being “blessed” - PEACE-MAKERS!

4. PEACE-MAKERS.

Let me repeat again, a peacekeeper is a person who enforces, by whatever means, by force of personality or by superior weapons, a truce. **A peacemaker is one who actually discovers the origin of the conflict, and finds a way to resolve it, and helps the parties to restore a proper, loving relationship.** This applies to individuals or nations. He or she actually “makes” or “constructs” peace.

Peace-makers are a very different kind of people. They are different to peace-breakers because they set a guard on their tongue at all times, they think before they speak, and they are NOT confrontive just for the sake of it. They don't have to give their opinion all the time, and they are able to walk away quietly and avoid a conflict when the situation calls for it.

They are different to peace-fakers, because they are prepared to tell the truth and trust God for the outcome in order to have a peace that is worthwhile and lasting. They want REAL peace by resolving the cause of conflict.

Peace-makers are prepared to put others' well-being above their own comfort level.

Let me give you another ILLUSTRATION: Imagine a mother looking out her living room window at her three year old son, who is riding his tricycle in the driveway. Her heart spilling over with love, she goes to the kitchen, pours a glass of lemonade and takes it out to him. After he drinks it, she picks him up and hugs him and tells him how much she loves him. The little boy feels wonderful. BUT while mum is back in the kitchen rinsing out the glass, he gets back on his tricycle and cruises right into the street where he was told never to ride. Mum looks back out the living room window just as a car screeches to a stop, and then carefully eases its way around her precious son. She flies out the door, rushes into the street and picks up the boy, bike and all. As soon as they're back in the safety of the house, she starts yelling and spanking him.

The little boy wonders what's wrong with his mother, who just moments ago was hugging him and giving him lemonade. Where has all the love gone? But what WE all understand is that this IS love in a different form, but just as real. His mum is saying, “The happy time five minutes ago with the lemonade and the hugs is a distant memory right now, because we are dealing with life and death. Your well-being is far more important to me than constant warm fuzzy feelings.”

Peace-makers are motivated out of love - real love. If there is any other motivation behind what you are doing or saying then you are NOT acting as a peacemaker.

Well, all of this about peace-makers sounds pretty good, doesn't it? We all want to be peacemakers as God called us to be. BUT, here comes the bit that's not so nice. We must understand this, that PEACEMAKERS WILL OFTEN BE CRUCIFIED. Why do I say this? Because the greatest example the world has ever seen of someone being a PEACE-MAKER resulted in Him being crucified for it.

Jesus' primary role when He came to this earth was to be a PEACE-MAKER. He was making REAL peace, between God and man. Truth had to be upheld (we are all sinners); justice has to be done (someone had to pay the price) - God could not just sweep sin under the carpet. So, Jesus came to make peace. BUT, would you not Jesus' strange words in **MATTHEW 10:34** [READ].

The peace Jesus brings is far more than just the absence of fighting - it is fully restored relationship with God. In the bringing of such real peace (paradoxically) conflict is inevitable. THE MOST VIOLENT CONFLICT THAT EVER TOOK PLACE IN ALL OF HISTORY WAS WITNESSED BY THE UNIVERSE AS JESUS HUNG UPON THE CROSS MAKING PEACE. And the Cross has continued down through the ages to be the ground of conflict - it has been a bone of contention. Some have embraced it in love and commitment to Christ; others have cursed it and ridiculed it. But it was absolutely necessary if peace was to be restored between God and man.

Quote: John MacArthur

“A truce just says you don’t shoot for awhile. Peace comes when the truth is known, the issue is settled, & the parties embrace each other.”

Quote: Haden Robinson Writer of Salt and Light

“No peace will exist between nations until peace reigns in each country. And no country will have peace until peace dwells with the people. And no people will have peace until they surrender to the prince of peace.”

CONCLUSION:

So there we have it. There are four types of people, and I think that it’s very easy to remember this, so don’t forget it. There are:

Peace-breakers; Peace-fakers; Peace-keepers; and Peace-makers. God calls us all to be peace-makers, LIKE HIM (Ephesians 2:14-18). God’s peacemaker wants REAL peace.

Peace-makers may require any or all of the following at times:

- humbling yourself (perhaps to say sorry);
- confrontation of falsity (with truth);
- going out of your way to see the offender/offended;
- the risk of rejection;
- the risk of being misunderstood or misrepresented;
- the risk of appearing wrong or foolish (1 Corinthians 6:7).

Matthew 5:9

“Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called the sons of God”

Why will they be called “sons of God”? Because when you are truly working for real peace YOU BEAR GOD’S LIKENESS. You look like your Father. You’re a chip off the old block. (I used to love it when I was growing up, and people would say, “doesn’t he look like his dad!” I still get a kick out of it.) But there is no greater honor in all the world than when people can say, “Isn’t he like his heavenly Father. Isn’t he like Jesus?”!

Jesus said that a “peacemaker” will “be called the son of God.” He was the ultimate peacemaker. He was the Son of God. He was able to create peace in our hearts by removing the cause of conflict from our souls. That cause of conflict is sin. Shall be called a son of God..... refers to our not only being God’s child, but that we have a reputation for being that! You might think that conflict is inevitable. The greatest amount of conflict is not between nations, it is between family members and church members. More family members are estranged from each other than can be counted. Almost every family has someone they can’t seem to get along with and not on good terms.

The same applies in the church. But this is not Jesus’ prescription. We understand that there are misunderstandings. You heard what you think you thought I meant. When I didn’t mean that. These are easily resolved if we communicate and listen to each other.

Or there are separate goals. One person believes that worship should take place one way. Another believes that worship should take place another way. One believes that the church should do one thing, and the other believes it should do something else. Each one believes that the other is wrong, mistaken, or in some cases, either selfish, has wrong motives, or is not spiritual enough.

All of these things happen. It is because we are human, and fallible. We make mistakes. We get crazy ideas, and so forth. But where we fall down as Christians is that we don't try to understand where each other is in our spiritual journey and allowing for the differences.

A Christian should be one is expert in dialogue and compromise. We should be able to talk to each other intimately, be able to share our feelings without fear of ridicule, and most of all, be willing to compromise on issues that are not basic to Christian belief. It doesn't matter whether we sing contemporary songs or traditional songs in our services. It doesn't matter if someone happens to wear pants to church. It not basic to Christian doctrine. We might think that traditional songs and our ladies wearing dresses to church are more appropriate, but let us not create conflict to achieve that end. It is contrary to what Jesus is telling us to do.

It is important to understand what Jesus is saying. He is saying that our primary identification as His child is by our "peacemaking." What that means is that if we are causing conflict in our families or in the church by our actions, and that is actions that are not related to Christian doctrine, then we cannot be called a "child of God." More importantly, if there has been a conflict in our family or in the church that has not been resolved, we are in danger of our own souls if we are not taking steps to "make peace." And always, the first step to making peace is not to automatically assume that the other is at fault. If you want to truly make an IMPACT, then be a peacemaker. Peacemakers do something to improve the situation.

Write this down: "Do something to make the situation better."

You now have the definition and description of a peacemaker. Some here this morning have a relationship in your family or friends that is broken or harmed. Do something to improve the situation. Others have a habit or addiction that causes them guilt. Do something to improve the situation. Some are stuck in a life situation that leaves them sad and hopeless. This is not what you envisioned for your life. Do something about it. You name the trouble and the difference between those who are blessed and those who are cursed is that the blessed is a peacemaker. He does something to improve the situation.

SUMMARY: It is only as we let the Holy Spirit work in our lives that we will become peacemakers, since this is an attitude which is contrary to all of our natural, human tendencies. It is also against all we have been taught by customs and our society in this world. In the way of the world, it is every man for himself; me first; stand up for your rights. These attitudes, which do not lead to peace, but to strife, have infiltrated the church, and become the normal way of thinking in many churches. We need to pray that the Lord will work not only in our hearts as individuals, but also in our churches, taking away all strife, and bringing in peace. When we are at peace with one another, rather than at odds, then we can work together in a united manner against the kingdom of Satan. Let us pray for, strive for, and work for peace with all our hearts. When we come to the place that we are at peace with both God and our fellowman, we will then be in a position where God can reveal Himself to us; where indeed we may see the Lord, even now. In the end, we have His promise that we shall see Him, and shall be with Him, and be as He is, forever.

EXTRA NOTES TO STUDY

I. It is God's will that all men dwell together in peace.

1. Sinners should dwell in peace. Pr 20:3; 17:19; Mk 9:50

2. Christians are commanded to dwell in peace. Ro 12:18; 14:19; He 12:14

II. Jesus practiced peacemaking while here on earth.

1. Between believers and non-believers. Lk 9:51-54

2. Between people even when fighting seemed appropriate. Mt 26:47-56; Mk 14:47-50; Lk 22:49-53; Jn 18:4-11

3. When He was physically abused. Is 53; Mt 26:67; 27:27-31; Mk 14:65; 15:16-20; Lk 22:63-65; 23:8-12; Jn 18:22-23; 19:1-3

4. Before He left, He promised peace to believers even during His absence. Jn 14:27; 16:33

5. On the cross, He made peace between God and a man as well as between God and mankind. Lk 23:39; Ro 5:1; Co 1:19-20

III. We have been given examples of peacemakers in Scriptures.

1. Paul 1 Co 1:10; Php 4:2

2. Christ Ref given above