

A PROGRAM OF MINISTRY TO MANAGE CONFLICT

A DOCTOR OF MINISTRY PROJECT

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by  
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### **A PROGRAM OF MINISTRY TO MANAGE CONFLICT**

This Ministry Project Report has been read and approved.

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To my wonderful wife, Jan Miller, whose splendid gift of love and confidence during the long and difficult days of writing this project brought encouragement toward completion. Her living out of the biblical truths of peacemaking serves as a living example for all who know her.

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## CHAPTER 1

### THE INTRODUCTION

One of the problems facing the church is how to handle conflict in a biblical manner that benefits the spiritual health and growth of the church. A concern in ministry is how to manage conflict in a way that moves the church to experience greater spiritual maturity in Christlikeness while at the same time moving the church to give priority focus to the “Great Commission” and kingdom work. The effectiveness of each church ministry is made better or worse by how conflict is managed. The purpose of this project is to provide a biblical strategy and practical tools for use by the pastors and churches of the Middle Florida Baptist Association in processing conflict in a way that advances the churches toward growth spiritually and numerically.

This chapter will introduce the research project by describing the history and churches of the Middle Florida Baptist Association found in the counties of Madison, Jefferson and Lafayette. This chapter will identify the problem for research and definitions of terms and concepts. This chapter will overview statements and information on goals for the project and basic assumptions of the project.

#### **The Scope and Characteristics of the Problem**

Conflict does not have to be negative for the health and growth of the church. Conflict does not have to be a tool in the devil’s hand to stunt the spiritual growth of God’s people and embarrass the gospel of Jesus Christ. Conflict does not have to fall into Satan’s arsenal to drain

the people of God spiritually. Conflict does not have to result in leaving God's people in an emotional fog of confusion. Conflict does not have to produce apathy about serving God's mission for the church. Conflict does not have to bring division to the people of God.

Conflict can become a tool of God to grow the Church spiritually. Conflict can become a channel of God's grace to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).<sup>1</sup> Conflict can bring God's grace to grow God's church numerically and in the ministry of the gospel. Paul says, "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have abundance for every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:8).

### **The Background of the Middle Florida Baptist Association**

The Middle Florida Baptist Association is made up of the original Florida Baptist Association of 1842.<sup>2</sup> In 2013, the Middle Florida Baptist Association consists of 34 churches and missions spread over the counties of Madison, Jefferson, and Lafayette of North Florida. The Middle Florida Baptist Association is the birth place of the Florida Baptist Convention. On November 20, 1854, several delegates met at Concord Baptist Church in northwest Madison county to draw up a constitution and bylaws to set up the Florida Baptist Convention.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the New King James Version.

<sup>2</sup>Doak S. Cambell, *The Florida Baptist Association: The First Hundred Years 1842-1942* (Tallahassee, Florida: Executive Committee of the Florida Baptist Association, 1943), 4.

<sup>3</sup>Mike Moore, "Local Program Recalls Historic Baptist Gathering," *Madison County Carrier*, December 1, 2004.

### **The Demographics of the Middle Florida Baptist Association**

There are three counties that make up the Middle Florida Baptist Association. Madison County has a population of 19,224. The racial makeup of Madison County is 56.1% white, 38.6% black/African American, and 2.7% other. Lafayette County has a population of 8,070. The racial makeup of Lafayette County is 86.7% white, 8.2% black/African American, and 4.2% other. Jefferson County has a population of 14,761. The racial makeup of Jefferson County is 60.5% white, 36.2% black/African American, and 1.2% other. Seven churches of the Middle Florida Baptist Association are in Lafayette County. Five churches of the Middle Florida Baptist Association are in Jefferson Country. Twenty two churches of the Middle Florida Baptist Association are in Madison Country.

### **The Ministry of the Middle Florida Baptist Association**

The Middle Florida Baptist Association carries out a multi-faceted partnership ministry which includes: full time Associational Missionary, part time Administrative Assistant, mission support, food ministry support, pregnancy crisis center support, campground ministry, biblical counseling ministry, and support to assist all churches in obeying the “Great Commission” and reaching the area with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### **The Statement of the Purpose**

The purpose of this project is to formulate a tool that will serve in equipping the churches of The Middle Florida Baptist Association to process and resolve church conflict issues in a way that enhances the spiritual, emotional, and relational health of the fellowship which grows the church. This project provides a practical process to teach members of any church the

biblical principles of conflict management that can be applied to their church, family, and personal lives.

### **The Rationale of the Project**

This project identifies key dimensions and dynamics of conflict that interface in a local church context. This project seeks to provide a training tool to grow churches and Christians in healthy conflict management.

Conflict in the church and in the life of the believer is real and certain. Conflict can be beneficial and edifying. Ken Sande notes,

When handled properly, disagreements can stimulate productive dialogue, encourage creativity, promote helpful change and generally make life more interesting. We should seek unity in our relationships. We should not demand uniformity (Ephesians 4:1-3). Instead of avoiding all conflicts or demanding that others always agree with us, we should rejoice in the diversity of God's creation and learn to accept and work with people who simply see things differently than we do (Romans 5:7; 14:1-13).<sup>4</sup>

Unfortunately in the church, conflict most often is destructive and harmful for individual lives and the church life.

There is a need to provide churches with resources to help them progress from spiritual sickness to spiritual health in dealing with conflict. Susan Heitler writes, "The health of any given system, be it an individual, couple, or group can be seen as a function of its ability to negotiate conflict."<sup>5</sup> Susan Heitler identifies a relevant and critical concern about church life in the twenty-first century. Mishandling conflict is a reality of the Christian life and the Christian community. Dysfunctional conflict often flows from innocent differences.

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<sup>4</sup>Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991), 19-20.

<sup>5</sup>Susan M. Heitler, *From Conflict to Resolution* (New York: W.W. Norton Company, 1993), 47.

Augsburger notes,

Conflict is a natural part of life. Whenever people interact with one another, there is potential for a difference in opinion or purpose. Most people are able to deal with minor differences. When major conflicts arise, however, many people do not know what to do. They fear conflict, react defensively or have difficulty negotiating just agreements. As a result, valuable relationships are damaged or destroyed, time and money are wasted, and promising businesses and careers fail.<sup>6</sup>

This project focuses on conflict that brings sickness to the church. In churches across America, conflict is bringing damaged relationships, wounded churches, and tainted testimonies of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Bible teaches that even saved people have a sin nature and live in a world that is saturated with spiritual evil and darkness. These spiritual realities feed the fire of conflict.

All churches and Christians are vulnerable to experience times of conflict. All churches and Christians are prone to manage conflict without scriptural or spiritual guidance. Conflict itself should not be seen as a spiritually discouraging experience for the church or Christian. Approaching conflict from a biblical perspective of behavior and attitude can become a tool of God to advance the spiritual health of a church.

Serving as a pastor for over thirty five years, this writer's experience was to find in every church scars and lingering wounds from those who manage conflict in an unscriptural manner. Serving now as a Director of Missions in the Middle Florida Baptist Association, this writer finds similar blemishes from past conflicts in most churches of the Association.

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<sup>6</sup>David Augsburger, *The Complete Book of Everyday Christianity: An A to Z Guide to Following Christ in Every Aspect of Life*, ed. Paul Stevens (Downer Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1997), s.v. "CONFLICT RESOLUTION," 209.

Unscriptural management of conflict promotes division and disunity in a church and drains away energy that could otherwise be used for productive Kingdom work. Paul Billheimer writes,

“The greatest sin of the church is not lying, stealing, drunkenness, adultery, not even murder but the sin of disunity. Because disunity in the body is more prevalent than these other sins and just as truly ties the hands of the Holy Spirit, it causes more souls to be lost than these flagrant offenses. The Holy Spirit cannot deal effectively in the conviction and conversion of sinners where the “saints” are divided. The most important, momentous, crucial, but the most ignored, neglected and unsolved problem that has faced the Church from its infancy to the present is the problem of disunity. It has been Satan’s master strategy. The sin of disunity has caused more souls to be lost than all other sins combined. Possibly more than anything else, it is the one thing that binds the hands of the Holy Spirit and thwarts His work of convincing of sin, righteousness, and judgment.”<sup>7</sup>

Disunity created by conflict mismanagement gives the Church a confusing reputation that becomes a barrier to lost people considering the gospel of Jesus Christ. When Christians do not settle disagreements according to Scriptural prescription it bogs down the Church’s ministry passion and focus. Handling conflict ineffectively provides Satan with ammunition to establish spiritual strongholds and puts the church in a spiritual quagmire.

### **The Basic Assumptions**

This project examines the following assumptions concerning conflict and conflict management in the local church. This project assumes that conflict is unavoidable in a local church due to the reality of the sin nature in humanity and the spiritually fallen world in which the church functions. Even growing mature Christians experience conflict in the context of the sin nature and the spiritually fallen world. The church is made up of saved sinners (John 1:8-10; Rom. 3:23; I). The church contains carnal Christians. The Bible presents a carnal Christian as a

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<sup>7</sup>Paul Billheimer, *Love Covers* (Fort Washington, Pennsylvania: Christian Literature Crusade, 1981), 31.

Christian who lives by the "flesh" or the "old nature" (I Cor. 3:1-4; Gal. 5:16-17) The Church contains lost people (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43; Rom. 16:17-18; Phil. 3:17-19). Because of its diverse mix, the Church presents a ripe arena for conflict. The church contains people who have different levels of commitment. The church contains different levels of spiritual growth and maturity. The church contains different levels of ethical and moral philosophies. The church contains different levels of understanding of the purpose of the church. The church comprises different levels of processing the meaning of the Christian life. The church contains different levels of ages. The church contains different levels of life experiences. The church consists of people who have different degrees of relationships with other people in the church. The church consists of people who misunderstand each other at times. The church consists of people who miscommunicate sometimes. All these differences influence and affect the processing of conflict in the church. All these differences make conflict a given reality in the life of the church. The aim of this project is to transcend the above differences toward the end of healthy conflict management.

This project assumes that only through the power of the Holy Spirit and the guiding authority of the Bible can a church manage conflict in a manner that benefits the church spiritually and numerically. Roy Bell notes,

The churches in the New Testament were very familiar with conflict, for example, the Corinthian church, and the classic case recorded in Acts 15. Paul and Barnabas were drawn into a serious debate over the Gentile converts who had been won to Christ during their missionary journey. The argument was ostensibly over circumcision. Some of the believers "who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, 'The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses'" (Acts 15:5 NRSV). This was no minor discussion. Circumcision was at the heart of Judaism. The passage speaks of "sharp dispute and debate" (Acts 15:2 NRSV) and "much discussion" (Acts 15:7 NRSV). The tone, comment and content affirm that the discussion was radical and emotional.

But it does not appear to have been personal. There was clearly lots of mud that could have been thrown. The issues were very important to the individuals debating them, to the community and to the future of Christianity. Nevertheless, there was an underlying goodwill, and they did not debate personalities. Without this and a significant willingness to hear what the Spirit had to say (Acts 15:8), no agreement could have been made.<sup>8</sup>

The authority of the Bible must be absolute in dealing with conflict. “God gives in the Scriptures why conflicts occur and how we should deal with them. The more believers understand and follow what God teaches, the more effective believers will be in resolving disagreements with other people.”<sup>9</sup> The assumption of this project is that Christians need to embrace the authority of the Bible and the power of the Holy Spirit in dealing effectively with conflict in their lives and the church.

This project assumes an organized training program to equip and mentor lay people in biblical and practical principles of conflict management is essential for a productive conflict management strategy in the church. The Bible teaches the importance of equipping the saints for the work of ministry (Eph. 4:12). The Bible teaches that at the foundation of “equipping saints for the work of ministry” is the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18). Augsburg writes,

As well as giving us the ultimate model of reconciliation Jesus Christ, (Hebrews 10:10) the Old and New Testaments are full of direction and action from God on the reconciliation of persons to himself. There are many pictures of unilateral forgiveness and provision for sacrifice as a substitute for judgment. It is obvious that complete, direct, personal reconciliation is one of God’s major preoccupations (Hebrews 2:1-4). God’s method of resolving conflict serves both as a model for our own behavior and as a reminder of our own utter dependence on God as the source of all good we hope to achieve.

Biblical peacemaking involves an active commitment to restore damaged relationships and develop agreements that are just and satisfactory to everyone involved (1 John 3:18).

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<sup>8</sup>Roy D. Bell, *The Complete Book of Everyday Christianity: An A-To-Z Guide To Following Christ in Every Aspect of Life*, ed. Paul Stevens (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), s.v. “CHURCH CONFLICT,”. 122.

<sup>9</sup>Sande, *The Peacemaker*, 19.

A spirit of forgiveness, open communication and cooperative negotiation clear away the hardness of hearts left by conflict and make possible reconciliation and genuine personal peace. True biblical vulnerability, honesty and forgiveness can restore a person's usefulness, both to God and to others, and lead to complete restoration of relationships (Galatians 6:1-3; Ephes. 4:1-3, 24).<sup>10</sup>

This project provides churches and Christians a process and tool to learn and apply the scriptural principles of conflict management.

This project assumes that there must be open accountability in the church to follow scriptural principles of behavior and attitude in dealing with conflict. The Bible teaches that a person's behavior does not happen in a vacuum. One church member's actions can influence for good or evil the people around that church member. The Bible teaches the importance of mutual accountability in the body of Christ (Luke 17:13). The biblical concept of accountability means that people are answerable to certain human authorities and ultimately to God for their conduct (Rom. 13:1-2; 14:12). Paul encourages churches to hold people accountable for sinful behavior. Paul writes, "Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all that the rest may fear" (I Tim. 5:20). Stanley Grenz notes,

True accountability does not entail blind obedience to a group or to dictatorial leaders. Rather, it involves taking seriously the simple truth that we are one body, an interrelated, interdependent community of faith. What each of us does and how each of us lives affect the entire fellowship. Any willful, blatant sin casts a shadow over our common testimony to the gospel (1 Peter 2:12). Conversely, as each of us grows spiritually, we all benefit (Eph. 1:18). Accountability also means that we are open to learning from another, knowing that each of us can be an instrument of the Spirit's work in fostering maturity in us. How you live as a believer affects all of us; how I live, in turn, affect you.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>David Augsburger, *The Complete Book of Everyday Christianity: An A-To-Z Guide To Following Christ in Every Aspect of Life*, ed. Paul Stevens (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), s.v. "CONFLICT RESOLUTION," 209-210.

<sup>11</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, *Created for Community: Connecting Christian Belief with Christian Living*, Second ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1998), 222

The assumption is that this project will help Christians approach conflict in the church and their lives with a biblical understanding and commitment to accountability.

### **The Intended Outcome**

The intent of this writer is to apply the research of conflict resolution to provide an ongoing equipping tool that offers practical help to all churches of the Middle Florida Baptist Association. This tool will also find use in the Middle Florida Baptist Association Counseling Ministry where this writer serves as a counselor. Additionally, this tool will find value in local church pastoral counseling and new member orientation in a local church.

The aim of this training process is to serve the churches of the Middle Florida Baptist Association in handling any church conflict with a healthy attitude and behavior that will result in a spiritually stronger church. Most importantly, the objective is to see the churches of the Middle Florida Baptist Association manage conflict for the glory of God.

The purpose of this training process is to encourage the churches of the Middle Florida Baptist Association to embrace a biblically driven conflict management style that is collaborating or a win-win style for the glory of God. This focus promotes trust and respect. This focus brings mutual satisfaction. This focus leaves room for healing of animosity and hard feelings. This focus promotes ownership of decisions made in resolving the conflict. This focus promotes an atmosphere for maximum unity in the church. This focus presents opportunity for openness in seeking multiple solutions. This focus increases the probability of finding the best solution. While it takes time, this focus grows and matures God's people in the process of conflict resolution.

The outcome of the training process is to see the impact of conflict become minimal in detracting the churches from fulfilling the Great Commission. The result of the training process is to grow the churches of the Middle Florida Baptist Association spiritually and numerically. Less attention to conflict allows more time and focus to reach people with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### **Definitions of Terms and Concepts**

The following concepts will guide the research and writing of this project.

#### **The Concepts of Conflict or Conflicts**

Conflicts are disagreements, struggles, or battles over opposing issues or principles. The Latin word “*conflictus*” means an “act of striking together or clashing with.”<sup>12</sup> The Greek word “*agon*” gives us our English word “agony.” Originally meaning a “place of conflict,” this word came to mean the actual conflict itself and later any kind of conflict, struggle, or strife.<sup>13</sup> “*Agon*” is the word the Apostle Paul uses when he said, “I want you to know how much I am struggling for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally” (Col. 2:1). It also finds use in Phillipians 1:30 when Paul speaks of “having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me.”

Stagner defines conflict as “a situation in which two or more human beings desire goals which they perceive as being attainable by one or the other, but not by both.”<sup>14</sup> The American

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<sup>12</sup>June Hunt, *Biblical Counseling Keys – Conflict Resolution: Solving Your People Problems* (Austin, TX: Hope for the Heart, 2008), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 2.

<sup>13</sup>Marvin Richard Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, 3 (Bellingham, WA: Logo Research Systems, Inc., 2002), 481.

<sup>14</sup>Ross Stagner, *The Dimensions of Human Conflict* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1967), 136.

Fellowship Dictionary defines conflict as "A crashing together" or "To come into opposition" or "To fight, to struggle, to battle." Conflict happens when the behavior, attitude or needs one person counters the behavior, attitude or needs of another person. Acts 6 illustrates this definition where the physical needs and personal value of the widows combine to produce conflict.

This project recognizes four types of conflict that become part of the dynamics of church conflict. The first is "Intrapersonal Conflict" which is a struggle within oneself to decide between two or more choices. The second is "Interpersonal Conflict" which is a clash of ideas between two or more people. The third is "Intraorganizational Conflict" which is a competitive or opposing action within a group such as a family, political party, state, nation or a church. The fourth is "Interorganizational Conflict" which is a battle or opposing action between two or more groups such as in the church.<sup>15</sup>

Conflict occurs any time there is a disturbance in the equilibrium and security of a protective environment. This may be an environment of religious beliefs, political thought, personality, integrity, or nature itself.<sup>16</sup> This project views conflict from a foundation of spiritual warfare. The project acknowledges the opportunity for the devil to work through any conflict to bring disruption and confusion to God's Church.

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<sup>15</sup>G. Brian Jones and Linda Phillips Jones, *A Fight to the Better End* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1989), 16.

<sup>16</sup>Paul Mickey and Robert Wilson, *Conflict and Resolution: A Case Study to Handling Parish Situations* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1973), 14.

## The Concept of Resolution

Resolution means “finding the answer” and derives from the Latin “resolutionem,” which points to the “process of reducing things into simpler form” or “to lessen.”<sup>17</sup> This project distinguishes between resolution and reconciliation.

## The Concept of Negotiation

“Negotiation” comes from the Latin “*negotior*” which means to do business or to carry on business. Negotiation is not concession or dominance. Negotiation compels those in the conflict to take specific problems seriously. Negotiation points toward the goal of resolution.<sup>18</sup> Conflict can be made less painful through negotiation. When the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh built an altar at the Jordan River, the rest of Israel feared that these tribes were starting their own religion and rebelling against God. But before beginning an all-out war, Phinehas led a delegation to learn the truth, following the principle taught in Deuteronomy 13:12-19. He was prepared to negotiate rather than fight if a battle was not necessary.<sup>19</sup> To be effective, negotiation must flow from the authority of Scripture and the power of the Holy Spirit.

## The Concept of Reconciliation

There are four Greek words to clarify the New Testament concept of reconciliation. The first word, *katallaso* (2 Cor. 7:10), means to change from enmity to friendship. This dimension of reconciliation would suggest a change in a relationship from one of hostility to one of friendship. The second Greek word, *apokatallasso* (Col. 1:20), means to reconcile completely. It

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<sup>17</sup>*Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary*, s.v. “Resolution”.

<sup>18</sup>Paul Mickey and Robert Wilson, *Conflict and Resolution: A Case Study Approach to Handling Parish Situations* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1937), 30-31.

<sup>19</sup>Neil S. Wilson, *Handbook of Bible Application* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1992), under Conflicts.

suggests that all enmity and impediment of peace is removed. The third Greek word, *diallassomai* (Matt. 5:24), means to bring about an exchange or to reconcile in cases of mutual hostility or yielding to mutual concession. The fourth Greek word, *katallage* (Romans 5:11), refers to a change on the part of one person induced by an action on the part of another. Reconciliation means "100 % restoration to harmony"; "to bring together again."<sup>20</sup> The word reconciliation means to restore to favor, or for those to make friends again who were at enmity with each other.

When two parties are at war with each other and then decide to make up their differences, that is called "reconciliation" in modern understanding. Estranged husbands and wives are asked to "reconcile," as are warring countries. The Greek word *katallage* basically means "change" or "exchange." When used in relationships between people, the term implies a change in attitude on the part of both individuals and a change from enmity to friendship.<sup>21</sup>

Reconciliation deals with restoration of friendship and fellowship after estrangement. Reconciliation has to do with relationship. It does not mean agreement or understanding on every issue. The goals in reconciliation are to process healing of emotional wounds and initiate relational peace if possible; to reestablish a oneness of heart, to encourage the conflicted parties to respect and accept one another in light of honesty, to identify points of misunderstanding, to agree upon a path of renewed friendship and fellowship and to pursue a relationship path that honors Scripture and minimizes harm to the church in sharing the gospel or tainting the reputation of the church.

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<sup>20</sup>New Oxford Dictionary of English (Oxford University Press, 1998); Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary, s.v. "Reconciliation" .

<sup>21</sup>Eugene E. Carpenter and Philip W. Comfort, *Holman Treasury of Key Bible Words: 200 Greek and 200 Hebrew Words Defined and Explained* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2000), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 373.

This project recognizes that while some differences might never find complete resolution, there still can be reconciliation between those who differ. Paul writes, “live in peace and the God of love and peace will be with you” (2 Corinthians 13:11). This can happen through the person of reconciliation who is Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2:14 says, "For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility." This project affirms the Lordship of Christ and the power of the cross as essential to experiencing true and biblical reconciliation.

### **Limitations**

The subject of conflict is very broad and complex. Therefore, the scope and duration of the project needs to be set forth clearly.

#### **The Scope of the Project**

This project intends to meet the needs of churches and persons who have experienced conflict in the Middle Florida Baptist Association. In establishing and evaluating a conflict resolution program for the churches of the Middle Florida Baptist Association, this study explores five areas. Area one is the biblical literature and complementary secular literature on conflict resolution. Area two is the attitude and behavior of the church staff toward conflict resolution. Area three is the attitude and behavior of the deacons toward conflict resolution. Area four is the attitude and behavior of key church leaders toward conflict resolution. Area five is the attitude and behavior of the general church congregation toward conflict resolution.

This project uses the following tools to measure the present level of attitude and behavior toward healthy conflict resolution. Tool one consists of Questionnaires (See Appendix Three – Sample Questionnaire). Tool two consists of Surveys (See Appendix Four – Sample Survey).

Tool three consists of personal interviews (See Appendix Five – Personal Conflict Assessment Summary).

This project examines some of the past attitudes and behaviors toward conflict management in the churches of The Middle Florida Baptist Association and compares it to the scriptural model for healthy conflict resolution. Research will analyze documented episodes of conflict in the churches of The Middle Florida Baptist Association and compare them to the scriptural model for healthy conflict resolution.

A variety of methods will be put in place to promote healthy conflict resolution. The Middle Florida Baptist Association Counseling Ministry will provide a Conflict Management Seminar open to the entire community of the Associational churches (See Appendix Two – “How To Allow Conflict to Benefit Life” and Appendix Five – Personal Conflict Assessment Summary). A four session workshop for pastors is provided for deacons and other key leaders in the churches of the Middle Florida Baptist Association to review biblical principles of healthy conflict resolution. The four session workshop will share ways for ongoing exposure of the churches to scriptural conflict resolution principles using the methods below. Materials from Appendix One and Two will form the basis of this workshop. A four to six week study on Christian conflict management that can find use in a Sunday school class or small group meeting will be available for use in the churches of the Middle Florida Baptist Association. A three to eight week sermon series on Christian conflict management will be made available for use by the pastors of the Middle Florida Baptist Association (See Appendix Six – Sermon Series for Conflict Management – Overview and sample). A deacon Ministry Team is trained to assist anyone requesting help with conflict resolution using Appendix one and two. The training of the church staff to serve as a model and resource for conflict resolution is done using Appendix one

and two. The New Member and New Christian class can contain major instructions on conflict resolution principles that can be applied to the church and the personal and professional life of the Christian. The New Member and New Christian class will draw from Appendix one and two.

### **The Duration of the Project**

This project involves approximately eighteen months from inception to completion. Four months are given to literary and social research, the design of questionnaires, project research and the establishment of the direction of the ministry of peacemaking. Nine months are devoted to developing and implementing peacemaker seminars. Five months are set aside for evaluation, organization and the writing of this project.

### **The Design of the Investigation**

#### **Literary Research**

There are two basic areas of literary research involved in this project. The first is the biblical materials related to the subject of conflict. Research is done for the entire matter of conflict as it pertains to church and personal relationships. The biblical dynamics and instructions concerning conflict are explored. Careful attention is given to establish a biblical perspective on God's roadmap for conflict management and resolution in church and people relationships. Biblical theme books on conflict, commentaries, word study books, the Greek text, related materials, and various translations are explored. The purpose of the biblical research is to establish a defensible and theologically sound basis for the development of principles to undergird an effective ministry to churches and individuals who experience conflict.

The second area of literary research is in the area of extra biblical materials on the subject of conflict. Secular models offer insight into conflict resolution. Roy D. Bell notes the following,

There is much to be learned from secular sources. For example, the idea that the best solution is when both parties emerge feeling they have both won is highly desirable. Interestingly it seems often to have been Paul's technique, the letter of Philemon being a conspicuous example. It may not always be possible to attain this, but it is a good ambition. If we love and care for our brothers and sisters in Christ, we will want to work it out in a way that everybody feels satisfied with the resolution.

Another helpful technique is a time-out. This happens when a local church debating a very contentious issue calls a meeting not to decide but to discuss. One ground rule is the avoidance of personality issues. By removing the possibility of a vote, people will be relaxed and heard. A further meeting can be held to make the decision. A variation of this is to call a meeting to brainstorm on the issue. All suggestions are listed. There is permission to include both the sublime and the ridiculous. No decision needs to be made yet.<sup>22</sup>

Susan M. Heitler, Ph.D. is a clinical psychologist and author of *From Conflict to Resolution*.

Heitler writes from a scholarly and secular perspective of conflict resolution. Heitler's approach to solutions for conflict issues is from an assimilation of systems perspectives, cognitive and behavioral methodologies and traditional views of personality and therapy.<sup>23</sup> Heitler represents a host of writers who approach conflict from a non-biblical and secular perspective. Other such authors and works include David Ausurger's book *Conflict Mediation Across Cultures*, Kevin Avuch's work *Culture and Conflict Resolution*, Gregory Bateson's work *Angels Fear: Toward an Epistemology of the Sacred*, John Burton's work *Conflict: Resolution and Prevention* and Roger Fisher's work *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving*.

### Social Research

Three questionnaires are used to gather needed information for the formation of a ministry to churches and people experiencing conflict. The first questionnaire (See Appendix Three – Sample Questionnaire) is given to pastors, deacons and laypeople throughout the Middle

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<sup>22</sup>Roy D. Bell, *The Complete Book of Everyday Christianity: An A-To-Z Guide To Following Christ in Every Aspect of Life*, ed. Paul Stevens (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), s.v. "CHURCH CONFLICT," 120.

<sup>23</sup>Susan M. Heitler, *From Conflict to Resolution* (New York; W.W. Norton Company, 1993), backcover.

Florida Baptist Association. The questionnaire explores the perceptions and experiences of pastors and laypeople with conflict. The questionnaire seeks to identify who was at fault for conflict, issues that ignited conflict, responses to conflict, and authority or guide for resolving conflict. The second questionnaire is a Bible survey (See Appendix Four – Sample Bible Survey). The questionnaire seeks to assess the level of biblical understanding for managing and processing conflict. The third questionnaire is a personal interview (See Appendix Five – Personal Interview Questionnaire). The questionnaire seeks to access detailed information about episodes of conflict in the life of the church.

### **Goals and Objectives**

The purpose of this project is to identify through academic and social research the major challenges churches and people face in conflict and to structure and implement a practical ministry to help churches and people cope successfully with conflict. Contained within this purpose are a number of goals and objectives.

#### **The Goals in Relation to the Researcher**

The goal for the researcher serving as a Director of Missions is to be better equipped to help churches process episodes of conflict in a healthy and biblical manner. The goal for the researcher serving as a counselor in the Middle Florida Baptist Association Counseling Ministry is to be better prepared to help individuals and families work through conflict in a healthy and scriptural manner. The goal for the researcher's personal life is to grow in being a peacemaker in the home and family.

### The Goals for People in Conflict

The goals for conflicted people are three fold. Goal one seeks to use assessment through academic and social research to perceive needs and struggles related to conflict. Goal two is the establishment of a ministry tool to aid people in coping with conflict. Goal three is to provide an opportunity for people in conflict to work through the trauma of conflict in a redemptive manner.

### The Goals for Churches in Conflict

The goals of ministry to churches in conflict are two fold. Goal one is leading the church to learn from conflict and experience God's grace and healing in the midst of conflict. In addition, the goal is to define biblical guidelines for dealing with conflict in a healthy manner and minimize conflict's impact upon the health of the church.

### The Goal for Pastors of Churches in Conflict

Finally, the goal of ministry for pastors is to help pastors become models of peacemaking for the local church. Pastors should be facilitators of peacemaking in the churches they serve. Pastors need to provide the consistent example for peacemaking for the staff. Pastors need to provide the consistent example for peacemaking for the entire church family.

## **Conclusion**

The churches of the Middle Florida Baptist Association differ in size, context, building structure, and style of worship. Their common experience is conflict. There is not one church that avoids the pain of conflict. The churches of the Middle Florida Baptist Association are a community of spiritually fallen human beings. This fallen nature filters into the relationship problems that challenge families and churches found in The Middle Florida Baptist Association. If Christians stand alone, their only problems are personal, but as soon as other Christians join

them, they have conflict problems as a group. To assume that most of the members of the churches of the Middle Florida Baptist Association are redeemed human beings does not make them any less human or any less prone to experience times of conflict. Differences of taste, temperament, opinion, moral energy, and speed of action among religious people in close association create a certain amount of friction in any church. Wise Christian leaders must anticipate this and have a Bible-based plan and strategy to manage conflict in a healthy manner for the personal and community benefit of the congregation.

The Church is a body of moving parts, a spiritual family of many members. The problems arising in any church will be in direct proportion to the zeal, the activity and the energy of its members. Conflict is inevitable and should be received as an opportunity for personal and corporate spiritual growth.

What then is the conclusion of the reality of conflict and the purpose to formulate a tool that would aid in equipping the members of the churches of the Middle Florida Baptist Association to process and resolve church conflict issues in a way that enhances the spiritual and relational health and growth of the church? Conflict is a given reality in the midst of a spiritually fallen world. Conflict is the price of kingdom advancement and church growth. Conflict does not have to be a negative drain on the church. Conflict that is processed biblically and in the power of the Holy Spirit can become a positive experience for the benefit of the entire church. Conflict can be a tool in the hand of God to advance the local church spiritually and numerically. Conflict can bring glory to God.

## CHAPTER 2

### RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS OF NEEDS

A central factor in establishing a ministry for churches and individuals wounded by conflict is the discovery and analysis of factors surrounding the experience and processing of conflict. First, questionnaire research of conflict perceptions and experiences are received from church members in the Middle Florida Baptist Association. Second, research of conflict perceptions and experiences are received from pastors in the Middle Florida Baptist Association. Third, research of conflict perceptions and experiences are received from deacons serving churches in the Middle Florida Baptist Association. Fourth, research of conflict perceptions and experiences are received from personal interviews with church members in the Middle Florida Baptist Association.

#### **Overview of Research on the Middle Florida Baptist Association**

Question asked: When conflict happens in the church, it is usually the fault of which of the following? Options for response were pastor, staff or staff members, church member or members, and combination of the above. Pastors see conflict as the fault of a combination of the pastor, staff, and church members (100%). Deacons see conflict as the fault of a combination of the pastor, staff, and church members (55%). Deacons view church members as the blame for conflict (45%). Lay people see conflict as the fault of a combination of the pastor, staff, and church members (70%). Lay people see conflict as the fault of church members (20%). The

above reflects a majority agreement that conflict in the local church is a shared responsibility and rarely the fault of one person.

Question asked: When conflict happens in the church it usually relates to which of the following? Options for response were money, making changes, poor communication, sin, and other. Pastors see conflict relating to making changes (40%), poor communication (30%), and sin (25%). Deacons see conflict relating to money (30%), making changes (30%), poor communication (20%), and sin (20%). Lay people see conflict relating to making changes (40%), money (25%), poor communication (25%), and sin (10%). The above reflects making changes is the top issue of igniting conflict in the church. Money issues and poor communication are high on the list as the context of conflict in the minds of deacons and lay people.

Question asked: When conflict happens in the church which of the following usually takes place? Options for response were people taking sides, people leave the church, people seek to follow the Bible, people seek to pray, and other. Pastors see people taking sides (90%), people leaving the church (5%), and people seek to follow the Bible (5%). Deacons see people taking sides (70%), and people leaving the church (30%). Lay people see people taking sides (58%), people leaving the church (29%), people seeking to pray (10%), and people seeking to follow the Bible (3%). The above reflects that all three groups see people taking sides as the number one response to conflict. People leaving the church is the second most perceived response to conflict.

Question asked: When conflict happens in the church what do you think the church should follow in handling the conflict? Options for response were Bible, church constitution and bylaws, respected members, pastor, deacons, and other. Pastors think the church should follow the Bible (100%). Deacons think the church should follow the Bible in handling the conflict (100%). Lay people think the church should follow the Bible in handling conflict (80%), follow

church constitution and bylaws (12%), follow respected members (4%), follow the pastor (1%), and follow the deacons (3%). The above reflects overwhelming agreement that the church should follow the Bible in handling conflict.

Question asked: When conflict happens in the church what does the church usually follow in handling the conflict in your experience? Options for response were Bible, church constitution and bylaws, respected members, pastor, deacons, and other. Pastors view the church to usually follow respected members (29%), pastor (8%), Bible (7%), and constitution and bylaws (7%) in handling church conflict. The highest percentage for the pastor's experience was other (43%) which includes following the loudest member, following family and friends, following people's ideas, and following the emotional temperature of the conflict. Deacons view the church to usually follow respected members (60%), constitution and bylaws (20%), deacons (10%), and other (10%) which includes following personal opinions of church people, most vocal church members, and own beliefs. Lay people view the church usually following the church constitution and bylaws (40%), respected members (20%), Bible (12%), deacons (11%), pastor (7%), and other (10%) which includes most vocal members and own beliefs.

While everyone seems to agree that the Bible should be followed in handling conflict, this is not what pastors, deacons, and lay people see their churches following in handling conflict. Pastors see their church follow respected members most of the time. Deacons see their church follow respected members most of the time. Lay people see their church follow the constitution and bylaws most of the time. All three groups note people following the most vocal members, most emotionally expressive members, and personal opinions of members in response to conflict.

Question asked: Which of the following statements best represent your view of conflict resolution? One option for response was if the person causing the conflict would listen to the

church this conflict could be settled. A second option for response was if the person causing the conflict would follow the Bible this conflict could be settled. A third option for response was if the person causing the conflict leaves the church this conflict could be settled. Pastors and deacons were in complete agreement (100%) that if the person causing the conflict would follow the Bible the conflict could be settled. Lay people agree with the pastors and deacons (96%) with (2%) indicating that if the person causing the conflict would listen to the church the conflict could be settled and (2%) indicating the if the person causing the conflict would leave the church the conflict could be settled.

It is clear that all three groups have personal views that conflict could find resolution if the person causing the conflict would follow the Bible. There is contradiction between what the three groups believe about settling conflict and what the actual behavioral response is in settling conflict.

### **Interview Research with Members in the Middle Florida Baptist Association**

Several church members agreed to a private interview regarding conflict from their personal experience as a church member (See Appendix Five – Personal Interview Questionnaire). The following insights are from these interviews. Insight one is the pain of conflict. Conflict produces deep and often lingering emotional pain in churches and church members. Insight two is the destructive price of conflict. Conflict costs lost testimony of one's faith in Christ. There is no church in the Middle Florida Baptist Association that sees its testimony of obedience to Christ in the community improved because of conflict. Conflict costs lost membership. There is no church in the Middle Florida Baptist Association that grows in number due to conflict. Many of the people who leave a church due to conflict do not get

involved in another church. Insight three is the continuing impact of conflict. Churches repeat conflicts. Churches experience spiritual dysfunction due to conflict.

### **Insights from Research on the Middle Florida Baptist Association**

The survey of the pastors, deacons, and laypeople of the Middle Florida Baptist Association brings to light the need for church members and pastors to be taught how to process conflict in a healthy and biblical manner. In sharing additional thoughts through the survey, the overwhelming comment was for the church to be taught from the Bible how to deal with conflict in a way that makes the church member strong spiritually and brings spiritual growth to the church. Pastors, church members, and deacons of the Middle Florida Baptist Association affirm their belief in the Bible as the authoritative Word of God. It is application of biblical truth on conflict that challenges the pastors, deacons, and church members of the Middle Florida Baptist Association. It is the need for pragmatic application and implementation of conflict resolution principles that motivates this ministry project.

### **Additional Research on Pastors and Conflict**

The following is a summary of Christianity Today's research on pastors and Church Conflict.<sup>24</sup> The purpose of the study is to determine the key issues that cause congregational conflicts, to identify how churches pursue solutions, and to gain insights for minimizing the negative effects in order to assist church leadership in building strong churches.

Nearly all (95%) of these pastors have experienced conflict in their churches in some

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<sup>24</sup>"Managing Church Conflict: The Source, Pastors Reactions, and Its Effects," *Christianity Today* (2007): 3-4.

capacity. Eight out of ten (84%) have had past experience with a church conflict; one-quarter is in the throes of conflict now. Of the pastors surveyed who have had firsthand experience with church conflict, more than four-fifths experienced “congregational” conflict. The two most common sources of congregational conflict, cited by two-thirds or more deal with control issues or vision/direction of their church. At least one-third has experienced church conflicts that swirl around leadership changes, the pastor’s style, and/or financial issues.

Three out of four pastors learned about the conflict through members of their congregation, with church board members ranking next. The proportion of the congregation who knew about the situation was related to church size. Typically, it was either a small group or no more than half of the congregation being cognizant.

The two most common responses by the pastor to the congregational conflict were “anger” and “defensiveness.” One-third said they were “overwhelmed” or “shocked.” In most cases, an informal, behind-the-scenes process managed the congregational conflict. This was the experience of more than 80%, although over half (56%) sought outside counsel. A formal, public process was sometimes available, but 37% did utilize this approach.

Nearly all pastors were able to identify positive outcomes, the most common being a greater sense of wisdom. On the opposite side, 93% cited negative effects of the conflict. Ranking highest were damaged relationships and a sense of sadness. One-third also experienced a drop in attendance at their church, leaders leaving, a loss of trust, and/or feelings of bitterness.

While 94% have experienced congregational conflict, 79% of the pastors have experienced conflict aimed at them individually. Thirteen percent are the focus of some

personally directed conflict at the current time. The three most common personal conflicts have focused on control issues (67%), the pastor's style (57%), and vision/direction of the church (51%). Pastors from churches of less than 100 were more likely to indicate that control issues were major sources of conflict than pastors of larger churches.

Nearly 60% of pastors learned about conflict aimed at them through members of their congregation. A distant second were church board members (35%), followed by church staff (28%). This pattern paralleled information sources about congregational conflict. Initial response by the respondent was similar to feelings that surfaced when respondents learned of conflict brewing in the congregation. Defensiveness and/or anger were the most commonly felt emotions, both sensed by half the respondents. Responses next were shock and a sense of being overwhelmed.

An informal, behind-the-scenes process was the most common way of handling the personal conflict as well as major congregational conflicts. Eighty percent managed the conflict in that way while half sought counsel from trusted outside resources. When presented with eleven possible effects of past or current personal conflicts, more negatives than positives were cited as outcomes. While most said they were wiser, the majority also experienced damaged relationships, sadness, and loss of trust.

Nearly 40% said they have left a pastoral position, at least in part, due to conflict. Compared to those who stayed, pastors who left were more likely to experience tension surrounding vision or direction of the church, financial issues, and the pastor's style. Those who left were less likely to cite positive benefits of the situation and more likely to cite negatives, particularly damaged relationships, loss of trust, leaders leaving, and a decrease in the church's attendance. They were also more likely to have feelings of bitterness, brokenness,

and confusion about the situation.

## CHAPTER 3

### PERSPECTIVES ON CONFLICT

#### **Biblical Foundation**

The Bible is the primary source for Christian literature surrounding conflict resolution. The Bible illustrates, explains, and offers solutions for interpersonal conflict. Among the more notable instances of interpersonal conflict recorded in the Bible are the hostilities between Cain and Abel (Gen. 4:1-16), Abram and Lot (Gen. 13:8-18), Jacob and Esau (Gen. 25-27; 32-33), Jacob and Laban (Gen. 29-31), Saul and David (1 Sam. 18-31), Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42), Jesus' disciples (Mark 9:33-37; Luke 22:24-27), Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:36-41), and the Corinthian believers (1 Cor. 1:10-12; 3:2-4; 11:18).

The root cause of interpersonal conflict is sin (Gal. 5:19-20). James explains that fighting is the result of uncontrolled passions and desires (James 4:1-3). The book of Proverbs characterizes those who stir up conflict as persons given to anger (Prov. 15:18; 29:22), greed (Prov. 28:25), hate (Prov. 10:12), gossip (Prov. 16:28), and worthless perversions (Prov. 6:12-15). Such conflicts inevitably result in personal destruction (Prov. 6:15), discord (Prov. 6:14), and strife (Prov. 10:12; 16:28). It is no wonder that “the Lord hates ... one who stirs up trouble among brothers” (Prov. 6:16,19 HCSB).

The Bible places great value on the ability to live at peace with one another (Ps. 34:14; Mark 9:50; Rom. 14:19; 1 Thess. 5:13; Heb. 12:14; 1 Pet. 3:11), in unity (Ps. 133:1), and

harmony (Rom. 15:5-6). At the same time, the Bible declares unequivocally that such peace is given only by God (Num. 6:26; John 14:27; 16:33; 2 Cor. 13:11; 2 Thess. 3:16) and lived out only as believers pattern their lifestyles after that of Jesus (Phil. 2:3-8).<sup>25</sup>

Using the Bible as a foundation, the following works represent an abundance of Christian works on conflict resolution: *Conflict Management and Counseling* by Gary Collins, *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict* by Ken Sande, *Conflict and Resolution: A Case Study Approach to Handling Parish Situations* and *When the Saints Come Storming In* by Leslie Flynn.

### **Types of Conflict in the Bible**

The Book of Esther illustrates four types of conflict that relate to the local church ministry. First is intrapersonal conflict. Intrapersonal conflict is a struggle within oneself to decide between two or more choices. In the Book of Esther, does Esther approach the king in an attempt to save the Jewish people from extinction which could earn her a death sentence or does she remain silent and live? Esther said, “All the king's officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law: that he be put to death. The only exception to this is for the king to extend the gold scepter to him and spare his life. But thirty days have passed since I was called to go to the king” (Esther 4:11).

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<sup>25</sup>Chad Brand, Charles Draper and Archie England, ed., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 190.

Second is interpersonal conflict. Interpersonal conflict is a clash of ideas or interests between two or more people. In the Book of Esther, malicious Haman plots to have Mordecai murdered only because Mordecai refuses to bow down to him. “When Haman saw that Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor, he was enraged” (Esther 3:5).

Third is intraorganizational conflict, which is a competitive or opposing action within a group (a family, department, church, political party, state, or nation). In the Book of Esther, the king learns about the plot which was crafted not by the enemy on the outside but by Haman, his top official on the inside. The king becomes enraged after realizing Haman has manipulated him into issuing a death sentence to murder all the Jewish people. “The king got up in a rage, left his wine and went out into the palace garden. So they hanged Haman on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the king's fury subsided” (Esther 7:7, 10).

Fourth is interorganizational conflict, which is a battle or opposing action between two or more groups (families, companies, religions, or countries). In the Book of Esther, because of Haman's surreptitious plot, the Persian nation threatens to annihilate the entire Jewish population men, women, and children. “Dispatches were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with the order to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews—young and old, women and little children—on a single day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods” (Esther 3:13).<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>June Hunt. *Biblical Counseling Keys: Conflict Resolution: Solving Your People's Problems* (Austin, TX: Wordsearch Corp. 2008), 3-4.

## **The Spiritual Warfare Aspect of Conflict**

The Bible speaks of conflict in the context of a spiritual battle. James 4:1-3 says, “Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.” The Bible says in 1 Peter 5:8, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” In the midst of any conflict is the devil who is seeking to bring influence of destruction and death.

In conflict, believers are empowered by God to wage war against the fortresses or strongholds of the intellect: "casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5). False ways of thinking, whether directly or indirectly inspired by deceiving spirits (1 Tim. 4:1), are to be rejected. Believers battle with sophistries, ideologies, and every other idea that opposes the knowledge of God.

The Bible, in Matthew 5:23, 24; Matthew 6:12, 14, 15; and Matthew 18:1-35, gives foundational scriptural truth to guide the church in conflict resolution. Scripture addresses conflict principles within the family of God when a person is hurt and when a person sees another person sinning. (See Appendix One – Biblical Principles of Conflict Resolution)

The Bible gives several insights about conflict resolution which will enter into the core of this ministry project. Conflict allows us to grow to be more like Christ (2 Cor. 12:7-10). Peacemaking starts with our own personal attitude which comes from a focus not on the conflict but on God (1 Peter 3:13-15). It is possible to reconcile oneself unilaterally but only if the past is

forgiven completely (Phil. 4:2-9). Resolving conflict may require different methods at different times and places (1 Samuel 25:26-35; Esther 7:1-6; Proverbs 6:1-5; Acts 16:22-24; Acts 22:22-23, 29). Differences of opinion are inevitable due to individual giftedness (1 Cor. 12).

Reconciliation does not necessarily require giving up or giving in, especially when someone is being hurt by ongoing conflict; loving confrontation may be preferable (Galatians 6:1-5). God reconciled all to himself through sacrifice and forgiveness, but we must pass this gift on to others to realize its full benefits (Eph. 4:29-32). Resolving conflict God's way may require us to accept consequences and to alter our behavior (Eph. 4:22-32). Justice is God's, not ours (Luke 6:27-39). Biblical peacemaking involves an active commitment to restore damaged relationships and develop agreements that are just and satisfactory to everyone involved (1 John 3:18). A spirit of forgiveness, open communication and cooperative negotiation clear away the hardness of hearts left by conflict and make possible reconciliation and genuine personal peace. True biblical vulnerability, honesty, and forgiveness can restore a person's usefulness both to God and to others and lead to complete restoration of relationships (Gal. 6:1-3; Eph. 4:1-3, 24).

The Bible keeps attention on the spiritual aspect of conflict. Pastor Rick Warren says, "The root cause of internal conflict and discord is always selfishness."<sup>27</sup> James says, "Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures" (James 4:1-3). Selfishness roots in pride and breeds a wicked attitude of wanting to be in charge or be in control.

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<sup>27</sup>Rick Warren, "How a Leader Resolves Conflict," *Leader Lifter* LO22, 1996.

While selfishness is at the foundation, “conflict does not usually emerge from a single cause.”<sup>28</sup> “Understanding the variety of causes is crucial to dealing with conflict.”<sup>29</sup> Conflict can be classified under three areas.

The first areas or cause is individual shortcomings. The church’s problems are caused by the shortcomings of certain people. Many times it is spiritually sick people who make church life miserable. There are three shortcomings in people that cause church conflict. The first shortcoming is fear. Many church conflicts begin when people become anxious about what is happening or not happening in the church. When anxiety turns into worry and fear, people begin to lose perspective about what is actually going on. The result is conflict. The second shortcoming is needs. Sometimes one person’s needs conflict with another person’s needs and that is when church conflict can begin. The third shortcoming is sin. Personal sin is the cause of many church ills. The only way to deal with sin is through repentance. Often repentance is difficult to do in the middle of conflict.

The second area or cause of conflict is problems outside the person. Outside problems fall into three categories. The first category is the category of issues. The church has money available to spend on needs. In a church there will be many options of what to do with the money. Each option has its own issues. Conflict comes when people cannot agree on the issue. For example, there will be agreement on the need to buy a computer. There will be disagreement and possible conflict over the issue of what brand of computer to buy or the parameters of the computer to buy.

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<sup>28</sup>Marshall Shelley, *Leading Your Church Through Conflict and Reconciliation* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House Publishers, 1997), 103.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 104.

The second category is dichotomies. In a dichotomy, the possible solutions are limited to two. The choices facing the church absolutely exclude the possibility of satisfying both sides of a controversy. Dichotomies are much more difficult to deal with than issues. Those who perceive themselves as losers can become angry. Sometimes they sabotage agreements or leave a church when they do not get their way.

The third category is value differences. Value differences are not seen as often in churches as are issues and dichotomies. Value conflict is tortuous to work through and the likelihood of finding agreement low. Some people in churches, for example, might object to any divorced person being in leadership positions; others believe that forgiveness of divorce extends to letting people lead the congregation. It is never easy for churches to dispute about values. Conflict flows easily from value differences because of the passion that people wrap around values.

The third area or cause of conflict is behavior patterns. Each church has unwritten rules about how it goes about disagreeing. In one church, each disagreement is immediately taken to the pastor for his adjudication. In another church, disputes are publically avoided and handled by gossip. However the dispute is handled, it is not necessarily done consciously. People learn behavioral patterns of how to handle conflict and the pattern might be spiritually sick.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Marshall Shelley, *Leading Your Church Through Conflict and Reconciliation* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House Publishers, 1997), 104-114.

## **The Emotional Aspect of Conflict**

Conflict always stirs emotions. The emotional components include anger, distrust, defensiveness, scorn, resentment, fear, and rejection. It is vital to deal with the emotions of conflict before addressing the substantive aspects of conflict. In conflict resolution the first goal is to deal constructively with the emotions. A peacemaker understands foundationally this need and seeks to receive from God the grace and power to calm and heal emotions.

The following three step process provides a channel for the Holy Spirit to lessen the emotional temperature of a conflict. Step One is to treat the other person with respect. Respect for another person is felt through an attitude conveyed by specific behaviors. Communicating respect comes from specific behaviors such as listening intently to the other person and looking at him with genuine concern. A soft tone of voice can communicate respect. Kind and gentle words can communicate respect. The type of reasoning I use can convey respect. Peacemaking cannot happen until every effort is made to communicate respect for the conflicted person.

Step two is to listen until you clearly understand the other person's position and thinking. Under the best conditions, effective communication is difficult to achieve. During conflict when feelings are strong, people are especially prone to misunderstand one another. A goal of listening is to understand the content of the other person's ideas or proposals. A second goal is to discern the meaning it has for that person. A third goal is to appreciate the feelings the other person has about issue of conflict. This means being able to step into the other person's shoes and view from that person's point of view the things the person is talking about. One of the best ways to communicate more accurately during disagreements and to be a biblical peacemaker is to institute Carl Roger's rule: "Each person can speak up for himself only after he has first restated the ideas and feeling of the previous speaker accurately and to that speaker's satisfaction." It is

very difficult to accurately understand and summarize another person's point of view unless we listen with humility and the aid of the Holy Spirit. Only when the other person feels heard and understood can progress be made as a peacemaker. It is at these first two points that peacemaking often breaks down.

Step three is to share your views, needs, and feelings with humility and in the control of the Holy Spirit. This can only happen after the peacemaker has demonstrated understanding of the other person's feeling and point of view. Five guidelines should frame your sharing. First, state your point of view briefly. Second, avoid negative words. Third, say what you mean and mean what you say. Fourth, share your feeling with brokenness. Fifth, ask God to show you whether you even need to share your point of view. Often, if step one and step two are accomplished, there is no need for step three by the peacemaker.<sup>31</sup>

### **Healthy Conflict Management**

Healthy conflict management understands that conflict can be healthy and beneficial for the church. Conflict in the church is not necessarily a sign of ill health. Conflict can be constructive and helpful to the church. Some of the most important benefits are as follows: Conflict can cause issues to be fully understood. Conflict can be open eyes to see the clear issues that might otherwise be cloudy in the minds of church leaders. Conflict can help the church to make better decisions. Conflict can motivate leaders to get complete information on a problem before making a decision. This puts the leaders in a wiser position to make the best decision concerning the conflict. Conflict can bring the people to greater commitment to the

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<sup>31</sup>Robert Bolton, *People Skills: How To Assert Yourself, Listen to Others and Resolve Conflict* (New York: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1979), 218-222.

decisions made by leaders. If the leaders give best effort to making good and healthy decisions about an issue of conflict, the people's commitment can be one of the sweet fruits of the good decisions.<sup>32</sup>

Acts 15 shows several healthy benefits of conflict resolution. One benefit is positive action to benefit the Church and solve the problem, "...choose men from among them to send to Antioch" (verse 22). A second benefit is high morale building among the people. "It seemed good to the Apostles ... elders ... whole Church. And Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brethren with a lengthy message" (verses 22, 31, 32). A third benefit is a sense of peace builds among the people. "And after they had spent time there, they were sent away from the brethren in peace to those who had sent them out" (verse 33). A fourth benefit is the mission of the church and the Word of the Lord goes forth. "But Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and preaching, with many others also, the word of the Lord" (verse 35). Overall Acts 15 teaches how conflict can deepen vision and unity in the church.

Healthy conflict management recognizes that conflict often comes from conflicting visions. Anderson says, "Many churches have visions that conflict."<sup>33</sup> The term "division" is formed with a prefix "di," which means double or two. Division, which produces conflict, is having two or more visions competing in a church. Conflict and division comes from a double or two visions in a church. The prophet Amos asks, "Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?" (Amos 3:3). Jesus said, "And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand" (Mark 3:25). A church "divided," having more than one vision, cannot stand. "Multiple,

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<sup>32</sup>Eward. Dobson, Speed Leas and Marshall Shelly, *Mastering Conflict and Controversy* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1992), 32-33.

<sup>33</sup>Leith Anderson, *Leadership That Works* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1999), 115.

often conflicting, visions within the same church complicate the leader's task."<sup>34</sup> Conflicting visions describe this leader's predominate experience with conflict in the local church ministry. One group in the church desires to go forward and is open to change. Another group desires to hang on to past ways of doing things regardless of the effectiveness or efficiency of the past ways. The outcome is conflict. Such conflict breeds disunity in the church which reduces focus on the Great Commission. "Preserving unity within the church is a key spiritual factor in evangelistic success."<sup>35</sup>

Healthy conflict management anticipates and prepares for predictable times of conflict. "Pastors are better prepared for church conflict if they know when it is more likely to come."<sup>36</sup> Conflict is ripe and possible, if not probable, during the following ten times in the life of a church:

1. Easter is a ripe time for conflict. Easter is usually the busiest time of the year. A church offers more programs and services which can create more stress and tension, and any underlying or submerged conflicts more easily surface.
2. Stewardship campaigns or budget preparation is a ripe time for conflict. The focus on money gives opportunity for people to express their dissatisfaction with the church. Budget prioritizing can stir conflict from those who feel neglected or overlooked.
3. Addition of a new staff member is a ripe time for conflict. The most frequent type of conflict in congregations is between the pastor and key leaders in the church. This is particularly true when a new pastoral staff member is called. New staff means not only changes in relationships and procedures but also changes in directions and priorities. Anytime there is change, especially in relationships, there is good possibility of conflict. Change in leadership style is a ripe time for conflict. When a congregation calls a pastor and that pastor has a leadership style different from the predecessor, conflict is a near certainty.

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid. 118.

<sup>35</sup>John Borek, Danny Lovett, and Elmer Towns, *The Good Book on Leadership* (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Publishing Group, 2005), 94.

<sup>36</sup>Marshall Shelly, *Leading Your Church Through Conflict and Reconciliation* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House Publishers, 1997), 45.

4. The pastor's vacation is a ripe time for conflict. If serious problems are festering in the church, those who are upset will sometimes gather to discuss them while the pastor is away.
5. Conflict also comes during this time when churches depend unduly on the pastor and people subconsciously panic when the pastor is absent. One group begins to fuss with another group and absent the pastor who is able to be a peacemaker there is conflict.
6. Changes in the pastor's family are a ripe time for conflict. Often changes in a pastor's family, even for the better, will cause conflict in the congregation. If a pastor decides God wants more time to be spent with the family conflict can come from those who feels the pastor is reducing interest in caring for the congregation.
7. Different generations coming into the church are a ripe time for conflict. Baby boomers tend to be more liberal than previous generations, and live significantly different lifestyles. With baby boomers typically both parents work full time and have little free time. There is therefore short term commitment and support of only programs that meet their needs. Generations younger than baby boomers also add to the atmosphere for conflict.
8. Completion of a new building is a ripe time for conflict. Studies reveal that after completion of a new building, clergy are vulnerable to firing. While a building is going up there is focus in the church. Once the building project is over, unless a new focus emerges, frustration will build and get directed into a conflict.
9. Loss of church membership is a ripe time for conflict. Conflict is more likely when a church endures significant drops in membership. Members often pin the blame on the pastor or group who have nothing to do with those who have left.
10. Increase in church membership is a ripe time for conflict. An increase in church membership can also trigger conflict because as congregations grow their personalities change. People happy with the old personality and setup usually do not like the new personality and new people taking leadership once held by the old guard.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., Shelly, 45-52.

## CHAPTER 4

### FORMULATING AND IMPLEMENTING A MINISTRY PLAN

#### **The Process of Formulation**

Following several months of observation, examination, conversation, and thought, a “Peacemaker Seminar for the Local Church: Resolving Conflict God’s Way” was scheduled for the Middle Florida Baptist Association. The initial seminar was planned for approximately six hours on a Saturday morning at the Middle Florida Baptist Association office. The seminar targeted pastors and key lay people in the association. The seminar brought pastors and key leaders from approximately fifty percent of the churches in the association. The content of the seminar was determined by this writer’s personal experience as a pastor for 38 years, literary research, association research and social research concerning the needs of church members and churches that experience conflict.

#### **Biblical Basis**

The following passages of scripture serve to undergird this project and provide support for the development by this writer of a significant ministry tool with the design to practically and biblically address the needs of churches and church members on the challenge of conflict. The first scripture passage stands at the foundation of God’s heart for the church as the body of Christ. Psalm 133 says, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, running down on the beard, the beard of Aaron,

Running down on the edge of his garments. It is like the dew of Hermon, Descending upon the mountains of Zion; for there the LORD commanded the blessing, life forevermore.” “Brethren dwelling together in unity” is a picture of a church being a peacemaking church.

A peacemaking church is a recipient of God’s blessing of unity. The psalmist points out in verse 3 that in the midst of “brethren dwelling together in unity” the “Lord commanded the blessing.” The need for the peacemaking purpose of the church and pursuit of the blessing of unity is brought into clear focus by Paul Billheimer.

The greatest sin of the Church is not lying, stealing, drunkenness, adultery, - not even murder - but the sin of disunity. Because disunity in the Body is more prevalent than these other sins and just as truly ties the hands of the Holy Spirit, it causes more souls to be lost than these flagrant offenses. The Holy Spirit cannot deal effectively in the conviction and conversion of sinners where the "saints" are divided ... The most important, momentous, crucial, but the most ignored, neglected, and unsolved problem that has faced the Church from its infancy to the present is the problem of disunity ... it has been Satan's master strategy. The sin of disunity has caused more souls to be lost than all other sins combined. Possibly more than anything else, it is the one thing that binds the hands of the Holy Spirit and thwarts His work of convincing of sin, righteousness, and judgment. Disunity is the most heinous and destructive sin of the church.<sup>38</sup>

The prayer of Jesus in John 17 points to unity and peacemaking for the church. Jesus prayed:

“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me (John 17:20-23).”

A passage that frames conflict resolution within the context of the cross is Ephesians 2:14-15. Paul writes, “For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of

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<sup>38</sup>Paul Billheimer, *Love Covers: A Biblical Design for Unity in the Body of Christ* (Fort Washington, Pennsylvania: Christian Literature Crusade, 1981), 31.

commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace.” Paul uses a vivid picture from the ancient Jewish temple when he says “has broken down the middle wall of separation.”

The temple consists of a series of courts, each one higher than the one that went before. The Temple itself was the inmost of the courts. First, there was the Court of the Gentiles, then the Court of the Women, then the Court of the Israelites, then the Court of the Priests, and finally the Holy Place. A gentile could enter only the first of these. Between that court and the Court of the Women was a wall. The wall was a kind of screen of marble. Set into the wall at intervals were tablets that warned if a gentile went any further, he was subject to instant death. It was that wall that Christ broke down. The gentiles were without hope and without God, shut out from the presence of God by this wall that man had made. Christ tore down that wall so that gentile and Jew could become one in union with Christ.

Conflict and peacemaking in the church is a picture of people building walls, putting up fences, barriers and divisions. The only way walls of intolerance, fences of hate, and barriers of misunderstanding can be broken down in the church is Christ. “For He Himself is our peace who has made us one ... thus making peace.”

Additional passages provide impetus to the writer to encourage all who are of the body of Christ to be about peacemaking in the church and in this world: “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God” (Matthew 5:9). “Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness” (James 3:18). “Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs that you stand in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel” (Philippians 1:27).

These scriptures provide the basis for taking initiative in addressing the needs of the church that struggles because of conflict. These scriptures give focus to be steadfast to help church members who experience the agony of conflict.

### **Appropriate to Needs**

The design of any ministry for the church must take into consideration the purpose of the church as the agent of God in taking the gospel to the ends of the earth, the spiritual and emotional forces at work in the church and the lives of God's people, and the needs of all who will be the target of the ministry of peacemaking. The task of a peacemaking ministry is made complex by the presence of many conditions which tend to make people loveless and unwilling to pursue peace: pettiness, ignorance of scripture, pride and stubbornness, self-righteousness, competition, power struggles, status seeking, and activism. Coming to grips with personal needs and spiritual condition as the body of Christ is the first step to learn how to minister God's grace and truth in the arena of conflict.

### **Church and Association**

Research on the needs of the church as it relates to the development of a peacemaking ministry tool and process is very helpful on several levels. First, members of the churches of the Middle Florida Baptist Association demonstrate a realistic awareness of the impact and challenge of conflict situations. Members of the Middle Florida Baptist Association show sensitivity and concern for fellow Christians and churches that go through conflict.

Second, the Middle Florida Baptist Association is open to the full counsel of scripture, love, and prayer as priorities in participating in a peacemaking ministry. Third, there is much ambiguity in taking what the Bible teaches about being a peacemaking church and living out the

principles of peacemaking such as forgiveness, reconciliation, love, and humility. Fourth, the Middle Florida Baptist Association gives evidence of being willing to support any effort to minister to churches or people in conflict. Finally, the Middle Florida Baptist Association indicates a willingness to receive the instruction of scripture and to grapple with the issues of conflict and peacemaking.

#### Pastor and Director of Missions

The examination of this writer's personal experience as a pastor with 38 years of senior pastor experience reflects a pilgrimage that motivates the formulation of a peacemaking ministry plan. Teaching about conflict resolution is not part of this writer's college or seminary experience. This writer's seminary experience brought quality preparation for many things in the pastoral ministry. Conflict management was not one of them. Conflict in this writer's first pastorate ignited the ongoing yearning for understanding the scriptural truth and path of conflict resolution. Conflict management was on the job training. Every church pastored by this writer presents a workshop for practical handling and processing of conflict. The hunger for some reasonable, practical and biblical approach to address the dilemma of conflict in the church and the Christian life becomes more urgent as this writer's ministry path advances.

Serving now as a Director of Missions and interacting with 34 churches and missions, this writer sees more clearly than ever that conflict is a certainty in the life of God's Church and people. There is no way for a church or Christian to become exempt from conflict. Developing a ministry plan and tool to help churches and Christians deal with conflict in a way that brings God's power and blessing becomes a passion for this Director of Missions.

## Families and Counseling Ministry

Conflict does not just visit the Church and Christian. Conflict falls upon all lost and saved. Serving as Director of the Middle Florida Baptist Association Counseling ministry, this Director of Missions and other counselors seek to impart the wisdom of scripture and the power of the Holy Spirit in helping people know God's path for peace. Every person who comes to the Counseling Ministry for help is seeking help in an environment of family conflict. Biblical principles of conflict resolution pave the way for the hearing of the gospel for all who experience the care of the Middle Florida Baptist Counseling Ministry.

### **Implementation**

The primary implementation of this ministry project is in the form of a "Peacemaker Seminar for the Local Church." Secondary implementation is a "Peacemaker Seminar for the Family."

#### Session One of Peacemaker Seminar on Conflict for the Church

Session one seeks to introduce the seminar by sharing the roots of the seminar, defining conflict, overviewing results of research on conflict and the Middle Florida Baptist Association, summarizing additional research by Christianity Today on pastors and church conflict, overviewing biblical truths to understand why we have conflict in the church, emphasizing the cost of conflict mishandled, pointing out the difficulty of peacemaking, sharing foundational scriptural truths that any who will be a peacemaker must embrace, and stating the goal of the seminar to help Christians and churches in the Middle Florida Baptist Association to become a team of peacemakers by embracing a biblical model for peacemaking.

## Session Two of Peacemaker Seminar on Conflict for the Church

Session two seeks to overview the “Peacemaker Pledge: A Commitment to Biblical Conflict Resolution” that each participant is asked to make. Session two outlines in detail the materials of Peacemaker Ministries, which is a non-profit organization with the aim of equipping and assisting Christians to respond to conflict biblically. These materials, used by written permission from Peacemaker Ministries, grow from the “Peacemaker Pledge: A Commitment to Biblical Conflict Resolution,” which teaches the peacemaker to glorify God, getting the log out of your own eye, go and show your brother his fault and go and be reconciled.

## Session Three of Peacemaker Seminar on Conflict for the Church

Session three deals with miscellaneous subjects that relate to being a peacemaker such as handling the emotional component of conflict, handling the tongue issue in being a peacemaker, handling conflict and promoting peacemaking in a church business meeting, foundational principles in processing change as a peacemaker leader or pastor, principles to have a peacemaking church, how to conduct a peacemaker meeting, and showing the church the anchor of peacemaking in the church covenant.

## Series of Sermons to the Church

Each pastor attending the seminar receives the offer of a series of sermons from Peacemaker Ministries. This gift is by written permission from Peacemaker Ministries. The sermons can be accessed on line at [http://www.peacemaker.net/site/c.aqKFLTOBIpH/b.7989097/k.6EE6/Sample\\_Peacemaking\\_Sermons.htm](http://www.peacemaker.net/site/c.aqKFLTOBIpH/b.7989097/k.6EE6/Sample_Peacemaking_Sermons.htm) (See pages 133-138). The sermon titles are “Real Peace,” “The Powerful Witness of Unity,” “Finding Peace through a Prompt “You Turn,” “The Silence that Stifles True

Happiness,” “Criticism and the Cross,” “Discipline: God’s Gift and Blessing to the Church,” “The Welcoming Father and His Three Sons,” and “Our Church: A Dwelling Place for God?”

### Peacemaker Seminar on Conflict for the Family

The Middle Florida Baptist Association has an arm of ministry known as the Middle Florida Baptist Association Counseling Ministry. This writer and spouse serve as the counselors for the counseling ministry. The objective of the counseling ministry is to bring the truths of the Word of God to the needs and challenges of life this side of eternity. People who come for counseling in the Middle Florida Baptist Association counseling ministry arrive in the context of conflict.

Churches experience conflict. Families experience conflict. Ken Sande notes,

There are three ways we can handle the conflicts of normal family life. We can be peace-fakers, denying that we have problems, always giving in, or becoming distant from family members. We can be peace-breakers, relying on manipulation, a sharp tongue, or overt anger to compel others to give into our wishes. Both of these approaches can wreak havoc on families, reducing them to superficial coexistence or burned out battlegrounds. Our third option is to use the conflicts of family life to become peacemakers, drawing on God’s grace and practicing the powerful peacemaking principles He has given to us in His Word. This approach may require a lot of work and change, but it is the surest way to preserve your marriage and see your family mature in love, in character and in its witness for Christ.<sup>39</sup>

The seminar on a peacemaking family roots in the teaching of Peacemaker Ministries and draws from Ken Sande’s book *Peacemaking for Families: A Biblical Guide to Managing Conflict in Your Home*, Gary Harper’s book *The Joy of Conflict Resolution: Transforming Victims, Villains and Heroes in the Workplace and at Home* and Ken Sande’s and Kevin Johnson’s book *Resolving Everyday Conflict*. All information from Peacemaker Ministries is

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<sup>39</sup>Ken Sande, *Peacemaking for Families: A Biblical Guide to Managing Conflict in Your Home* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers Inc., 2002), preface.

used by written permission from Peacemaker Ministries. Seminar materials use in the counseling ministry parallel what is taught in the seminar on growing a peacemaking family.

Teaching families about peacemaking exposes them to biblical truth around the following sessions. Session one focuses on families that fight. Families that fight teach that marriage means conflict, how to get to the heart of conflict, and a biblical framework for peacemaking. Session two focuses on the peacemaker marriage. The peacemaker marriage teaches the principles of confession, confrontation, forgiveness, and negotiation. Session three addresses family conflict. It seeks to teach children to be peacemakers, making peace with children and handling conflict between adult family members. Session four is getting help. This session addresses getting help for a troubled marriage and insurance policies of a healthy marriage.

## CHAPTER 5

### EVALUATION AND ANALYSIS

The evaluation and analysis for the ministry project involves four parts. First, an overall examination of the various parts of the entire project is made to ascertain specific positive and negative values of each step in the development of the ministry project. The main areas of assessment are: design, interview and research, seminars and recommendations to pastors and churches of the Middle Florida Baptist Association. Second, an evaluation of the model of ministry to churches and people experiencing conflict is made with emphasis on the structure and organization, the content, and the results. Third, an assessment of general strengths and weaknesses for the whole project is made to clarify the general impact of recommendations for the operation and ministry of the local churches of the Middle Florida Baptist Association. Finally, certain conclusions are drawn and recommendations made for ongoing peacemaking ministry in the local church with the intent of strengthening the church, ministering effectively to situations of conflict, and growing the pastor as a model of peacemaking to produce a dynamic peacemaking local church.

#### **Design and Research**

The following is a brief sketch of the primary methods used in the total development of the ministry project. First, during the planning stage, approximately fifty people were engaged in conversation on the subject of church conflict management. These informal talks stirred fruitful

thoughts, ideas, and insights about conflict. The participants in these conversations came from varied backgrounds, some were church members, some were friends and colleagues in ministry and others are not associated with any church. The expressions of feelings, stories, hurts and disappointments provided a strong incentive to address the needs of churches and people in conflict. One of the surprises was the frequency in which these informal talks brought forth unhealed pain, sorrow, and anguish in experience with church and family conflict.

It is difficult to assess the value of pastoral conversations surrounding conflict, but their value to the writer is due to certain cautions that become apparent and hold true throughout the ministry project. The subject of conflict ignites intense feelings of betrayal, misunderstanding, anger, and bitterness rooting in conflict experiences and widespread misinformation about the biblical dynamic of conflict that tends to produce a spiritually dysfunctional pastor and church. Pastors who have experienced conflict in their ministry are often extremely sensitive to negative, simplistic generalizations on the subject of church and ministry conflict. Pastors who see their ministry exempt from the threat of conflict tend to think pastors who have conflict in their church or leave a church because of conflict are less spiritual and immature as a pastor. These factors encouraged the writer to be sensitive and cautious in formulating and executing some aspects of the ministry project.

Formal social research was implemented primarily through demographic studies and questionnaires. The questionnaires gathered information on attitudes and opinions of people's experience with conflict for the continuation of the project. The greatest value of the questionnaires was to see the distance between what people believe about conflict and how people actually handle conflict. Pastors, deacons, and church members all agreed that the Bible should be followed in dealing with conflict. Yet, responses to how pastors, deacons, and church

members approach and handle conflict are void of biblical understanding and scriptural adherence.

Social research gave a basis for understanding the problems involved in developing a ministry of peacemaking for the local church and for people in general. The social research brought to light the depth of the problem of conflict and encouraged the search for finding a practical and scriptural tool to help churches, pastors, and people process conflict in a healthy and beneficial manner.

Literary research involves two basic areas. The first is the Biblical material and included theological word books, commentaries, and the Bible. The intent was to locate and understand teachings, principles and guidelines pertaining to the matter of conflict in order to establish a biblical basis for ministry to conflicted churches and people. Writings outside the Bible were used to glean guidelines and principles for helping churches and people in conflict, to examine different perspectives on conflict, and establish a broad view on the subject of conflict.

The Biblical studies provided a foundation and theological basis for ministry, guidelines for accomplishment, and purpose surrounding the ministry project. Contemporary writings provided a framework of understanding the wide array of needs in the lives of those touched by conflict and ways those needs can be addressed.

### **Interviews**

Interviews with individuals who find themselves in the midst of church conflict proved to be fruitful for insight in giving felt needs solutions to pastors and churches in the peacemaker seminar. These interviews reveal major areas of conflict topics that surface in the local church. People see conflict coming from men serving as deacons who are morally and biblically

ineligible for service as a deacon. People see conflict coming from people who want to be pacified in their complaints. People see conflict coming from staff members who will not honor commitment to the church in terms of time spent in ministry. People see conflict coming from staff members who seek to undermine the pastor's ministry through lies and misinformation. People see conflict coming from people who are in positions of leadership, who seek to embezzle money from the church. People see conflict coming from people resisting or opposing change in the church due to church growth or new ministry development in the church.

The interview process for the project could have been improved by consulting more people who had experienced successful management of conflict. It could also have benefited from talking to people from different generations to learn their perspective on the church conflict. It would also have been helpful to bring people together from different church for discussion of church conflict perspectives.

### **Sermons**

Eight sermons from Peacemaker Ministries were made available to pastors who attended the peacemaker seminar for the local church. These sermons were intended as vehicles for pastors to address specific scriptural principles that speak to the issue of peacemaking in the local church. They address real problems in the local church that produce conflict and bring biblical teaching to bear on those problems. When the seminar was conducted in a local church setting, this writer preached a sermon on Psalm 133 the "Peace Producing Principle of Unity" (See Appendix Seven – Director of Missions Sermon for Local Church Seminar).

Several steps could have been taken to improve this portion of the project. A partial outline of each sermon with space for taking notes could have been provided to the pastors.

Encouragement for pastors to provide a discussion time following the service for each sermon preached would help deepen the truths into the lives of the hearers. Following up with each pastor who attends the peacemaker seminar and discussing the value of the pastor preaching the series to the church would provide accountability for the pastors to preach the series.

### **Church Action from the Peacemaker Seminar**

The association seminar on peacemaking for the local church was well attended with church representation from nearly one half of the association. Three churches welcomed the teaching of the seminar in their church. The three churches had strong attendance at the local church seminar on peacemaking. The three churches experienced conflict challenges following the teaching of the seminar in the church. The reality of spiritual warfare, mentioned earlier, is clearly evident in the three churches. Most churches in the Middle Florida Baptist Association, at the writing of this paper, did not respond to the offer of the Director of Missions to conduct a local church peacemaking seminar.

### **Evaluation of the Model**

#### **The Structure and Organization**

The structure and organization of the seminar at the association level was a lecture style with opportunities for written questions to be submitted and answered. Due to time constraint of the seminar, the controlling of time for questions was necessary. A detailed note book was given to each participant containing information covered in the seminar, as well as supplementary material.

The structure and organization was weak in that the presenter had more relevant materials to present than time allowed presenting it. There was weakness also in not allowing adequate

time for questions and answers. Adding additional time to the seminar for both teaching and questions would improve the overall impact of the seminar.

### The Content

The content of the seminar was adequate in that major questions and issues raised in the research dimension of the project were addressed in the seminar. Peacemaker Ministries' model of handling conflict is an excellent tool to put in the hands of pastors and church members. The tool is both biblical and practical. The challenge is getting people to unlearn unscriptural attitudes and behaviors and embrace biblical attitudes and behavior surrounding conflict.

The miscellaneous content of the seminar has great potential to help churches deal with conflict if embraced. The miscellaneous section dealt with subjects that relate to being a peacemaker such as handling the emotional component of conflict, handling the tongue issue in being a peacemaker, and handling conflict and promoting peacemaking in a church business meeting. In addition, the miscellaneous section covered foundational principles in processing change as a peacemaker leader or pastor, principles to have a peacemaking church, how to conduct a peacemaker meeting, and showing the church the anchor of peacemaking in the church covenant.

The biggest issue of conflict in the church surrounds change. In the miscellaneous section, pastors and church leaders were taught how to process change in a way that minimizes disunity and conflict. Most pastors in the Middle Florida Baptist Association welcomed a scriptural roadmap to lead in church change that reduces the opportunity for conflict.

Many churches have in their bylaws a document known as the "Church Covenant." Some churches even have the "Church Covenant" displayed on a prominent wall. The "Church Covenant" is a document that calls the church and Christians to peacemaking. The "Church

Covenant” is a biblically based resource already in the life of the church that if obeyed will become a tool of peacemaking in the local church.

### **Strengths and Weaknesses**

The strengths of the project were found in several aspects of its development and execution. The project had great meaning for the churches of the Middle Florida Baptist Association. For years, the association had little training to meet the needs of churches dealing with conflict. The project opened the door for some practical solutions for future conflict for those who have experienced previous conflict at the church level.

Another dimension of strength for the project is its contribution to pastors and church leaders learning that they can tackle tough areas of ministry with minimal dissent or defeat. Encouragement is given to a change in the attitude and feeling level of the congregation in the midst of conflict. As the project proceeded, more and more individuals expressed desire to see peacemaking as the rule rather than the exception for the church and God’s people. More and more people came to understand that conflict managed in the power of God on the authority of scripture opens the door for greater evangelism and discipleship.

Pastors and church leaders were given a vision of what God can do through conflict in the church to grow the church and Christians to experience the glory of God. As James Macdonald notes, “A church with no conflict is likely a church that is manufacturing peace in a way that prohibits glory for God.”<sup>40</sup>

A final strength of the project is its effect on the writer to reveal mistakes made in personal pastoral ministry that did not serve peacemaking in the midst of conflict. For the first

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<sup>40</sup>James Macdonald, *Vertical Church* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2012), 147.

time in the writer's ministry there is a spirit of confidence to both deal with conflict in the body of Christ and to teach others how to deal with conflict.

Just as there were strengths in the project there were also weaknesses. In spite of the involvement of many persons in the project and in spite of exposure of the truths of God's Word about conflict management, no core of leadership was trained for equipping peacemakers in the church. Individual contributions are abundant, but the opportunity to develop a group of people called to the peacemaking ministry was minimal. Lesson plans, sermon outlines, talk back sessions after sermons and more discussion in the seminar would have been helpful at various stages in the implementation of the project ministry. The questionnaires could be improved by focusing more on elements of conflict that relate to personal bias or ignorance about biblical conflict management.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The experience of planning and implementing a ministry project designed to meet the need of churches and Christians becoming peacemakers, results in the formation of several conclusions and thoughts for future ministry. These conclusions and recommendations appear relevant to this writer's ministry as a Director of Missions and applicable to church conflict needs in any setting.

#### Conclusions

1. People in the church are interested in the teaching of the Bible about matters pertaining to the conflict issue of life and will listen to any pastor or Bible teacher who demonstrates faithfulness toward God and His Word and a loving spirit toward people.
2. Pastors and church members may or may not comprehend how destructive conflict

can be to the church and its testimony. Interviews with several individuals confirm that some professed Christians stop attending church due to conflict.

3. Pastors and church members may or may not comprehend the barrier conflict can become to the church sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with a lost and dying world. Interviews with several lost people confirm that conflict in churches hinder their response to the gospel and the ministry of the church.
4. People and churches who neglect to learn from conflict will often repeat the same mistakes that result in conflict.
5. A church that will model biblical peacemaking in its pastor and leaders will be given opportunity to provide meaningful ministry to families that are going through conflict. People who see the church processing conflict in a healthy and biblical manner are more open to receive ministry from the church for conflict in their lives.

#### Recommendations

1. A peacemaking church begins with organizing the church according to scripture. The scriptural organization of the church is as follows:
  - A. A New Testament church is a body with Jesus Christ as the Head. (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18)
  - B. A New Testament church is pastor led. (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; 1 Timothy 5:17; Titus 1:5; Hebrews 13:7,17)
  - C. A New Testament church is deacon served. (Acts 6)
  - D. A New Testament church is committee/team operated. (1 Corinthians 12)
  - E. A New Testament church is congregationally confirmed. (Acts 6)

2. A peacemaking church needs a pastor who commits to and models scriptural peacemaking.
3. A peacemaking church needs deacons who commit to and model scriptural peacemaking.
4. A peacemaking church needs all leadership (Sunday School Director, Women's Missionary Union Director, Brotherhood Director; Committee/Team leaders, etc.) who commits to and models scriptural peacemaking.
5. A peacemaking church needs the church to conduct all business meeting in harmony with the Peacemaker's Pledge and Robert's Rules of Order. The Peacemaker's Pledge will frame the attitude, words and behavior to be Bible centered. Robert's Rules of Order can keep the business meeting on a peaceful track.
6. A peacemaking church needs ongoing scriptural teaching on peacemaking to help church families grow as peacemakers in their homes and in their lives.
7. A peacemaking church needs to incorporate teaching of biblical principles on peacemaking into new member classes, small groups and leadership training. The Bible's teaching about peacemaking should be ongoing and repeated in the life of the church.
8. A peacemaking church needs spiritual leaders (pastor and deacons) to hold church members accountable to scriptural peacemaking behavior and attitude. The pastor and deacons must be proactive in spirit filled correction of the following behaviors: irresolvable disputes between members (Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:11), persistent teaching of false doctrines (Romans 16:17; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Titus 1:9-11; Titus 3:10-11; Jude 1; 2 Timothy 4:2-4; 1 Timothy 1:20; 1 Timothy 2:17-18), continuing immorality and disorderliness (1 Corinthians 5:11; Ephesians 5:11; 1 Timothy 5:20; Titus

3:10; 2 Thessalonians 3:6; 3 John 1:9-10. The pastor and deacons are accountable to God to hold church members accountable to scriptural peacemaking behavior and attitude.

### Concluding Thoughts

The primary insight from this project is found in not the conclusions or recommendations which are practical expressions of research and applications for future ministry. More than anything else this writer realizes that the prime factor in a church ministry of peacemaking begins with the heart of leadership in the church. If church leadership positions the church to have the heart to move forward in obedience to God's Word on peacemaking in both attitude and behavior, the people of the church will follow. This writer hopes that the time and energy put in this project will produce a scriptural peacemaking culture in the churches of the Middle Florida Baptist Association. This writer sees a peacemaking culture in the Middle Florida Baptist Association bringing greater obedience to the "Great Commission."

## APPENDICES

### **Appendix One - Biblical Principles of Conflict Resolution<sup>41</sup>**

#### Introduction

Basic Goals and Principles In Righting Wrongs based on Matthew 5:23, 24; Matthew 6:12,14,15 and Matthew 18:1-35.

1. Basic Goal - To restore all relationships in the quickest time possible, while involving as few people as possible.
2. Basic Principles
  - a. The Christian who first becomes aware of a wrong has the responsibility to initiate and carry out God given procedures in taking care of it until it has reached a satisfactory completion.
  - b. The Christian who first becomes aware of a wrong ought to proceed as quickly as possible within the framework of God-given procedures.
  - c. The Christian who first becomes aware of a wrong should seek the counsel of a spiritual leader if he is unsure what to do. Confidentiality should be observed by not using any name.

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<sup>41</sup>Peter Lord, *The 29:59 Plan: A Guide to Communion with God* (Titusville, FL: Agape Ministries, 1976), 20-23.

A. Conflict Resolution wwithin the family of God.

1. When you are the offender - the one who has done wrong

a. First, it must be set right with God. Psalm 51:1-4

- 1) Confession to God - The verbal acknowledgement that you have done wrong according to God's standards. 1 John 1:9
- 2) Repentance to God - Sorrow that results in action according to God-given procedures and in return to God's ways. 2 Cor. 7:9,10
- 3) Acceptance of God's forgiveness that God has given you solely by his work on the cross. Romans 5:1; Colossians 1:20
- 4) Rejoicing in your freedom from the burden - John 8:34,36

b. Second, it must be set right with those offended. Matthew 5:23, 24

- 1) Confession to the offended. Seeking to be private is important to preventing Satan from further infiltration into the situation. The confession should be only as public as was the offense. Seek to keep the focus on naming the basic offense. The devil would want you to confess every thought to every person in order to create confusion.
- 2) Asking for forgiveness - Forgiveness is not a feeling; it is an act of obedience.

Note: Wrong approaches:

Sharing blame - "I am sorry, but if only you had not ..."

Being vague - "I am sorry, forgive me."

Placing a doubt - "If I have been wrong, I'm sorry."

Right Approach: Name basic offense

"I see I have been wrong in \_\_\_\_\_. Will you forgive me?"

- c. Third, satisfactory/necessary restitution must be made. Ephesians 4:28-31
    - 1) Anything stolen must be returned.
    - 2) Lies told need to be confessed.
    - 3) Gossip and slander that have hurt relationships and reputations must be repudiated.
    - 4) Gratitude for favors received must be given.
    - 5) Rebellion against authority experienced in attitudes and actions must be replaced with submissive spirit and action.
  - d. Finally, it must be set right with yourself. Sin always damages you. Ps. 32:3, 4
    - 1) Accept God's forgiveness and forgive yourself.
    - 2) Seek cleansing from the cause of the sins.
2. When you are offended - the one who has been wronged. Matthew 18:21, 22
- You must seek reconciliation with the offender.
- a. Self-examination - Under the Holy Spirit you must examine yourself to see if you have contributed in any way to the wrong that was done. Did you provoke?
  - b. Prayer preparation – Prayerfully, you must go to the offender with a committed attitude of forgiveness and reconciliation.
  - c. Wise face-to-face confrontation - A good approach would be, "Have I done something that has caused you to be angry with me?" Always give the other person the benefit of the doubt and promote an attitude that wants restitution.
  - d. Finalize the matter - Do not leave until you have done all in your power to consummate the matter by the full restoration of relationship. Pray together.
  - e. If a person refuses to talk with you or refuses to forgive you, leave it in the hands

of God and pray about seeking a hearing in the future. Continue to love that person with Christ's love. Continue to pray for that person. Continue to look for ways to serve that person.

3. When you are the Christian who sees a brother sinning – Gal. 6:1, James 5:19.
  - a. Pause to pray for guidance. You need to be very careful and spirit-led. Yet, you cannot avoid your God-given responsibility to be a peacemaker.
  - b. Make sure of your own spiritual condition. Galatians 6:1 seems to indicate only the "spiritual" ought to handle this. Take time to make sure your own obedience is up to date.
  - c. Approach the party who you believe is the most likely to initiate God's procedures. Have in mind a procedure to suggest to them.
  - d. At times it will be appropriate to go and participate in the reconciliation.
4. All members of the church should follow the principles outlined in Matt. 18:15-20 to guide in any disagreement.
  - a. It is recognized that often disagreements are pure in motive and honor Christ in attitude.
  - b. It is recognized that people will often disagree in an honest and respectful manner. Sometimes the best thing to do is to agree to disagree on issues of preference. Continue to serve God in peace and respect with the person of disagreement.
  - c. It is recognized that sometimes disagreement roots in and prompts behavior that is unscriptural and wounds the cause of Christ in a person's life and the life of God's Church. It is this kind of disagreement that should alert us to be sensitive to follow Biblical truth in processing the conflict.

- d. Make sure the following is taking place in your life:
    - 1) You have prayed asking God to give you Christ like words, attitude, and action as you go to this person.
    - 2) Your heart is full of humility, love, kindness, and your desire is reconciliation, peace, and healing.
  - e. Go privately to the person with whom you have a disagreement. If resolved, praise God and go forth in the peace and power of God serving the Lord. If not resolved,
  - f. Go with someone who is spiritual (Gal. 6:1) to the person again. Make sure the person you take with you walks with God and commits to honor Christ and pursue peace. If resolved, Praise God and go forth in the peace and power of God serving the Lord. If not resolved, prayerfully move to the next step.
  - g. Go public before the church after you have consulted with the pastor to make sure all efforts have been made to handle it privately.
5. In situations where disagreement or behavior is not being processed biblically and is hindering the cause of Christ in the church, the pastor and trained leadership teams should lovingly, peacefully, and respectfully intervene to pursue healing, reconciliation, and resolution to the situation.

B. Conflict Resolution outside the family of God.

- 1. Follow biblical principles above.
- 2. Be sensitive to protecting the “reputation of Christ” in your life.

## **Appendix Two - Peacemaker Seminar; Resolving Conflict God's Way**

### **SCHEDULE**

Session One – Roots of the Seminar

Session Two – Peacemaker Seminar: Resolving Conflict God's Way

Session Three – Miscellaneous Subjects Related to Being a Peacemaker

### **QUESTIONS**

A brief time for questions is part of Session One and Session Three. Additional questions can be answered by emailing the question to the Director of Missions.

### **ADDITIONAL MATERIALS**

The following resources are available to the participating church per the request of your pastor:

- A. A four week study on Christian conflict management for use in a Sunday school class or small group meeting.
- B. A four to eight week sermon series on Christian conflict management for the pastor.
- C. A study tool to equip a Deacon Ministry Team to assist anyone requesting help with conflict resolution.
- D. A study tool to equip the church staff to serve as a model and resource for conflict resolution.
- E. A study tool for inclusion in a new member's class or new Christian class that will contain biblical instructions on conflict resolution principles that can be applied to church life, personal life and professional life.

## ADDITIONAL PEACEMAKING MINISTRY HELPS

Director of Missions is providing a Peacemaker Seminar for the Family to help families resolve family conflict in God's way. Director of Missions is providing a Peacemaker Seminar for the Workplace to help workplaces to handle conflict in a productive manner.

### SESSION ONE

#### ROOTS OF THIS SEMINAR

This seminar is the product of the DOM's Doctor of Ministry degree work.

- The goal of the DOM's Doctor of Ministry project is to provide a biblical strategy and practical tools to be used by the pastors and churches of the Middle Florida Baptist Association in processing conflict in a way that advances the churches toward growth spiritually and numerically.
- As previously noted, the seminar is for pastors, deacons, church leaders and any church member. Those attending the seminar can receive additional resources listed below.
  - A. A four week study on Christian conflict management that can find use in a Sunday school class or small group meeting.
  - B. A four to eight week sermon series on Christian conflict management for pastors.
  - C. A study tool to equip a Deacon Ministry Team to assist anyone requesting help with conflict resolution.
  - D. A study tool to equip the church staff to serve as a model and resource for conflict resolution.
  - E. A study tool for inclusion in a new member's class or new Christian class that will contain biblical instructions on conflict resolution principles that can be applied to church life, personal life and professional life.

The outcome of the above is to advance the spiritual and relationship health of the churches of the Middle Florida Baptist Association. The outcome is to position the churches of the Middle Florida Baptist Association to grow as peacemaker churches.

## CONFLICT DEFINED, FRAMED AND EXPANDED

The definitions for conflict in this seminar are as follows: “Conflict is a difference in opinion or purpose that frustrates someone’s goals or desires. Conflict happens when the behavior, attitude or needs one person counters the behavior, attitude or needs of another person. Other words for conflict in Scripture include dispute, quarrel, strife or contention.

Writers who actually lived during the New Testament era give us a realistic picture of the early church in conflict. There is conflict when partners in ministry split up when they could not agree on how best to carry out their task (Acts 15:36–40). There is conflict when a congregation full of cliques with each clique asserted their members were the “real believers” (1 Cor. 1:10–12; 11:17–22). There is conflict when as prominent women fought with each other (Phil. 4:2–3). There is conflict in the midst of warnings against showing favoritism (Jas. 2:1–9). The point is that even in the early church, in an era of great missionary fervor, leaders had to deal with conflict.

To be a peacemaker a leader must resist abandoning roles as a leader or abandoning the church itself and learn to handle controversy with grace and biblical obedience. A leader must look to the Lord for strength in the midst of conflict. A leader must focus on God’s Word for authoritative guidance in attitude and behavior for Christ honoring peacemaking.

Unfortunately and contrary to Scripture, church leaders and members will sometimes go to great lengths to avoid conflict. Some become quite adept at taking cover when they see storm clouds on the horizon. These weather watchers use several techniques: they refuse to get involved, they redirect the combatants, or sometimes they simply sit tight and wait for the storm to blow over. They have learned to listen to all sorts of terrible accusations, some quite personal, and reply, “Thank you for your opinion.”

This posture is built on several assumptions. They wrongly assume that all conflict is negative. Due to experience with destructive conflict, many people believe that the fault lies with the conflict itself. They wrongly assume that people are always hurt by conflict. If God doesn't want people to be hurt, then God must not like conflict. Leaders wrongly assume, therefore, that they must still the angry waves just as Jesus did on the Sea of Galilee. They wrongly assume that people cannot be trusted to handle conflict. Perhaps because of past experience, some leaders assume that conflict will get personal, so it is better kept out of the hands of amateurs. They wrongly assume that fear of conflict makes their perception a self-fulfilling prophecy. If experience says conflict is always harmful, then the pattern is repeated, either by commission or avoidance. These mistakes create the very harm the leader fears. People are hurt. The church is weakened.

These assumptions are false. In reality conflict that is handled God's way can have positive results for the church. Issues surrounding the church get fully explored. Better decisions on the issues can be made by the church. People in the church give greater commitment to decisions due to the conflict. Relationships are made healthier and stronger due to the conflict. All of these benefits can come from peacemaking in a scriptural manner and attitude.

In understanding conflict keep in mind the following distinctions. There is a difference between concerned disagreement and conflict. Conflict is a disagreement that keeps decisions from being made or the group from moving forward after a decision has been made. Often leaders fear that any disagreement indicates conflict. A problem or difference of opinion, however, does not mean there is a conflict. There is conflict only when the group cannot make a decision or move forward.

There is a difference between reconciliation and resolution. Resolution usually means finding the answer. Reconciliation means bringing the folks in conflict together. Some issues will never be resolved, but people can still be reconciled. Often in the process of seeking resolution, however, we compromise and seek middle ground. Many poorly designed church buildings are the result of trying to resolve the conflict between low costs and effectiveness; as a result, neither is accomplished.

There is a difference between being a peaceful and being a peacemaker. As opposed to staying away from disputes, peacemakers are often in the middle of conflict, seeking to reconcile leaders. Peacemakers are often risk takers, willing to enter the fray with an expanded heart.

### **MIDDLE FLORIDA SURVEY ON CONFLICT**

1. When conflict happens in the church it is usually the fault of which of the following?

Pastors see conflict as the fault of a combination of the pastor, staff, and church members (100%). Deacons see conflict as the fault of a combination of the pastor, staff and church members (55%). Deacons view church members as the blame for conflict (45%). Lay people see conflict as the fault of a combination of the pastor, staff, and church members (70%), and conflict rooting in church members (20%). The above reflects in all three groups a majority agreement that conflict is rarely the fault of one person or group but a combination of all three groups.

2. When conflict happens in the church it usually relates to which of the following?

Pastors see conflict relating to making changes (40%), poor communication (30%), and sin (25%). Deacons see conflict relating to money (30%), making changes (30%), poor communication (20%), and sin (20%). Lay people see conflict relating to making changes

(40%), money (25%), poor communication (25%), and sin (10%). The above reflects making changes is the top issue of igniting conflict in the church. Money issues and poor communication are not far behind in the minds of deacons and lay people.

3. When conflict happens in the church which of the following usually takes place? Pastors see people taking sides (90%), people leaving the church (5%), and people seek to follow the Bible (5%). Deacons see people taking sides (70%) and people leaving the church (30%). Lay people see people taking sides (58%), people leaving the church (29%), people seeking to pray (10%), and people seeking to follow the Bible (3%). The above reflects that all three groups see people taking sides as the number one response to conflict. A person leaving the church is the second response to conflict.
4. When conflict happens in the church what do you think the church should follow in handling the conflict? Pastors think the church should follow the Bible (100%). Deacons think the church should follow the Bible in handling the conflict (100%). Lay people think the church should follow the Bible in handling conflict (80%), follow church constitution and bylaws (12%), follow respected members (4%), follow the pastor (1%), and follow the deacons (3%). It is clear that pastors, deacons, and lay people in the Middle Florida Baptist Association agree that the church should follow the Bible in handling conflict.
5. When conflict happens in the church what does the church usually follow in handling the conflict in your experience? Pastors view the church to usually follow respected members (29%), pastor (8%), Bible (7%), and constitution and bylaws (7%) in handling church conflict. The highest percentage for the pastor's experience was other (43%) which includes following the loudest member, following family and friends, following people's ideas, and following the emotional temperature of the conflict. Deacons view the church to

usually follow respected members (60%), constitution and bylaws (20%), deacons (10%), and other (10%) which includes following personal opinions of church people, most vocal church members and own beliefs. Lay people view the church usually following the church constitution and bylaws (40%), respected members (20%), Bible (12%), deacons (11%), pastor (7%), and other (10%) which includes most vocal members and own beliefs. While everyone seems to agree that the Bible should be followed in handling conflict, this is not what pastors, deacons, and lay people see their churches following in handling conflict. Pastors see their church follow respected members most of the time. Deacons see their church follow respected members most of the time. Lay people see their church follow the constitution and bylaws most of the time. All three groups note people following the most vocal members, most emotionally expressive members and personal opinions of members in response to conflict.

6. Which of the following statement best represents your view of conflict resolution?

Pastors and deacons were in complete agreement (100%) that if the person causing the conflict would follow the Bible the conflict could be settled. Lay people agree with the pastors and deacons (96%) with (2%) indicating that if the person causing the conflict would listen to the church the conflict could be settled and (2%) indicating the if the person causing the conflict would leave the church the conflict could be settled.

It is clear that all three groups have personal views that conflict could find resolution if the person causing the conflict would follow the Bible. There seems to be disconnection between what the three groups believe and what is the behavioral response in settling conflict. The three groups obviously yearn to follow the Bible in the midst of conflict but

see the need for the church to be taught how to process conflict in a healthy manner and in a way that brings spiritual growth to the church.

SUMMARY OF CHRISTIANITY TODAY  
RESEARCH ON PASTORS AND CHURCH CONFLICT<sup>42</sup>

The purpose of the study was to determine the key issues that cause congregational conflicts, to identify how churches pursue solutions, and to gain insights for minimizing the negative effects in order to assist church leadership in building strong churches. The study was done on a cross section of a thousand churches and pastors from various denominations in the United States. Questionnaires were used to gather information. The following is a summary.

Nearly all (95%) of these pastors have experienced conflict in their church in some capacity. Eight out of ten (84%) have had past experience with a church conflict; one-quarter is in the throes of conflict now. Most pastor experience conflict.

Of the pastors surveyed who have had firsthand experience with church conflict, more than four-fifths have experienced “congregational” conflict. The two most common sources of congregational conflict, cited by two-thirds or more, deal with control issues or vision/direction of their church. At least one-third has experienced church conflicts that swirl around leadership changes, the pastor’s style, and/or financial issues.

Three out of four pastors learned about the conflict through members of their congregation, with church board members ranking next. The proportion of the congregation

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<sup>42</sup>“Managing Church Conflict: The Source, Pastors Reactions, and Its Effects,” *Christianity Today* (2007): 3-4.

who knew about the situation was related to church size. Typically, it was either a small group or no more than half of the congregation being cognizant. The two most common responses by the pastor to the congregational conflict were “anger” and “defensiveness.” One-third said they were “overwhelmed” or “shocked.”

In most cases, an informal, behind-the-scenes process managed the congregational conflict. This was the experience of more than 80%, although over half (56%) sought outside counsel. A formal public process was rarer, but 37% did utilize this approach.

Nearly all were able to identify positive outcomes; the most common being a greater sense of wisdom. On the flip side, 93% cited negative effects of the conflict. Ranking highest were damaged relationships and a sense of sadness. One-third also experienced a drop in attendance at their church, leaders leaving, a loss of trust, and/or feelings of bitterness.

While 94% have experienced congregational conflict, 79% of the pastors have experienced conflict aimed at them individually. Thirteen percent are the focus of some personally directed conflict at the current time. The three most common personal conflicts have focused on control issues (67%), the pastor’s style (57%), and vision/direction of the church (51%). Pastors from churches of less than 100 were more likely to indicate that control issues were major sources of conflict than pastors of larger churches.

Nearly 60% learned about conflict aimed at them through members of their congregation. A distant second were church board members (35%), followed by church staff (28%). This pattern paralleled information sources about congregational conflict.

Initial response by the respondent was similar to feelings that surfaced when respondents learned of conflict brewing in the congregation. Defensiveness and/or anger were the most commonly felt emotions, both sensed by half the respondents. Ranking next were

shock and a sense of being overwhelmed. An informal, behind-the-scenes process was the most common way of handling the personal conflict as well as major congregational conflicts.

Eighty percent managed the conflict in that way while half sought counsel from trusted outside resources.

When presented with eleven possible effects of past or current personal conflicts, more negatives than positives were cited as outcomes. While most said they were wiser, the majority also experienced damaged relationships, sadness, and loss of trust. Nearly 40% said they have left a pastoral position, at least in part, due to conflict. Compared to those who stayed, pastors who left were more likely to have had tension surrounding vision or direction of the church, financial issues, and the pastor's style. Those who left were less likely to cite positive benefits of the situation and more likely to cite negatives, particularly damaged relationships, loss of trust, leaders leaving, and a decrease in the church's attendance. They were also more likely to have feelings of bitterness, brokenness, and confusion about the situation.

#### BIBLICAL TRUTHS TO UNDERSTAND WHY WE HAVE CONFLICT

The following foundational biblical truths must be considered if we are to experience God's best in the midst of conflict. Christians cannot escape conflict. The Bible teaches people are part of the problem. The problem is part of all of us due to the following reality.

Conflict happens in the church because of the sin nature of believers. The Bible teaches that even as Christians we have a sin nature. The Bible calls it the flesh. Galatians 5:19-20 says, "Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions,

dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like ...” Conflict happens among Christians because our sinful nature, the flesh, seeks to feed whatever I want. The flesh focuses on my desires. James says in James 4:1, “Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?” Church conflict finds root in our passion to make ourselves, our needs, our opinions, our group, our goals the center of focus.

God wants believers to live not by the power of the flesh but by the power of the spirit. Paul says, “But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another! I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish” (Galatians 5:15-17). When the Holy Spirit is allowed to control the believer’s fleshly thirst, the conflict is negated by the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul says, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23).

To live as a peacemaker the Christian must daily confess and repent of sin and yield to the control of the Holy Spirit. Otherwise the Christian will give opportunity to the flesh to come to the fore front of life and the outcome will be conflict.

Conflict happens in the church because believers live in a spiritually fallen world. The Bible says, “But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin” (Galatians 3:22). Paul describes the atmosphere of the spiritually fallen world in II Timothy noting, “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, <sup>unloving</sup>, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong,

haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away” (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

Conflict happens in the church because of the pursuit and influence of the evil one. Peter writes, “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world” (1 Peter 5:6-9). Ephesians 4:27 cautions the Christian, “And do not give the Devil an opportunity.” This is why Paul writes, “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11).

Conflict happens in the church because there are lost people among the church membership. Jesus brought attention to this reality in the parable of the wheat and tares (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43). Paul speaks of people in the church who are not serving God’s purposes. He writes, “Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame--who set their mind on earthly things” (Philippians 3:17-19). Paul says, “Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple” (Romans 16:17-18).

Conflict happens in the church because of differences among people in the church. People are at different levels of spiritual growth. People are at different levels of commitment.

People are at different levels of understanding the purpose of the church. People are at different levels of relationships with members in the church. People are at different levels in understanding things about the church rooting in miscommunication or poor communication.

Conflict happens in the church because Christians yield to the control of their sin nature instead to the control of the Holy Spirit. Conflict happens in the church because Christians live in a spiritually fallen world filled with destructive conflict. The world system teaches the Christian damaging attitudes and behavior that play out painfully in the life of the church. Conflict happens because Satan is organized in the spiritual realm to bring demonic infiltration into the life of the believer and the life of the church. Conflict happens in the church because of unsaved members who cannot think or reason biblically because of their lost condition (Ephesians 2:1-3). Conflict happens in the church because everyone is not at the same level spiritually or in understanding the happenings of the church.

#### THE COST OF CONFLICT MISHANDLED

Mishandled conflict will cost the church energy that could be spent on Kingdom work. Mishandled conflict costs the church time that could be invested in reaching a lost world. Mishandled handled conflict costs the church opportunity that could be lost forever to win people to faith in Jesus Christ. Mishandled conflict costs the church potential that is hindered and restricted. Mishandled conflict costs the church a testimony to the community who sees the church through the lens of the conflict. Mishandled conflict damages the reputation of Jesus Christ to a lost and dying world.

## DIFFICULTY OF PEACEMAKING

The Bible says, “If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men” (Romans 12:18). This verse reminds the believer that peacemaking is the personal responsibility of a disciple of Jesus Christ as seen in the words, “as much as depends on you”. This verse indicates that God’s objective is for the believer to “live peaceably with all.” The phrase “if it is possible” speaks of the difficulty of peacemaking.

Peacemaking is difficult because not everyone seeks peace. In the church people resist peace for many reasons. Some resist peace because of a desire to control. Some resist peace to seek revenge. Some resist peace to take up an offense for someone else. Some resist peace to justify sin. It is not in the nature of the fallen flesh to be a peacemaker.

Peacemaking is difficult because some in the church do not have a scriptural understanding of peacemaking. In the words of Jesus, “You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures” (Matthew 22:29). As a deacon notes on the Middle Florida Baptist survey on conflict, “Church members need ongoing training in peacemaking based on the Bible.” Since churches rarely provide such biblical training, peacemaking is made difficult by either unawareness of what the Bible teaches or confusion about what the Bible teaches on healthy conflict resolution.

Peacemaking is difficult because it happens in the context of spiritual warfare. This reality cannot be overstated. The devil is always looking for ways to sow seeds of discouragement, division, and discord into the life of the church. Any issue of conflict presents the enemy with opportunity to influence believers either through the ignorance of Scripture or the influence of the flesh to mishandle conflict. Paul writes, “By the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you, I, Paul, who am "timid" when face to face with you, but "bold" when

away! I beg you that when I come I may not have to be as bold as I expect to be toward some people who think that we live by the standards of this world. For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:1-5).

Peacemaking is difficult because it requires persistent attention by the pastor, deacons and the church body. The Bible tells us that we should “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3). The Greek word in this verse is translated, “make every effort” means to strive eagerly, earnestly and diligently. It is a word that a trainer of gladiators might have used when he sent men to fight to the death in the Coliseum: “Make every effort to stay alive today!” Peacemaking is hard work in service to the Lord Jesus Christ.

### TRUTHS OF CONFLICT AND PEACEMAKING

To serve God as a peacemaker remember that conflict is a part of the Christian life and experience. All Christians and all churches will face conflict. Conflict like sin and death is inevitable.

To serve God as a peacemaker remember that conflict brings broken relationships. Conflict brings broken relationships between people and God. Conflict brings broken relationships between people and people. Conflict brings broken relationships between people and the created world. This is why Christians are called to have an ongoing ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). To serve God as a peacemaker remember that conflict is

a spiritual collision. No church should minimize Satan's power or question his existence.

Conflict is relational and spiritual.

To serve God as a peacemaker remember that conflict is an opportunity to serve God and glorify God. Ken Sande writes, "In every conflict God gives the opportunity to exalt Him. We need to be ready to embrace conflict in the right way." The goal of this seminar experience is to help Christians and churches in the Middle Florida Baptist Association to be a team of peacemakers by embracing conflict in the right way.

## SESSION TWO

### Peacemaker Seminar; Resolving Conflict God's Way

#### A Biblical Model

#### Introduction

The following seminar notes are derived from materials from Peacemaker Ministries. Peacemaker Ministries is a non-profit organization started in 1982 to equip and assist Christians to respond to conflict biblically. All information from Peacemaker Ministries is used by written permission from Peacemaker Ministries.

The goal of this seminar is to help each participant make the following *Peacemaker Pledge: A Commitment to Biblical Conflict Resolution*. As people reconciled to God by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we believe that we are called to respond to conflict in a way that is remarkably different from the way the world deals with conflict (Luke 6:27-36; Gal. 5:19-26; Matt. 5:9). We also believe that conflict provides opportunities to glorify God, serve other people, and grow to be like Christ (1 Cor. 10:31-11:1; Rom. 8:28-29; James 1:2-4). Therefore, in

response to God's love and in reliance on His grace, we commit ourselves to respond to conflict according to the following principles:

Glorify God instead of seeking personal goals — Instead of focusing on our own desires or dwelling on what others may do, we will seek to please and honor God—by depending on His wisdom, power, and love; by faithfully obeying His commands; and by seeking to maintain a loving, merciful, and forgiving attitude (1 Cor. 10:31; James 4:1-3; Psalm 37:1-6; Phil. 4:2-9; Col. 3:1-4; 1 Peter 2:12; John 14:15; James 3:17-18; Rom. 12:17-21; Mark 11:25).

Get the log out of your own eye — Instead of attacking others or dwelling on their wrongs, we will take responsibility for our own contribution to conflicts—confessing our sins, asking God to help us change any attitudes and habits that lead to conflict, and seeking to repair any harm we have caused (Matt. 7:3-5; 1 John 1:8-9; Prov 28:13; Col. 3:5-14; Luke 19:8).

Go and show your brother his fault — Instead of pretending that conflict doesn't exist or talking about others behind their backs, we will choose to overlook minor offenses, or we will talk directly and graciously with those whose offenses seem too serious to overlook. When a conflict with another Christian cannot be resolved in private, we will ask others in the body of Christ to help us settle the matter in a biblical manner (Matt. 18:15-20; James 5:9; Prov. 19:11; Gal. 6:1-2; Eph. 4:29; 2 Tim. 2:24-26; 1 Cor. 6:1-8).

Go and be reconciled — Instead of accepting premature compromise or allowing relationships to wither, we will actively pursue genuine peace and reconciliation—forgiving others as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us, and seeking just and mutually beneficial solutions to our differences (Matt. 5:23-24; Matt. 6:12; Eph. 4:1-3, 32; Matt. 7:12; Phil. 2:3-4).

By God's grace, we will apply these principles as a matter of stewardship, realizing that conflict is an opportunity, not an accident. We will remember that success, in God's eyes, is not a

matter of specific results but of faithful, dependent obedience. And we will pray that our service as peacemakers brings praise to our Lord and leads others to know His infinite love (Matt. 25:14-21; 1 Peter 2:19, 4:19; Rom. 12:18; John 13:34-35).

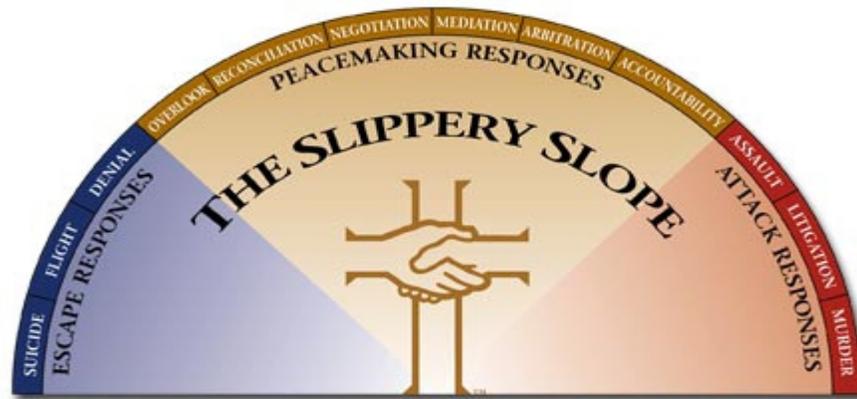
### Part One: Glorify God

The scriptural foundation for part one is I Corinthians 10:31 which says, “Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”

#### 1. Understanding Conflict and Our Responses to It

- A. What words or feelings come to mind when you hear the word conflict?
- B. What is conflict? A difference in opinion or purpose that frustrates someone’s goals or desires.
- C. Devotional theology for conflict resolution
- D. Systematic theology for conflict resolution
  - 1) Glorify God. Question – How can I please and honor the Lord in this situation?
  - 2) Get the log out of your eyes. Question – How have I contributed to this conflict and what do I need to do to resolve it?
  - 3) Go and show your brother his fault. Question – How can I help others to understand how they have contributed to this conflict?
  - 4) Go and be reconciled. Question – How can I demonstrate forgiveness and encourage a reasonable solution to this conflict?

- E. How do we respond to conflict? There is a spectrum of responses to conflict. Picture below is from Peacemaker Seminar workbook.



- 1) Escape responses. The three responses found on the left side of the curve are directed at getting away from the conflict situation rather than resolving it. These responses are:
  - a. Denial – Pretend that a conflict does not exist, or refuse to do what you should do to resolve it properly. This is always a wrong response to conflict.
  - b. Flight – Run away from the person with whom you are having a conflict. This is a legitimate response only when it is presently impossible to resolve the conflict in a constructive manner (see I Samuel 19:9-10).
  - c. Suicide – A person takes his or her own life. This is always a wrong response to conflict.
- 2) Attack responses – The three responses on the right side of the curve are directed at bringing as much pressure to bear on opponents as is necessary to defeat their claims and eliminate their opposition. These responses are:

- a. Litigation – A matter is taken before the civil authorities for a decision.  
At times this is a legitimate response, but should be used only after exhausting the “work it out” responses (with a few rare exceptions).
  - b. Assault – Use force or intimidation (physical, verbal, financial or otherwise) to compel an opponent to give in to your demands.
  - c. Murder – Kill the person or persons who oppose you. Murder is always wrong.
- 3) Conciliation or peacemaking responses – This is also known as “work it out responses”. The six responses found along the top portion of the curve are directed at finding a just and mutually agreeable solution to a conflict. These responses may be divided into two subcategories:
- a. Personal peacemaking responses, which involve only the parties:
    - i. Overlook an offense (Prov. 19:11; 12:16; 17:14; I Peter 4:8; Col. 3:13). One person deliberately and unilaterally decides to forgive a wrong and walk away from the conflict.
    - ii. Discussion (Matt. 18:15; 5:23-24; Gal. 6:1-3; Pro. 28:13). Personal offenses are resolved through confession or confrontation, leading to forgiveness and reconciliation.
    - iii. Negotiation (Phil. 2:3-4). Substantive issues are resolved through a bargaining process in which the parties seek to reach a mutually agreeable settlement of their differences through an exchange of promises.

- b. Assisted responses, which involve others in the parties' church or community.
  - i. Mediation (Matt. 18:16). One or two other people meet with the parties to improve communication and facilitate a resolution. Mediators can only suggest solutions and have no power to impose a solution.
  - ii. Arbitration (I Cor. 6:1-8). When the parties cannot come to a voluntary solution, they explain the matter to one or more arbitrators who are empowered to rendering a binding decision on the matter.
  - iii. Church discipline (Matt. 18:17-20). When a Christian party refuses to do what is right and just, the church family intervenes to promote repentance and reconciliation.

## 2. Conflict Provides Opportunities

1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1 (NKJV) <sup>31</sup> Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. <sup>32</sup> Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, <sup>33</sup> just as I also please all *men* in all *things*, not seeking my own profit, but the *profit* of many, that they may be saved. <sup>1</sup> Imitate me, just as I also *imitate* Christ.

- A. Opportunity One – Glorify God. Show God honor and bring God praise. Trust Him. Obey Him. Imitate Him. (See John 14:15-31; John 19:21; 1 Pet. 2:12; 1:6-7).
- B. Opportunity Two – Serve other people. Help to carry their burdens (Gal. 6:2, 10). Help them to change through constructive confrontation (Gal. 6:1) Teach and encourage others by example (1 Tim. 4:12; Titus 2:7).

- C. Opportunity Three – Grow to be like Christ (Romans 8:28-29; II Cor. 3:18; James 1 3-4; Romans 5:3-4; Heb. 12:7-13). Conflict helps us to remember our need for God (2 Cor. 12:7-10). Conflict helps to uncover sinful attitudes and habits (Ps. 119:67, 71). Conflict provides opportunities to practice godly habits (I Tim. 4:7; Heb. 5:14). The “ABC” of Christian growth: Adversity Builds Character.
- D. Opportunity produces responsibility and responsibility produces stewarding (a biblical approach to conflict).
- E. Stewarding requires an accurate view of God.
- 1) If you believe that God’s power is limited or His love is inconsistent, you will find it difficult to trust Him or obey His commands, which may lead you to take matters into your own hands.
  - 2) The Bible tells us that God is sovereign, supreme, unlimited, and totally in control (Isa. 46:10; Dan. 2:20-22; 4:34-37).
  - 3) God is not only all powerful but also all loving. He is for us (Ps. 62:11-12; Isa. 43:2-3; Matt. 10:30-31).
  - 4) Therefore, nothing happens by chance. Suffering and conflict do not happen by chance (Matt. 10:29-30; Ex. 4:10-12; Prov. 16:4-5; Acts 2:23; I Thess. 3:3; I Pet. 4:12-19; Gen. 45:5; 50:20; Dan. 3:16-18).
  - 5) Stewarding means trusting that God is always up to something good, even when His purposes are not clear (Deut. 29:29). We embrace an attitude of “What Lord, please show me all I need to know so I can cooperate with you.” instead of an attitude of “Why me, Lord, this is not fair.”

- 6) A steward views conflict not as an accident, but as an assignment.
- 7) Stewarding means measuring success not by results, but by faithfulness  
(Matt. 25:21; Luke 12:42-47; John 12:24:26).

#### From THE PEACEMAKER'S PLEDGE

As people reconciled to God by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we believe that we are called to respond to conflict in a way that is remarkably different from the way the world deals with conflict (Luke 6:27-36; Gal. 5:19-26; Matt. 5:9). We also believe that conflict provides opportunities to glorify God, serve other people, and grow to be like Christ (1 Cor. 10:31-11:1; Rom. 8:28-29; James 1:2-4). Therefore, in response to God's love and in reliance on His grace, we commit ourselves to respond to conflict according to the principles that follow.

### 3. Peacemaking is not optional.

Romans 12:18 (NKJV) If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

#### A. The three dimensions of peace.

- 1) Peace with God (Col. 1:19-20; Rom. 5:1-2).
- 2) Peace with others that bring unity (Rom. 12:18).
- 3) Peace with yourself (Isa. 32:17; 48:18; Matt. 22:37-39). Inner peace is a by product of righteousness, which means being right with God and doing everything within our power to be right with others.

#### B. Jesus' reputation depends on peace and unity.

- 1) Note Jesus' final prayer (John 17:20-23; John 13:34-35).
- 2) Peace and unity are so important to Jesus that He commands us to seek reconciliation with others even ahead of worship (Matt. 5:23-24).

#### C. Strive like a gladiator (Eph. 4:1-3; Rom. 15:5-7; I Cor. 1:10; Gal. 5:19-22; Col. 3:13-15; I Thess. 5:13-15). "Make every effort" means to strive earnestly and repeatedly for peace and unity.

D. Instead of filing lawsuits against one another, Christians should resolve their conflicts within the church (I Cor. 6:1-8). There are three negative aspects of litigation:

- 1) Bad witness.
- 2) Ignores root problems.
- 3) No reconciliation.

E. Peacemaking is not an optional activity for those who follow Christ (Matthew 5:9).

#### From THE PEACEMAKER'S PLEDGE

Glorify God — Instead of focusing on our own desires or dwelling on what others may do, we will seek to please and honor God by depending on His wisdom, power, and love; by faithfully obeying His commands; and by seeking to maintain a loving, merciful, and forgiving attitude (1 Cor. 10:31; James 4:1-3; Psalm 37:1-6; Phil. 4:2-9; Col. 3:1-4; 1 Peter 2:12; John 14:15; James 3:17-18; Rom. 12:17-21; Mark 11:25).

#### Part Two: Get the Log Out Of Your Eye

The scriptural foundation for part two is Matthew 7:5 which says, “You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”

1. Is This Really Worth Fighting Over (Prov. 19:11)? There are two kinds of logs to remove:

- A critical, negative attitude that leads to unnecessary conflict.
- Actual sinful words and actions.

A. God commands us to overlook minor offenses (Prov. 12:16; 19:11; 17:14; I Pet. 4:8; Col. 3:13).

- 1) Why? To imitate the Lord (Ps. 103:8-10; Luke 6:36; James 2:13).
  - 2) When? If the offense is not dishonoring God, if your relationship has not been permanently damaged, and if others are not being hurt.
- B. Change your attitude (Phil. 4:2-9).
- 1) Rejoice in the Lord always (v. 4).
  - 2) Let your gentleness be evident to all (v. 5).
  - 3) Replace anxiety with prayer (vv. 6-7).
  - 4) See things as they really are (v. 8).
  - 5) Practice what you've learned (v. 9).
- C. Count the cost (Matt. 5:25-26).
- D. Remember that rights are privileges given to us by God. Stewarding means investing our rights and resources for God's glory to build his kingdom, not hoarding them for our convenience (I Cor. 10:31-11:1; Matt. 25:24-27). The big "R" for a Christian is not "rights," but responsibility. The responsibility to glorify God, serve others and to grow to be like Christ.
2. Examine Yourself (Prov. 28:13).
- A. Take an honest look at yourself (Ps. 139:23-24).
- B. Repentance is more than a feeling.
- 1) Mere remorse leads only to further grief (2 Cor. 7:10).
  - 2) Godly sorrow comes when we see sin for what it is: a personal offense against God (Luke 15:18; Gen. 39:9; Ps. 51:3-4).
  - 3) Genuine repentance involves a change of heart, a different way of thinking (Luke 15:17; Isa. 55:7-8).

- 4) Genuine repentance leads to changed behavior (Acts 26:20; Matt. 3:8). The process is confession, restitution, and then change.
- 5) Three benefits of genuine repentance and confession:
  - a. Clear conscience before God.
  - b. First step toward constructive change.
  - c. Set an example that others will follow.

C. The seven A's of confession:

- 1) Address everyone involved (Ps. 41:4; Luke 19:8).
- 2) Avoid if, but, and maybe (Ps. 51).
- 3) Admit specifically.
  - a. Sinful attitudes (Matt. 15:19; James 4:1-3; I John 2:15-17)
  - b. Sinful words
    - Harsh or reckless word (Prov. 12:18; 15:1).
    - Grumbling and complaining (Phil. 2:14; James 5:9).
    - Falsehood or any deceptive or twisting of the truth (Ex. 20:16; Prov. 24:28).
    - Gossip or revealing or discussing personal information about others, even if it is true (Prov. 11:13; 16:28; 20:19; 26:20; 1 Tim. 5:13).
    - Slander or speaking false and malicious words (Lev. 19:16; 2 Tim. 3:3; Titus 2:3).
    - Any "worthless" talk (Eph. 4:29).
  - c. Sinful actions
    - Not keeping your word (Matt. 5:37; Ps. 15:1,4).

- Not respecting authority (Mark 10:42-45; Rom. 13:1-7; 1Pet. 2:18-25).
  - Not treating others as you want to be treated (Matt. 7:12).
- 4) Apologize and express sorrow for the way you affected that person.
  - 5) Accept the consequences (Luke 15:19; Num. 5:5-7; Luke 19:8).
  - 6) Alter (change) your behavior (Eph. 4:22-32).
  - 7) Ask for forgiveness (Gen. 50:17). Never make a confession merely to get a burden off your shoulders, gain comfort for yourself, or to minimize the consequences of your sin. Rather, your goal should always be to glorify God and minister (bring healing and comfort) to the person you have wronged.

D. What if the person will not forgive?

- 1) Prayer
- 2) Was your confession adequate?
- 3) Have you followed through on your commitments?
- 4) Allow time.

From THE PEACEMAKER'S PLEDGE

Get the log out of your own eye — Instead of attacking others or dwelling on their wrongs, we will take responsibility for our own contribution to Conflicts—confessing our sins, asking God to help us change any attitudes and habits that lead to conflict, and seeking to repair any harm we have caused (Matt. 7:3-5; 1 John 1:8-9; Prov 28:13; Col. 3:5-14; Luke 19:8).

Part Three: Go and Show Your Brother His Fault

The scriptural foundation for part three is Matthew 18:55 which says, “If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault.”

1. When and how should you go and confront someone (Gal. 6:1)?
  - A. When someone has something against you (Matt. 5:21:24).

- 1) You may be able to clarify a misunderstanding.
  - 2) You may learn that you were actually wrong.
  - 3) You may help to deliver the other person from the acid of unforgiveness.
- B. When someone's sins are too serious to overlook (Matt. 18:15).
- 1) Is it dishonoring God (Rom. 2:21-24)?
  - 2) Has it damaged your relationship?
  - 3) Is it hurting other people including yourself (Lk. 17:2-3; 1 Cor. 5:6)?
  - 4) Is it hurting the offender (James 5:19-20; Lev. 19:17; Prov. 9:8; 19:25; 24:11-12; 27:5-6; 28:23; Luke 17:3; Gal.6:1)?
    - a. Not being a "busybody" (2 Thess. 3:11; 1 Tim. 5:13; 2 Tim. 2:23).
    - b. Excuses not to confront:
      - "Do not judge or you will be judged" (Matt. 7:1-5).
      - "Is not it God's job to show people where they are wrong" (2 Sam. 12:1)?
    - c. Confrontation is needed when someone is "caught" in a sin (Gal.6:1).
    - d. The purpose of confrontation is to "restore" the offender to usefulness to God (Gal. 6:1).
- C. The same basic principles apply with non-Christians (Gal. 6:10).
- D. The same basic principles apply with a person in authority (2 Sam. 12:1).
- E. Communication skills.
- 1) Speak only to build up (Eph. 4:29).
  - 2) Listen carefully.
    - a. Waiting (Prov. 18:13).

- b. Concentrating (Matt 7:12).
- c. Clarifying (“Are you saying ...?” “Would you give me an example ...?”)
- d. Reflecting (“From your perspective, I was wrong when ...” “You really care about ...”)
- e. Agreeing (Psalm 141:5; Prov. 28:13) “You’re right. I should not have ...”  
“A lot of what you say is true.” “I can understand why you feel that way.”

3) The elements of an effective confrontation (Prov. 12:18).

- a. Pray.
- b. Choose the right time and place.
- c. Believe the best about others until you have facts to prove otherwise (1 Cor. 13:7).
- d. Talk in person whenever possible (Matt. 18:15).
- e. Plan your words.
- f. Use a gracious tone of voice and friendly body language.
- g. Be objective (facts vs. personal opinions or conclusions).
- h. Use the Bible carefully (don’t preach).
- i. Ask for feedback.

F. Recognize your limits (Rom. 12:18; 2 Tim. 2:24-26).

- 1) Your job is to speak the truth in love as clearly and persuasively as possible.
- 2) God’s job is to change the person.

2. When and how should you involve other people (Matt. 18:16)?

- A. Only after you have attempted step one, which is: Overlook minor offenses.
- B. Only after you have exhausted step two, which is: Talk in private (Matt. 18:15).

- C. Step three: Take one or two others along (Matt. 18:16).
- 1) The operative verb: “refuses to listen.”
  - 2) By mutual agreement.
  - 3) By unilateral request.
  - 4) What do conciliators do?
    - a. Encourage self control and courtesy.
    - b. Ask questions to clarify facts.
    - c. Counsel and admonish by God’s Word.
    - d. Expand resources.
    - e. Observe conduct and report to churches.
  - 5) What if my opponent is not a Christian (Gal. 6:10)?
- D. Step four: Tell it to the church (Matt. 18:17).
- E. Step five: Treat the other person as a nonbeliever (Matt. 18:17-20; 1 Cor. 5:1-6; 2 Cor. 2:5-11; 2 Thess. 3:14-15; Titus 3:10-11).
- 1) Treat as a functional decision, not a heart decision.
  - 2) Treat sinners like Jesus treated sinners. Love them enough to tell them the truth.
  - 3) Three purposes of church discipline:
    - a. To protect God’s reputation (Rom. 2:23-24).
    - b. To protect the purity of the church (1 Cor. 5:1-13).
    - c. To restore the offender to usefulness (Gal. 6:1).
- F. Is it time to go to court (Rom. 13:1-5)?
- 1) Will it glorify God?

- 2) Will it benefit others?
- 3) Is it necessary to preserve essential rights or assets?
- 4) Otherwise, “Why not rather be cheated? Why not rather be wronged?” (I Cor. 6:8).

#### From THE PEACEMAKER’S PLEDGE

Go and show your brother his fault — Instead of pretending that conflict doesn't exist or talking about others behind their backs, we will choose to overlook minor offenses, or we will talk directly and graciously with those whose offenses seem too serious to overlook. When a conflict with another Christian cannot be resolved in private, we will ask others in the body of Christ to help us settle the matter in a biblical manner (Matt. 18:15-20; James 5:9; Prov. 19:11; Gal. 6:1-2; Eph. 4:29; 2 Tim. 2:24-26; 1 Cor. 6:1-8).

#### Part Four: Go and Be Reconciled

The scriptural foundation for part four is Matthew 5:24 which says, “First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.”

1. Forgive as God Forgave You.
  - A. Neither a feeling, not forgetting, nor excusing at first.
  - B. Forgiveness is a decision.
    - 1) The major penalty of sin is personal separation (Isa. 59:2; Rom. 6:23).
    - 2) Forgiveness releases us from this penalty (Eph. 2:13; Jer. 31:34; Ps. 103:2).
    - 3) Four promises modeled after God’s forgiveness (Matt. 6:12; Col. 3:13; Eph. 4:32; 1 Cor. 13:5; Ps. 130:3-4).
      - a. “I promise I will not think about this incident.”
      - b. “I promise I will not bring this incident up and use it against you.”
      - c. “I promise I will not talk to others about this incident.”

- d. “I promise I will not allow this incident to stand between us or hinder our personal relationship.”
- 4) When should you forgive (Luke 17:3; Mark 11:25; Luke 6:37)?
- a. The ideal biblical response to sin is repentance, confession, restitution and change.
  - b. Positional forgiveness reflects promise number one to not dwell upon this incident. It is a commitment made to God. It is immediate and unconditionally embraced.
  - c. Transactional forgiveness reflects promises two through four. It is a commitment made to the offender. Ideally it comes after repentance and confession. Minor offenses may be forgiven if there is no confession or repentance. For major offenses, these promises may need to be delayed until the problem is resolved by following Matthew 18.
- 5) What about the consequences? There is a time for mercy (Matt. 18:21-35; Luke 15:21-32). There is time for firmness (Ps. 99:8; Prov. 19:19; Num. 14:20-23). Forgiveness of personal offenses does not necessarily release a person from the material consequences of their actions.
- C. Overcoming unforgiveness.
- 1) Unforgiveness will separate you from God (Matt. 18:35; Mark 11:25).
  - 2) Renounce sinful attitudes and unrealistic expectations (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13).
  - 3) Remember and experience God’s daily forgiveness (Matt. 18:21-35).
  - 4) Draw on God’s strength (Phil. 4:13).
- D. Reconciliation and the replacement principle.

- 1) Reconciliation means that your relationship is restored at least to its condition before the conflict arose (Matt. 5:23-24; 6:12; 2 Cor. 2:5-11; 5:18-29).
  - 2) Reconciliation usually takes deliberate work.
  - 3) The replacement principle (Luke 6:27-28; Lev. 19:18; Eph. 4:22-24).
    - a. In thought (Phil. 4:8).
    - b. In word (Rom. 12:14).
    - c. In deed (Rom. 12:20).
  - 4) Forgive to forget.
2. A Biblical Approach to Negotiating (Phil. 2:3-4).
- A. Cooperative verses competitive negotiation.
- 1) Competing is appropriate in some cases. But often neglects underlying problems and needs results in inadequate solutions that is inefficient and damages relationships.
  - 2) Cooperating (Matt. 22:39; Phil. 2:3-4; I Cor. 10:24; I Cor. 13:4-5; Matt. 22:29).
  - 3) Pause is need to negotiate:
    - a. Prepare.
    - b. Affirm relationships.
    - c. Understand all interests.
    - d. Search for creative solutions.
    - e. Evaluate options objectively and reasonably.

B. Prepare (Prov. 14:8, 22)

- 1) Pray.
- 2) Get the facts.
- 3) Identify issues and interests.
- 4) Study the Bible.
- 5) Seek godly counsel.
- 6) Anticipate reactions.
- 7) Pick a good time and place.
- 8) Plan your opening remarks.

C. Affirm relationships by showing concern and respect.

- 1) Communicate in a courteous manner.
- 2) Spend time on personal issues.
- 3) Exercise authority with restraint.
- 4) Submit to authority in a godly manner.
- 5) Earnestly seek to understand others' concerns and perspectives.
- 6) Look out for the interests of others.
- 7) Confront in a gracious manner.
- 8) Allow face saving.
- 9) Give sincere praise and encouragement.

D. Understand interests

- 1) Issue – an identifiable and concrete question.
- 2) Position – a desired outcome or definable perspective on an issue.

- 3) Interest – what motivates people and gives rise to positions; a concern, desire, need, limitation, or something a person values (1 Sam. 25:24-35). The better you understand others’ interests as well as your own, the more likely you are to develop acceptable solutions.
- E. Search for creative solutions (Prov. 14:8; Dan 1:11-13).
    - 1) When brainstorming, separate inventing from deciding.
    - 2) Expand to discover additional interests and develop ways to meet them.
  - F. Evaluate options objectively and reasonably. Evaluate and do not argue.
    - 1) Look to God’s truth (Ps. 19:7; 111:10).
    - 2) Get objective facts (Daniel 1:11-16).
    - 3) Seek objective opinions from trusted advisors (Prov. 12:15; Matt. 18:16).
    - 4) Look behind others’ positions and deal wisely with their objects and criticisms.
    - 5) Last resort: Matthew 18:15-20, 1 Corinthians 6:1-8, Romans 12:17-13:7.

From THE PEACEMAKER’S PLEDGE

Go and be reconciled — Instead of accepting premature compromise or allowing relationships to wither, we will actively pursue genuine peace and reconciliation—forgiving others as God, for Christ’s sake, has forgiven us, and seeking just and mutually beneficial solutions to our differences (Matt. 5:23-24; Matt. 6:12; Eph. 4:1-3, 32; Matt. 7:12; Phil. 2:3-4).

3. Dealing with Unreasonable People (Rom. 12:21).
  - A. We have divine weapons (2 Cor. 10:3-5; Luke 6:27-28; Eph. 6:10-18).
  - B. Control your tongue (Rom. 12:14).
  - C. Seek godly advisors (Rom. 12:15-16).
  - D. Keep doing what is right (Rom. 12:17; I Pet. 2:12, 15; 3:15-16; 1 Sam. 24).

E. The ultimate weapon is deliberate focused love (Rom. 12:20-21; Luke 6:27-31; Rom. 5:8).

- 1) Doing good can protect you from your own bitterness and resentment.
- 2) Doing good also can help to bring another person to repentance.

From THE PEACEMAKER'S PLEDGE

By God's grace, we will apply these principles as a matter of stewardship, realizing that conflict is an opportunity, not an accident. We will remember that success, in God's eyes, is not a matter of specific results but of faithful, dependent obedience. And we will pray that our service as peacemakers brings praise to our Lord and leads others to know His infinite love (Matt. 25:14-21; 1 Peter 2:19, 4:19; Rom. 12:18; John 13:34-35).<sup>43</sup>

SESSION THREE

Miscellaneous Subjects Related to Being a Peacemaker

Handling the Emotional Component of Conflict

Conflict always stirs emotions. The emotional components include anger, distrust, defensiveness, scorn, resentment, fear, and rejection. It is vital to deal with the emotions of conflict before addressing the substantive aspects of conflict. In conflict resolution, the first goal is to deal constructively with the emotions. A peacemaker understands and foundationally pursues to receive from God the grace and power to calm and heal emotions. The following three step process provides a channel for the Holy Spirit to lessen the emotional temperature of a conflict:

- a. Treat the other person with respect. Respect for another person is felt through an

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<sup>43</sup>Ken Sande, *Peacemaker Seminar; Resolving Conflict God's Way* (Billings, MT: Peacemaker Ministries Publishers, 1990) 3-28.

attitude conveyed by specific behaviors. Communicating respect comes from specific behaviors. The behavior of listening intently to the other person can communicate respect. The behavior of looking with genuine concern at the other person can communicate respect. A soft tone of voice can communicate respect. Kind and gentle words can communicate respect. The type of reasoning I use can communicate respect. Peacemaking cannot happen until every effort is made to convey respect for the conflicted person.

b. Listen until you clearly understand the other person's position and thinking.

Under the best conditions, effective communication is difficult to achieve. During conflict, when feelings are strong, people are especially prone to misunderstanding one another. The goal of listening is to understand the content of the other person's ideas or proposals, the meaning it has for that person, and the feelings the other person has about it. This means being able to step into the other person's shoes and view from that person's point of view the things the person is talking about. One of the best ways to communicate more accurately during disagreements and to be a biblical peacemaker is to institute Carl Roger's rule: "Each person can speak up for himself only after he has first restated the ideas and feeling of the previous speaker accurately and to that speaker's satisfaction."<sup>44</sup> It is very difficult to accurately understand and summarize another person's point of view unless we listen with humility and the aid of the Holy Spirit. Only when the other person feels heard and understood can progress be made as a peacemaker. It is at these first two points that peacemaking often breaks down.

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<sup>44</sup>Robert Bolton, *People Skills: How To Assert Yourself, Listen to Others and Resolve Conflict* (New York: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1979), 220.

c. Humbly and in the control of the Holy Spirit share your views, needs and feelings.

This can only happen after the peacemaker has demonstrated understanding of the other person's feeling and point of view. Five guidelines should frame your sharing. First, state your point of view briefly. Second, avoid negative words. Third, say what you mean and mean what you say. Fourth, share your feeling with brokenness. Fifth, ask God to show you whether you even need to share your point of view. Often, if step one and step two are accomplished, there is no need for step three by the peacemaker.

### Handling the Tongue Issue in being a Peacemaker.

#### How to Guard Against the Defilement of Listening to an Evil Report<sup>45</sup>

A major challenge in managing conflict in a scripturally healthy way is the problem of what the Bible calls "listening to an evil report" (Genesis 37:2; Numbers 14:37, 13:32; Nehemiah 6:13; 2 Corinthians 6:8). What causes conflicts in families, churches, or organizations to flair out of control and split the entire group? What causes close friendships to be broken when neither party offended the other? Why are attempts to restore a fallen Christian brother or sister often met with defeat? A major cause is wrong responses to an evil report.

What is an evil report? An evil report involves distortion of facts, incomplete facts, or false information. An evil report is given with wrong motivations and causes the hearer to come to inaccurate conclusions and to respond with unscriptural "solutions." Evil reports are so destructive that they can even destroy long-lasting, close friendships: "A whisperer separates chief friends" (Proverbs 16:28).

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<sup>45</sup>Bill Gothard, *Basic Church Ministry Manual* (Chicago, IL: Institutes in Basic Youth Conflicts, 1974), 1-7.

Wrong doing should never be covered over in the church. It must be brought to the attention of those who are responsible and dealt with in a scriptural manner. This necessary process will be damaged by the defilement of an evil report. In the medical world, there are stages in the development of a disease. In the same way, there are stages of destruction to a spiritually healthy person who listens to an evil report. In the medical world physical defilement happens in the following sequence:

1. There is ignorance of “preventive” measures to avoid contamination.
2. There is exposure to one who is already “infected.”
3. There is contamination (defilement) by allowing the “germs” to enter our system.
4. There is infection as the “germs” overcome our normal defenses.
5. There is disease when the infection destroys vital life-supporting functions.

The defilement of listening to an evil report has parallel stages that result in spiritual defilement.

1. There is ignorance of spiritual realities. Satan will gain an advantage over us if we are ignorant of his devices (See 2 Corinthians 2:11). Ignorance is not being aware of the destructive power of untrue or distorted words. “The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity... it defileth the whole body and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell” (James 3:6).
  - a. There is ignorance of how words destroy close friendships. “He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends” (Proverbs 17:9).
  - b. There is ignorance of how the unclean defile the clean, rather than the clean influencing the unclean (see Haggai 2:11-14).

- c. There is ignorance of what constitutes an evil report. An evil report is an unauthorized, distorted or false report which influences us to form an evil opinion about another person.
- d. There is ignorance of how evil reports are given. Evil reports are communicated by words, facial expressions, gestures, and tonal patterns. They can be subtle or obvious, quiet or angry, sweet or bitter.
- e. There is ignorance of who gives evil reports. Giving bad or evil reports is part of the fallen nature of every person. Evil reports happen through the following sins:
  - 1) Whisperer. A whisperer is one who secretly or privately passes on evil reports to others (see Psalms 41:7).
  - 2) Gossiper. A gossiper is one who magnifies and sensationalizes rumors and partial information (see Proverbs 11:13; 16:28; 20:19; 25:10; 26:20; 29:19; 2 Cor. 12:20).
  - 3) Slanderer. A slanderer is one who seeks to destroy another's credibility or reputation with damaging facts, distortions of facts, or evil suspicions (see Numbers 14:36).
  - 4) Busybody. A busybody is one who digs up evil reports and makes it his business to spread them by means of gossip, slander, or whispering. Such an action is as great a sin as murder or stealing. It is classified with these by God when He warns: "Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters" (see 1 Peter 4:15).
- f. There is ignorance of what motivates evil reports. According to James 3:14-18, evil reports root in bitterness due to personal hurts, rebellion due to justifying an

independent spirit, deception due to believing that evil reports are right to give, pride due to wanting to exalt self, guilt due to justifying past actions or attitudes, and envy due to desiring what someone else has in their possession.

- g. There is ignorance of how susceptible we are to evil reports. We enjoy hearing them because they exalt us. They bring down or hurt those whom we dislike.
  - h. There is ignorance of how Satan uses evil reports. Satan wants to use conflict to discredit spiritual leadership. Satan wants to use conflict to cause Christians to close their spirit toward each other causing an emotional wall to separate believers. Satan wants to use conflict to multiply conflicts and produce more ungodliness in the lives of believers. Satan wants to use conflict to prompt non-Christians to mock Christianity and reject Christ and the gospel.
2. There is exposure to a sinful and evil spiritual atmosphere. Scripture cautions, “A prudent man foreseeeth the evil and hideth himself; but the simple pass on and are punished” (Proverbs 27:12). Spiritual exposure is entering into conversation with a person who is a carrier of an evil report.

How does God want us to respond to potential exposure to an evil report?

“Whoso privily slandereth his neighbor, him will I cut off...” (Psalm 101:5).

“...And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret” (Ephesians 5:10-12). “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and void them” (Romans 16:17).

We have protective physical defenses to warn us about physical contamination. We can smell it or see it or taste it. Sometimes, however, we are unaware of contamination until it is too late.

In the same way, God gives us protective spiritual defenses to warn us about spiritual contamination. We can sense the promptings of God's Holy Spirit, follow the warnings of God's Word, and obey the wise counsel of our human authorities. Sometimes, however, we are unaware of spiritual danger until it is too late.

How can we detect a carrier of an evil report? A carrier will usually test your spirit before giving you the evil report. Any evidence of a compatible spirit in you will encourage him to give you the report. A carrier will usually check your acceptance of his report before giving it to you. He may do this by asking for your opinion about the person or dropping a negative comment and observing your response to it. A carrier will often get you to ask for the evil report by creating curiosity for it. Some starters are: "Have you heard about the person? "Wait until I tell you about the person!" A carrier may communicate an evil report by asking us for counsel or by sharing a concern for the person involved. A carrier may use evil reports to get you to admire him or her because of being on the inside and having access to privileged information. A carrier is usually one who evokes vivid details of evil and will even search them out. God condemns such "detectives of darkness" whose tongues are like sharp swords.

How can a believer detect an evil report? A believer can detect an evil report by asking five questions before listening to a carrier. Question one is, "What is your reason for telling me?" Widening the circle of gossip only compounds the problem.

Questions two is, “Where did you get your information?” Refusal to identify the source of information is a sure signal of an evil report. Question three is, “Have you gone to those directly involved?” Spirituality is not measured by how well we expose an offender, but by how effectively we restore an offender (Galatians 6:1). Question four is, “Have you personally checked out all of the facts?” Even “facts” become distorted when not balanced with other facts or when given with negative motives. Question five is, “Can I quote you if I check this out?” Those who give evil reports often claim that they are misquoted. This is because their words and overriding impressions are reported.

3. There is defilement that comes from listening to an evil report. “The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly” (Proverbs 26:22). Defilement is receiving an evil report from another person and believing that it is true. In the same way that touching a diseased person will defile one’s hands, listening to an evil report will defile one’s mind. It is a reality which must be properly dealt with. “...Lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled” (Hebrews 12:15).

A classic illustration of many listening to an evil report: Absalom used an innocent sounding evil report to steal the hearts of almost an entire nation and lead it in revolt against his own father, King David. The report emphasized his concern for suffering people, his deep desire that justice be done, and his ability to be a better administrator than his father. Actually, Absalom was bitter because his father did not bring judgment to Absalom’s half-brother for immorality, so he took matters into his own hands and was rejected for it. 2 Samuel 15:1-6: “And it came to pass after this,

that Absalom prepared him chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him.

And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate; and it was so, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him and said, Of what city art thou? And he said, Thy Servant is of one of the tribes of Israel. And Absalom said until him, See, thy matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee.”

Note he gathered and organized a group that would be loyal to him, rather than to the one whom he served. He was energetic and disciplined. He made himself available to the people. He sought out those who had grievances. He had a personal interest in the people. He took up the offenses of those who had been hurt. He alienated people from their authority by giving an evil report about David’s leadership. “Absalom said, moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice.” And it was so, that when any man came nigh to him to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him. ...So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.” He offered to be the representative to make sure things were done right. He would use his new position to increase his loyal following. He desired acceptance and recognition as well as authority. He carried out a tragic take-over of the nation with the help of those who were defiled and infected with an evil report.

4. There is spiritual infection that comes from listening to and receiving an evil report. “The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going” (Proverbs 14:15). “As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire, so is a contentious man to kindle strife” (Proverbs 26:21). Infection is responding to an evil

report with human reasoning and emotion rather than with spiritual understanding and genuine love. “A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips” (Proverbs 17:4). If the defilement of an evil report is not cleansed, wrong attitudes, opinions, conclusions and actions will follow – even toward very close friends.” ...a whisperer separateth chief friends” (Proverbs 16:28).

What are some clear symptoms of being infected by an evil report? I believe the evil report. I form negative opinions based on the evil report. I focus on negative aspects of the person pointed to by the evil report. I begin to interpret the words and actions of the subject of the evil report as supporting evidence of the evil report. I begin to judge the motives of the subject of the evil report. I begin to back away from the subject of the evil report in my spirit and resist fellowship with the person. I begin to tell the evil report to others.

5. There is a spiritual disease that comes from embracing the evil report. “A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips” (Proverbs 17:4). The spiritual disease consists of being mentally and emotionally controlled by the evil report and by the destructive spirit of the one who gave it to us. “He that hateth dissembleth with his lips, and layeth up deceit within him, when he speaketh fair, believe him not; for there are seven abominations in his heart” (Proverbs 26:24-25). “Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people” (Leviticus 19:16). A diseased Christian has grieved and quenched the Holy Spirit by taking up the offenses of others, making them his own, and adding to them.

What are some symptoms of this spiritual disease? We develop bitterness and/or rebellion, even though the person involved did not directly offend us. We set

ourselves up as the judge in matters which are God's responsibility and recruiting others to our side. We search out evil reports and using them to give the worst possible impressions." "An ungodly man diggeth up evil and in his lips there is as a burning fire" (Proverbs 16:17). We believe that such actions are actually accomplishing God's will rather than realizing that we give non-Christians occasion to blaspheme God's name because of our lack of genuine love: "I speak to your shame...brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now therefore thou art utterly a fault among you...ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren" (1 Corinthians 6:5-8).

Often we do not act on information when we should do so because the defilement or infection hinders God's grace in us (see Hebrews 12:25). Attempts to restore a Christian who has been overtaken in a fault will usually fail unless the defilement of listening to evil reports is first cleansed and then replaced with the spirit of Christ's love, humility, and forgiveness.

How can we cleanse our minds from an evil report? How can we experience cure for the disease that has taken hold of our spiritual life? First, we must ask God to cleanse our mind from the defilement of an evil report. Second, we must pray for God to give us genuine love for each one involved in the evil report. Third, we must cleanse our mind with appropriate Scripture.

We must be honest before God in answering the following questions: Have I accepted the evil report as true? "The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going" (Proverbs 14:15). "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins..." (Psalms 19:13). Presumptuousness is taking a matter for

granted and assuming it to be true in the absence of proof to the contrary. Has the evil report affected how I feel toward the person involved? “A wholesome tongue is a tree of life; but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit.” (Proverbs 15:4). “...For wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest, thyself for thou that judgest doest the same things” (Romans 2:1). “Above all things, have fervent love among yourselves, for love shall cover the multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8). Love...thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not iniquity...” (1 Corinthians 13:5,6). Do I have an urge to tell someone else the evil report? “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers” (Ephesians 4:29). “A talebearer revealeth secrets, but he that is of a faith spirit concealeth the matter (Proverbs 11:13). “He that covereth a transgression seeketh love, but he that repeateth a matter separateth very (close) friends” (Proverbs 17:9).

I know my heart is clean and I am in the midst of God’s healing when the following is true. I lose my urge to tell someone else the evil report. I grieve over the fact that an evil report was given. I have genuine love toward the person spoken of in the evil report. I find encouragement from God to examine my own life for failures.

The Bible teaches that knowing what to do must be translated into doing what we know (James 4:17). Is God directing you to contact the one who gave you the evil report and ask the five questions which identify an evil report? Is God directing you to contact the person involved in the situation? Is God directing you to contact the person involved in the evil report in order to check out the facts and

help to restore in the spirit of meekness? (See Matthew 18:15-18). Is God directing you to contact those who are spiritually responsible for the situation? Once they are informed, the responsibility for further action rests with them. Your responsibility is to continue to pray for those involved in the situation.

### How to Have a Peacemaker's Tongue

James 3:6 “And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.”

- a. Daily dedicate the heart and tongue to the Lord (Psalm 19:14).
- b. Daily put the heart in tune with God's Spirit by reading the Bible (Psalm 119:11).
- c. Assume responsibility for every word spoken (Matthew 12:36).
- d. Ask people around you which words you speak are offensive (Proverbs 27:17).
- e. Commit to the biblical purpose of giving a good report and purpose to obey Scripture (Matthew 18:15).
- f. Fulfill past promises and think carefully before making any new promises (Psalm 15:4).
- g. Ask forgiveness for any unloving words or attitudes (James 3:2).
- h. Learn how to speak words that will encourage, comfort, inspire, and edify (Colossians 4:6).
- i. Commit to memory the following scriptures:  
  
Proverbs 13:3 He who guards his mouth preserves his life, But he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction.

Proverbs 29:20 Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

Proverbs 18:13 He who answers a matter before he hears it, It is folly and shame to him.

Matthew 12:36 But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.

Ephesians 4:29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.

Proverbs 15:23 A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, and a word spoken in due season, how good it is!

Proverbs 21:23 Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles.

Proverbs 15:1 A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

Proverbs 15:4 A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit.

Proverbs 17:28 <sup>Even</sup> a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; when he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive.

Proverbs 18:8 The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles, and they go down into the inmost body.

1 Peter 3:10 For He who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit.

James 1:26 If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.

## Handling Conflict and Promoting Peacemaking in a Business Meeting

### A History Lesson

In 1863 a U.S. Army officer who was active in his church was assigned to construct defenses for the port of New Bedford, Massachusetts. While there the gentleman was asked, without warning, to preside over a business meeting of his church. Though he was an officer in the Corps of Engineers and had participated in church and civic affairs wherever he was stationed, he did not know how to preside at a meeting. Embarrassed, but feeling the worst thing he could do would be to decline, he plunged into the meeting hoping that the assembly would behave itself. It did not. The officer emerged from that turbulent meeting determined that he would never again attend another church business meeting until he knew something about parliamentary law.

Though various parliamentary manuals were available, the gentleman learned that there were no generally accepted set of parliamentary rules for voluntary associations, such as churches and civic groups. So, he set out to write one. That man was Henry M. Robert, author of "Robert's Rules of Order," the famous manual that has dominated the field of parliamentary procedure for over a century.<sup>46</sup>

One key insight from this true account of parliamentary history is that General Robert, a Christian, wrote his now famous guide to help churches to conduct their business more efficiently, productively and peacefully in accordance with the Bible's call to peacemaking. 1 Cor. 14:33 says, "For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints."

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<sup>46</sup> <http://www.robertsrules.com/history.html> (accessed December 3, 2012).

## Peacemaking Principles to Plan a Business Meeting in a Local Church

A business meeting should obey the Bible and follow "Robert's Rules of Order." Properly used, "Robert's Rules of Order" can produce a peaceful business meeting even when there is disagreement. The following guides a church in making business meetings peaceful and Christ-honoring.

- A. A written agenda should be provided in advance to the church family. A policy such as the following is encouraged:

It shall be the responsibility of the pastor and deacons to prayerfully formulate the agenda for any and all business meetings. Anyone wishing to place an item on the agenda of an upcoming business meeting must submit in writing the request two weeks prior to the business meeting in order to give the pastor and deacons time to consider the request. Only items cleared by the pastor and body of deacons can appear on the agenda. Pastor and deacons must agree with two thirds majority to place an item on the agenda. The pastor and deacons should provide a written agenda to the church body three to seven days prior to the business meeting. Only what is placed on the agenda can be discussed or voted on at the business meeting.

Such a policy honors scripture. 1 Corinthians 14:33 says, "For God is not the author of confusion but of peace" or "God is not a God of disorder but of peace" (HCSB). An agenda, previously approved by spiritual leaders, promotes order and peace in the church.

Such a policy minimizes the opportunity for the enemy to pollute God's church through a business meeting. The Bible says, "Give no opportunity to the devil" (Ephesians 4:27). An agenda, previously approved by spiritual leaders, promotes holiness and fear of God in the church.

Such a policy stimulates unity because the entire church family has time to read and fully understand any motion or item on an agenda. When surprise issues or motions are brought up in a business meeting the opportunity for the enemy to stir

- disunity is great. When surprise issues or motions are brought up in a business meeting everyone usually does not hear the item or motion the same way. Confusion and misunderstanding can easily occur. An agenda, previously approved by spiritual leaders, promotes unity in the church.
- B. Decisions should be made in an orderly and peaceful fashion. Per the direction of Robert's Rules of order, any discussion of a motion or issue must have a balance alternating between speaking for the motion and speaking against the motion.
  - C. Majority rules in all decisions. The church body should respect and support decisions made by the church body.
  - D. Information shared at a business meeting should be as accurate and objective as possible. Personal opinion should be stated as such and should be expressed respectfully.
  - E. A business meeting affords freedom to disagree. Any disagreement should be biblical in content and characterized by respect, truth, kindness, and gentleness. "Speaking the Truth in Love" (Eph. 4:15) relates to your:
    - 1. Information. Do I have the facts? Have I checked the facts out?
    - 2. Motivation. What is driving me to ask this or speak about this?
    - 3. Attitude. Is my attitude Christ-like?
    - 4. Timing. Is this the best time to bring this up?
    - 5. Prayer. Have I prayed about this?
  - F. The following items are appropriate for a business meeting where the church is seeking to follow scriptural principles and *Robert's Rules of Order*.
    - 1. Reports to the Church relative to Finances and Ministry

2. Business requiring Church approval
3. Sharing of appropriate information

All of the above should be done in the context of respect, kindness, and peace.

G. The following behavior should not take place in a business meeting where the church is seeking to obey the Bible and follows *Robert's Rules of Order*.

1. Raising issues and questions that should be raised and asked in a more private setting in line with Biblical principles.
2. Airing opinions, especially those that are accusatory and imply wrong doing on someone else's part. If someone feels wrong has been done, biblical principles should be followed which begins going to the smallest and most private group possible first.

God will never honor or bless anything done or said in an un-biblical manner, regardless of the accuracy of the information.

#### Foundational Principles in Processing Change in the Church as a Peacemaker Pastor or Leader

a. Prayerfully connect every need for change to the Great Commission. Explain how the change will help the church to reach people for Christ. Show how the change will aid the church in missions and evangelism.

b. Process the proposed change through all leaderships groups (deacons, finance committee, etc.) and get their support before presenting it to the church family.

c. Communicate the proposed change and get the support of the church family.

You cannot over communicate. Every avenue of communication should be used. The best communication is person to person through a supportive and informed leadership (deacons,

finance committee, etc.). This writer learned in an audio seminar from Fuller Theological Seminary of what is called the 70/20/10 Principle. Fuller found from research that in the average church 70% of the people will support most changes. Fuller found that 20% of the church are not opposed but simply need more information and explanation. Fuller found that 10% of the church would not support a change under any circumstance. Fuller points out that the mistake made by most pastors and churches is that too much attention is given to the 10% and not enough attention is given to the 20%. Fuller notes that if time was given to answer questions of the 20% that the church could have 90% support on most changes.

d. Consider a trial period for any proposed changes. Plan a church wide evaluation at the end of the trial period to determine the value of the change.

#### Principles to have a Peacemaking Church

A peacemaking church begins with organizing the church according to scripture. Read Acts 6; Hebrews 13:17; Hebrews 13:7; 1 Timothy 5:17; Titus 1:5; 2 Thessalonians 5:12-13 and 1 Corinthians 12. The scriptural organization of the church is as follows:

A New Testament church is a body with Jesus Christ as the head.

A New Testament church is pastor led.

A New Testament church is deacon served.

A New Testament church is committee/team operated.

A New Testament church is congregationally confirmed.

- A peacemaking church requires a pastor who commits to and modes scriptural peacemaking.

- A peacemaking church requires deacons who commit to and model scriptural peacemaking.
- A peacemaking church requires all leadership (S.S Director, WMU Director, Brotherhood Director; Committee/Team leaders etc.) who commits to and models scriptural peacemaking.
- A peacemaking church requires the church to conduct all meetings in harmony with the Peacemaker's Pledge and Robert's Rules of Order.
- A peacemaking church requires ongoing scriptural teaching to help church families grow as peacemakers in their homes and in their lives.
- A peacemaking church requires spiritual leaders (pastor and deacons) to hold church members accountable to scriptural peacemaking behavior and attitude. The pastor and deacons must be proactive in spirit filled correction of the following behaviors:  
 Irresolvable disputes between members (Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:11);  
 persistent teaching of false doctrines (Titus 1:9-11; Titus 3:10-11; Jude 1; Romans 16:17; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; 2 Timothy 4:2-4; 1 Timothy 1:20; 1 Timothy 2:17-18)  
 and continuing immorality and disorderliness (Ephesians 5:11; 1 Timothy 5:20; Titus 3:10; 2 Thessalonians 3:6; I Corinthians 5:11; 3 John 1:9-10. The pastor and deacons are accountable to God to hold church members accountable to scriptural peacemaking behavior and attitude.

## How to Conduct a Peacemaker Meeting

### P – PLAN A PEACE CONFERENCE. (Private and personal)

Matthew 5:23-24 <sup>23</sup> Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, <sup>24</sup> leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Psalms 34:14 <sup>14</sup> Depart from evil and do good; Seek peace and pursue it.

How to plan a peace conference

Take initiative in humility

Work hard at peacemaking in God's strength and wisdom

### E – EMPHATHIZE WITH THEIR FEELINGS

1 Peter 3:7-8 Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered. <sup>8</sup> Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; Romans 15:2 (NKJV) Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification. Philippians 2:4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

How to empathize with a person

Listen to understand and speak without lecturing

Purpose to understand their hurt

Focus on the deeper emotional and spiritual needs of the person

### A – ATTACK THE PROBLEM NOT THE PERSON.

Proverbs 10:10 He who winks with the eye causes trouble, But a prating fool will fall. Ephesians 4:15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ. Ephesians 4:25 Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another. Ephesians 4:29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.

Guidelines to deal with a problem and avoid attacking a person

Don't compare the person with someone else

Don't challenge a person by threatening them

Don't condemn or judge a person's heart

Don't command a person with a demand

Don't condescend or belittle a person

Don't contradict or interrupt a person

Don't confuse the issue by bring up unrelated subjects

C – COOPERATE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.

Romans 12:8 He who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. James 3:17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Psalms 37:37 Mark the blameless *man*, and observe the upright; For the future of *that man is* peace.

If you're wise, you will seek things to agree upon.

E – EMPHASIZE RECONCILIATION, NOT RESOLUTION.

2 Corinthians 5:18 Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, Colossians 3:15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. 2 Peter 1:2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,

Reconciliation: To re-establish the relationship

Resolution: To resolve every issue

The Peacemaker's Pledge

*A Commitment to Biblical Conflict Resolution*

As people reconciled to God by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we believe that we are called to respond to conflict in a way that is remarkably different from the way the world deals with conflict.<sup>1</sup> We also believe that conflict provides opportunities to glorify God, serve other people, and grow to be like Christ.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, in response to God's love and in reliance on His grace, we commit ourselves to respond to conflict according to the following principles:

Glorify God instead of seeking personal goals — Instead of focusing on our own desires or dwelling on what others may do, we will seek to please and honor God—by depending on His wisdom, power, and love; by faithfully obeying His commands; and by seeking to maintain a loving, merciful, and forgiving attitude.<sup>3</sup>

Get the log out of your own eye — Instead of attacking others or dwelling on their wrongs, we will take responsibility for our own contribution to conflicts—confessing our sins, asking God to help us change any attitudes and habits that lead to conflict, and seeking to repair any harm we have caused.<sup>4</sup>

Go and show your brother his fault — Instead of pretending that conflict doesn't exist or talking about others behind their backs, we will choose to overlook minor offenses, or we will talk directly and graciously with those whose offenses seem too serious to overlook. When a conflict with another Christian cannot be resolved in private, we will ask others in the body of Christ to help us settle the matter in a biblical manner.<sup>5</sup>

Go and be reconciled — Instead of accepting premature compromise or allowing relationships to wither, we will actively pursue genuine peace and reconciliation—forgiving others as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us, and seeking just and mutually beneficial solutions to our differences.<sup>6</sup>

By God's grace, we will apply these principles as a matter of stewardship, realizing that conflict is an opportunity, not an accident. We will remember that success, in God's eyes, is not a matter of specific results but of faithful, dependent obedience. And we will pray that our service as peacemakers brings praise to our Lord and leads others to know His infinite love.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Luke 6:27-36; Gal. 5:19-26; Matt. 5:9.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. 10:31-11:1; Rom. 8:28-29; James 1:2-4.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. 10:31; James 4:1-3; Psalm 37:1-6; Phil. 4:2-9; Col. 3:1-4; 1 Peter 2:12; John 14:15; James 3:17-18; Rom. 12:17-21; Mark 11:25.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. 7:3-5; 1 John 1:8-9; Prov 28:13; Col. 3:5-14; Luke 19:8.

<sup>5</sup> Matt. 18:15-20; James 5:9; Prov. 19:11; Gal. 6:1-2; Eph. 4:29; 2 Tim. 2:24-26; 1 Cor. 6:1-8.

<sup>6</sup> Matt. 5:23-24; Matt. 6:12; Eph. 4:1-3, 32; Matt. 7:12; Phil. 2:3-4.

<sup>7</sup> Matt. 25:14-21; 1 Peter 2:19, 4:19; Rom. 12:18; John 13:34-35.

## **Church Covenant and Peacemaking**

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, we do now in the presence of god, angels, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this prosperity and spirituality; holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expense of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and sacred devotions; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings; faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger; to abstain from the sale and use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage; and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay.

We moreover engage that when we remove from this place we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other church, where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

### Basis of Church Covenant

The obligations of church membership outlined in the covenant are all scriptural, as may be seen from the following study.

- I. Salvation and Baptism (John 1:11–12; Matt. 28:19-20)
- II. Duties to the Church
  1. To walk together in Christian love (John 13:34-35).
  2. To strive for the advancement of the church and promote its prosperity and spirituality (Phil. 1; 27; 2 Tim. 2:15; 2 Cor. 7:1; 2 Peter 3:11).
  3. To sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrine (Heb. 10:25; Matt. 28:19; I Cor. 11:23-26; Jude 3).
  4. To give it pre-eminence in my life (Matt. 6:33).
  5. To contribute cheerfully and regularly (ICor. 16:2; 2Cor. 8:6-7).
  6. To carry my membership when I move and be active in church work wherever I live (Acts 11:19-21; 18:24-28).
- III. Duties in Personal Christian Living
  1. To maintain family and secret devotions (I Thess. 5:17-18; Acts 17:11).
  2. To religiously educate the children (2 Tim. 3:15; Deut 6:4-7).
  3. To seek the salvation of the lost (Acts 1:8; Matt. 4:19; Psalms 126:5-6; Prov. 11:30).
  4. To walk circumspectly in the world, and to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment (Eph. 5:15; Phil. 2:14-15; 1 Peter 2:11-12).
  5. To avoid gossip and excessive anger (Eph. 4:31; 1 Peter 2:21; Col. 3:8; James 3:1-2).
  6. To abstain from sale or use of liquors. (Eph. 4:31; Hab. 2:15).
  7. To be zealous in our efforts for Christ (Titus 2:14).
- IV. Duties to Fellow Members
  1. To watch over one another in love (1 Peter 1:22).
  2. To pray for one another (James 5:16).
  3. To aid in sickness and distress (Gal. 6.2; James 2:14-17).
  4. To cultivate sympathy and courtesy (1 Peter 3:8).
  5. To be slow to take offense, always ready for reconciliation (Eph 4:30-32).

## Appendix Three – Sample Questionnaire

### SURVEY ON CONFLICT

DEFINITION CLARITY - Conflict is “a difference in opinion or purpose that frustrates someone’s goals or desires.” Conflict is “the process that occurs when the actions of one person (actual or potential) threaten the actions, goals or well-being of another.”

#### RESPONDER’S PROFILE

Church member  Pastor  Deacon

Circle Age Group 18-22 23-30 31-35 36-40 41-45 46-50 51-60 61-70 71+

In your personal opinion and from your personal church experience, please respond to the following questions regarding times of conflict in the church. Please check one item in each question.

1. When conflict happens in the church it is usually the fault of which of the following?

Pastor

Staff or staff member

Church member or members

Combination of the above

2. When conflict happens in the church it usually relates to which of the following?

Money

Making changes

Poor communication

Sin

Other - \_\_\_\_\_

3. When conflict happens in the church which of the following usually takes place?

People takes sides

People leave the church

People seek to follow the Bible

People seek to pray

Other - \_\_\_\_\_

4. When conflict happens in the church what do you think the church should follow in handling the conflict?

Bible

Constitution and Bylaws

Respected members

Pastor

Deacons

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

5. When conflict happens in the church what does the church usually follow in handling the conflict in your experience?

Bible

Constitution and Bylaws

Respected members

Pastor

Deacons

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Which of the following statement best represents your view of conflict resolution?

If the person causing the conflict would listen to the church this conflict could be settled.

If the person causing the conflict would follow the Bible this conflict could be settled.

If the person causing the conflict leaves the church, this conflict could be settled?

Additional thoughts I have about conflict:

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## Appendix Four – Sample Bible Survey Regarding Conflict

Respond to the questions below after reading the following passage, "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5:21-24).

1. What did Jesus indicate our responsibility is if we discover that another believer has something against us?

---

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Is the answer different if we have nothing against the other believer?

---

Did Jesus provide the alternative of being reconciled to God through prayer and leaving it at that?

---

2. In view of our Lord's references in verse 23 and 24 to presenting one's offering at the altar, in fulfilling this responsibility may we wait for the other believer to sue us, or to hire a lawyer who sends us a "demand" letter, or to personally bring his or her complaint to our attention? Or does our responsibility exist as soon as we learn of his or her complaint from any source?

---

May we wait until the next time we happen to see the other believer?

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3. What do Jesus' references to presenting one's offering at the altar suggest concerning his view of the importance of being reconciled to a fellow believer?

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4. What did Jesus mean by the words "has something against you" in verse 23?

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5. What did Jesus mean to "be reconciled" to another person?

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List three words which describe what you believe "reconciliation" means.

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List three words which describe the opposite of what you believe “reconciliation” means.

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6. Notice the “therefore” near the beginning of verse 23, relating back to verse 22. How does verse 22 furnish a reason for us to be reconciled to our fellow believers?

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For whose benefit are we to seek reconciliation?

---

7. Are you angry with the other person in this dispute?

---

Is the other party angry with you?

---

In light of verse 22, should a Christian be willing to seek reconciliation for the Christian’s own spiritual health and/or the other party’s spiritual health?

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## Appendix Five – Personal Conflict Assessment Summary

Please complete this summary regarding a conflict you are presently experiencing.

1. Briefly summarize the conflict as you perceive it, placing events in chronological order as much as possible.

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2. Place a check by the following elements that conflict includes; cross out those if it definitely does not include.

Disagreements as to the facts.

Disagreements as to the “rightness” or propriety of certain actions.

Disagreements as to the requirements of the civil or criminal law.

Personal feelings of hurt, anger, loss, or guilt.

3. Write a brief comment in each space below indicating what effect this conflict is having in your life?

On your attitudes (resentment, bitterness, etc.):

---

---

On your emotional energies for your family and friends:

---

---

On your personal devotional life:

---

---

On your sense of joy and vitality:

---

---

On your outlook in life (thankfulness, hope, etc.):

---

---

On your finances:

---

---

On your reputation in the community or church:

---

---

4. This conflict could have been substantially avoided or minimized if:

I had \_\_\_\_\_

---

The other party had \_\_\_\_\_

---

5. How would your relationship with the other party be different if you were reconciled?

---

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6. What is the very best conclusion you can imagine to this conflict?

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7. What would be a first step you could take toward reconciliation with the other party?

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## **Appendix Six – Sermon Series Plan for Conflict Management**

The following sermons are used by written permission from Peacemaker Ministries. They can be accessed on line at

[http://www.peacemaker.net/site/c.aqKFLTOBIpH/b.7989097/k.6EE6/Sample\\_Peacemaking\\_Sermons.htm](http://www.peacemaker.net/site/c.aqKFLTOBIpH/b.7989097/k.6EE6/Sample_Peacemaking_Sermons.htm)

### **The Peacemaking Church Sermon Outline #1**

#### **Real Peace**

Key Text: Colossians 1:15-20; He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. <sup>16</sup>For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. <sup>17</sup>He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup>And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. <sup>19</sup>For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, <sup>20</sup>and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Purpose: To inspire believers to see God's priority and passion for peace, and to firmly establish the gospel of Christ as the foundation of real peace.

Key principle from Small Group Study #1: Conflict is an opportunity.

Sermon Outline:

People are hungry for peace! (Jer. 6:14)

Illustration: To get a taste of how hungry people are for peace, try typing “peace” in on the website search engine, Google. You will be astounded to find that there are millions and millions of websites devoted to this topic. To search for real peace we don’t need a website search engine. God knows we hunger for peace, so He has given us a feast of information on the subject in His Word.

1. Real peace is a priority to God (Col 1:15-19; Matt. 5:23-24)
2. Real peace is expensive (Col 1:20; John 3:16; 1 John 4:9-11; 1 Pet. 5:6; Matt. 7:3-4; Phil. 2:3-4; Eph. 4:32)
3. Real peace requires an ally (Col. 1:19-20; Phil. 2:13; Eph. 1:18-20)
4. Real peace is found only at the Cross (Col. 1:20; Acts 4:12)
5. Real peace has eternal consequences (Col. 1:20; John 6:47; 2 Cor. 5:17-20; John 13:34-35; Luke 6:27-36)

Conclusion: Conflict is an opportunity to show others how to find real peace!

Challenge: Think of someone in your life with whom you need to make peace. Throughout this study, commit to prayer the steps you need to take to go to that person.

## The Peacemaking Church Sermon Outline #2

### The Powerful Witness of Unity

Key Text: Ephesians 4:1-6; 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. <sup>3</sup>Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

<sup>4</sup>There is one body and one Spirit-- just as you were called to one hope when you were called--

<sup>5</sup>one Lord, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup>one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Purpose: To help believers to understand that true Christian unity enhances the productivity of the church and overflows in a positive witness to the outside world that draws others to Christ.

Key principle from Small Group Study #2: Living at peace is a key to our Christian witness.

Sermon Outline:

Unity has an irresistible power.

Illustration: The unified effort of battering ram smashing the gate of a besieged castle has much more force than the individual efforts of those involved. Does our attack against the gates of hell consist of a unified effort, or are we splintered and uncoordinated?

1. What is the nature of Christian unity?

- People do not create unity— God does (Eph. 4:3; 2:22).
- Christian unity is not built around a cause, but rather centered on a Person – the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Christian unity is “being one in spirit and purpose” to love Jesus Christ and make him known to others (John 17:23; Phil. 2:2; Rom. 15:5-6).

2. Five commitments needed to cultivate, maintain, and demonstrate unity

- A commitment to love Jesus Christ above all things and to sacrifice all of our mini-agendas for His sake (Eph. 4:1, 15-16; Matt. 22:37; Gal. 2:20)
- A commitment to sound doctrine, which never sacrifices the truth, but always prioritizes it in a spirit of grace (Eph. 4:4-6, 13, 15, 16; Phil. 3:15)
- A commitment to develop Christ-like character, especially humility and submission (Eph. 4:2; Rom. 12:3; Phil. 2:3-4; 1 Pet. 3:8)

Illustration: Two individuals who strongly opposed each other’s view later end up arguing in favor of the other person’s view. When our focus moves from self to service of others,

this is a sign that we are growing in our Christ-like character.

- A commitment to respect and pursue God-given diversity and accept one another as Christ has accepted us (Eph. 4:11; Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Col. 3:11; Rom. 15:7)

Illustration: Unity is not the same as uniformity. The church at its best should be like an orchestra, with many different instruments blending together under one conductor to play complementary parts in one glorious composition.

- A commitment to strive earnestly and prayerfully to pursue peace, resolve conflict, and preserve relationships despite personal differences (Eph. 4:3; Prov. 19:11; Luke 6:27-28; Rom. 12:18; Gal. 6:1)

### 3. The evidence and fruit of unity

- A harmony of shared lives, with people regularly meeting, eating, praying, worshiping, and reaching decisions together (Acts. 1:14; 2:46; Rom. 12:16; 1 Pet. 3:8)
- No worldly discrimination based on race, gender, age, or economic status (Gal. 3:26-29)
- A commitment to seek genuine understanding and agreement rather than an imposed uniformity (Phil. 2:1-4)
- People feel a freedom to respectfully disagree with one another (Phil. 3:15)
- Work productively toward common kingdom goals and invest our spiritual and material resources far more effectively (Acts 4:32-37)
- Durable relationships (Eph. 5:25; Col. 3:12-15)
- Enhance our witness for Christ (John 17:23; 13:34-35)

Conclusion: True Christian unity can provide a powerful and appealing witness to the world.

Challenge: What will you do today, by God's grace, to cultivate, maintain, and demonstrate unity in your marriage, family, workplace, or here at church?

## The Peacemaking Church Sermon Outline #3

### Finding Peace through a Prompt “You Turn”

Key Text: Luke 12:13-15; Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” Jesus replied, “Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?” Then he said to them, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”

Purpose: To encourage believers to break free from the habit of focusing on other people’s wrongs and to promote peace by focusing on their own contribution to a conflict.

Key principle from Small Group Study #3: God uses conflict to reveal our idols.

Sermon Outline:

“No U Turn” vs. “No! You Turn.”

Illustration: When you see a “No U Turn” sign you likely interpret it to mean that you cannot turn around and go the other direction. However, people from other cultures might read it to say “No, You Turn” and interpret the same sign to mean that they are supposed to go the other way.

1. Our natural reaction to conflict is to blame others and focus on their wrongs (Luke 12:13; Gen. 3, 37; 1 Sam. 18-19)

Illustration: Choose a current high profile controversy in politics, sports, or another venue where both sides are blaming each other (and maybe even those outside the conflict) and refusing to admit any wrongdoing themselves.

2. The blame game always makes conflict worse (Luke 12:15; Ps. 73:21-22)

Illustration: If appropriate, refer to a recent conflict in your own community that grew out of proportion because of blame shifting.

3. You can change the course of a conflict with a prompt you-turn (Luke 12:15; Matt. 7:1-5)
4. Genuine reconciliation and lasting change require a transformed heart (Luke 12:15; Matt. 15:18-19; James 4:1-3; Ezek. 36:25-27)

Conclusion: Make a “you-turn” by confessing the sinful desires in your own life and by receiving the incredible gift of forgiveness and peace won on the cross.

Challenge: Making a “you-turn” means that you are going to go in another direction. Lay out a practical plan for the route that you will take, with God’s help, as you go in this new direction.

#### The Peacemaking Church Sermon Outline #4

##### The Silence that Stifles True Happiness

Key Text: Psalm 32; Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.

<sup>2</sup>Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit. <sup>3</sup>When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. <sup>4</sup>For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.

Selah <sup>5</sup>Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"-- and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah <sup>6</sup>Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found; surely when the mighty waters rise, they will not reach him. <sup>7</sup>You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah <sup>8</sup>I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you. <sup>9</sup>Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you.

<sup>10</sup>Many are the woes of the wicked, but the LORD's unfailing love surrounds the man who trusts in him. <sup>11</sup>Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!

Purpose: To encourage listeners to make humble confession of sin – both of secret sins and of offenses between brothers and sisters in Christ.

Key principle from Small Group Study #4: Confession brings freedom.

Sermon Outline:

Making resolutions

Illustration: At the age of 19, the great theologian, Jonathan Edwards, made a list of 70 resolutions. His 22<sup>nd</sup> resolution reads, “Resolved: To endeavor to obtain for myself as much happiness in the other world as I possibly can, with all the power, might, vigor, and vehemence, yea, violence, I am capable of, or can bring myself to exert, in any way that can be thought of.”

1. In what and for whom is this happiness? (Psalm 32:1-2)

True happiness is forgiveness for transgression.

True happiness consists in having our sin covered.

True happiness consists in the Lord not counting our sin against us.

True happiness is the possession of the confessing Christian.

2. The deceit of concealed sin (Psalm 32:3)
3. The consequences of keeping silent (Psalm 32:3-4)

Illustration: We work very hard at landscaping our “front yard lives” so that we look good to others. We may even allow people into our living rooms so they can see a little bit of us, yet our lives are really lived in the inner rooms, the dark, inner parts. The Lord wants truth in the inner parts (Psalm 51:6) because that’s where He lives.

4. How does God bring true happiness to believers?

Conviction comes through the supernatural working of the Holy Spirit in harmony with Gods' Word. Genuine conviction will lead to sincere confession.

- Secret sin (Ps. 90:8)
- Private sins (Matt. 18:15)

Illustration: In the Small Group Study this week we will learn the “7 A’s of Confession” – a helpful tool whether we are confessing to God, a spouse, co-worker, pastor, or friend.

- Public sins

5. You forgave my sin! (Psalm 32:5)

Conclusion: Let us resolve sincerely to confess our own sins and gladly encourage and forgive others as they do the same (Isa. 29:15; Prov. 28:13).

Challenge: Just as David needed Nathan, we also need others to help us see the sins in our lives. This week, ask a respected friend to help you identify a stumbling block in your life.

## The Peacemaking Church Sermon Outline #5

### Criticism and the Cross

#### Key Texts:

Prov. 9:9; Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning.

Prov. 12:15; The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice.

Prov. 13:10; Pride only breeds quarrels, but wisdom is found in those who take advice.

Prov. 15:32; He who ignores discipline despises himself, but whoever heeds correction gains understanding.

Prov. 17:10 A rebuke impresses a man of discernment more than a hundred lashes a fool.

Purpose: To teach believers to overcome their natural tendency to resist correction and instead to learn to welcome criticism as a blessing from God and a means of personal growth.

Key principle from Small Group Study #5: Constructive correction is a sign of genuine love.

Sermon Outline:

Pride can be exceedingly expensive.

Illustration: When the space shuttle Challenger exploded on January 28, 1986, it was a moment of horror and tragedy. People immediately began asking, “What went wrong?” The New York Times put it frankly: the ultimate cause of the space shuttle disaster was pride. A group of top-level managers failed to listen to the warnings, advice, and criticism of those beneath them. They disregarded the stated concerns about the reliability of the Challenger’s O-rings ability to function at cold temperatures, which ultimately led to the demise of seven astronauts. The Challenger presents a challenge to all of us: Do we know how to take criticism?

1. Criticism is when another person judges you by declaring that you have fallen short of a particular standard.

A key step is to recognize the idol of self.

Illustration: We like “yes people” because we want others to agree with our point of view.

Bosses often surround themselves with those who will agree with them and parents teach their children never to disagree with them. The issues at hand are significant to us, because we have great value when it is our name, our reputation, our honor, and our glory. We want

to be proven right (or righteous) in the eyes of others.

2. Criticism is a kindness, an honor, and a blessing if we have the humility to listen to whatever may be true in it (Prov. 12:15; 13:10; 17:10; 13:13; 9:9; 15:32; Ps. 141:5).

We will never be able to welcome criticism as a kindness until we understand both God's criticism and his justification of us through Christ's cross.

3. In Christ's cross, I affirm God's judgment of me (Gal. 2:20; Rom. 3:9-11; Gal. 3:10; James 2:10).

To claim to be a Christian is to claim to be someone who has understood criticism.

A Christian is someone who has stood under the greatest criticism – God's criticism —and agreed with it!

4. In Christ's Cross, I affirm God's justification of me (Phil. 3:9; Rom. 4:5; 3:20-26).

If the whole world criticizes you, you can reply, "If God has justified me, who can condemn me?"

5. The implications for our response to criticism:

We can face any criticism with confidence.

We can find comfort by seeing God's hand in criticism (2 Sam. 16:5-7, 11-12).

We can respond to criticism with a spirit of thanksgiving (Ps. 141:5).

We can respond with humility and a willingness to learn.

We can respond with a spirit of surrender (Rom. 8:33-34).

We can respond with a spirit of submission (Heb. 12:5-6).

Conclusion: "How can I best give accurate, fair, and balanced criticism with much mercy and affirmation?" (Proverbs 9:9; 12:15; 13:10, 13; 15:32; 17:10; and Psalm 141:5)

Challenge: Ask yourself, "Do people feel comfortable offering me correction, or do I have a

habit of responding with defensiveness and self-justification?" If you aren't sure of the answer, ask someone who cares about you.

### The Peacemaking Church Sermon Outline #6

#### Discipline is God's Gift and Blessing to the Church

Key Text: Matthew 18:12-22; "What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? <sup>13</sup>And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. <sup>14</sup>In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost. <sup>15</sup>If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. <sup>16</sup>But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' <sup>17</sup>If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. <sup>18</sup>"I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. <sup>19</sup>Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. <sup>20</sup>For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them. <sup>21</sup>Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times? <sup>22</sup>Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times."

Purpose: To teach believers to realize that mutual accountability and loving church discipline are a special privilege and blessing that God has given to his Church to rescue his people from sin and help them to experience the freedom and joy of godly living.

Key principle from Small Group Study #6: Discipline is God's gift and blessing to the church.

Sermon Outline:

Excellence requires discipline.

1. Discipline is all about love (Heb. 12:6; Ps. 94:12; Rev. 3:19).
2. Ninety-nine percent of church life involves formative discipline (Acts 2:42-47; 1 Thess. 2:11; Heb. 10:24-25; 12:10; Titus 1:8).

3. Occasionally we need corrective or restorative discipline (Matt. 18:12-22)

- Note the “bookends of love” (Matt. 18:12-14; 21-22).
- Step 1 – What should you do when someone does something wrong?

The world says, “Mind your own business,” “Live and let live,” or “Be tolerant”

God says, “If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over” (Matt. 18:15; cf. Lev. 19:17; Prov. 9:8; 19:18; Gal. 6:1-2; James 5:19-20; cf. Prov. 19:11; 1 Pet. 4:8).

“Nothing is more cruel than the tenderness that consigns another to his sin. Nothing is more compassionate than the severe rebuke that calls a brother back from the path of sin.” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*)

- Step 2 -- But what if others don't listen to you? What if they keep on doing something you think is wrong?

The world says, “Tell anyone and everyone about it.”

God says, “If he will not listen to you, take one or two others along so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses” (Matt. 18:16; Heb. 12:11).

- Step 3 -- But what if others get involved and the person still won't change?

The world says, "we've done all we can, so let's just drop it."

What does God say? "If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church" (Matt. 18:17; Acts 15:1-2, 6).

- Step 4 -- But what if the person still won't repent, even after others in the church do all they can to persuade him to repent?

The world says, "Judge not lest ye be judged."... "Don't force your values on me."

What does God say? "If he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector" (Matt. 18:17b; cf. Matt. 18:18-20; 1 Cor. 5:9-13; Titus 3:10).

- Step 5 -- What if a person repents of his sin and wants to be reconciled?

The world says, "Forgive you? Never! Not after all you've done."

What does God say? "Forgive your brother from your heart ... seventy-seven times" (Matt. 18:21-22; 2 Cor. 2:7).

Conclusion: Discipline is God's gift and blessing to the church!

Challenge: The next time you are faced with disciplining someone (a child, subordinate, etc.), challenge yourself to discipline as God disciplines: out of love for that person, not retribution.

## The Peacemaking Church Sermon Outline #7

### The Welcoming Father and His Three Sons<sup>47</sup>

Key Text: Luke 15:1-32

Purpose: To magnify the marvelous, undeserved forgiveness that God has given to us through Christ, and to inspire people to imitate that kind of forgiveness to others.

Key principle from Small Group Study #7: Our forgiveness shows what we think of God's forgiveness.

Sermon Outline:

Opening Illustration: From kids being momentarily lost in the grocery store to families being split apart by wars and hurricanes – being lost is a tragic feeling. Yet, there is a much more profound way in which a person can be lost, which exists when there is no sense of belonging. Listen to this revealing statement by a teenager from Walter Truett Anderson's book, *Reality Isn't What It Used to Be*: "I belong to the Blank Generation. I have no beliefs. I belong to no community, tradition, or anything like that. I'm lost in this vast, vast world. I belong nowhere. I have absolutely no identity."

Introduction: We're lost ... because we've left God.

1. We all view God as an employer.
2. The Story of the Younger Son (vv. 12-24)

The Request

Illustration: In our day and culture, this might seem like a somewhat reasonable request.

However, if you asked a Middle Easterner about the son's request you would learn that this is

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<sup>47</sup>Contributed by Rev. Alfred Poirier, senior pastor of Rocky Mountain Community Church in Billings, Montana, chairman of Peacemaker Ministries' Board of Directors, and author of *The Peacemaking Pastor* (Baker Books, 2006).

unheard of, and if a son were to do such a thing he should expect to be beaten, not granted his request.

- To ask for his inheritance means the son wants his father to die!
- Sin is wishing God were dead.
- The younger son returns not as a son, but rather as an employee.

The Father's Response

- Instead of condemning his son, the father runs to greet him and seals his forgiveness with a lavish celebration.

### 3. The Elder Son (vv. 12-24)

The Rejection

- The elder son surrendered his soul to his pride and self-sufficiency.
- When others have done wrong, we want justice, not mercy.

The Father's Response

- And yet the father's love was unquenchable.

### 4. The Third Son

Jesus has paid for all our sins and thereby opened the way for all of us to return to our Father's loving arms.

Because of Jesus, the Father is waiting for you to return — so that he may bless you, forgive you, accept you, and celebrate over you with the whole host of heaven.

Conclusion: The foundational “G” for all peacemaking is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Challenge: Think of someone you know who is “lost” and in need of Jesus' forgiveness and love.

Then, find a way to point this person to the loving arms of the welcoming Father.

## The Peacemaking Church Sermon Outline #8

### Our Church: A Dwelling Place for God?

Key Text: Ephesians 2:19-22; <sup>19</sup>Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, <sup>20</sup>built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. <sup>21</sup>In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup>And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Purpose: By focusing on the biblical image of the church as God's dwelling place, this sermon will help your church to look forward to the next steps of personal and corporate peacemaking – including the formation of a Peacemaking Team.

Sermon Outline:

Have we reached our destination? Do we have a culture of peace now?

Summary of past teaching and encouragement to look toward our future as a church

1. Our Church: the Community of the Lost (vv 11-12)
  - Paul reminds us of our past
  - We were lost apart from Christ
2. Our Church: the Community of the Redeemed and the Reconciled (vv 13-18)
  - Our peace was purchased by the blood of Christ.
  - For Christians in conflict, the blood of Christ brings peace with God and with other believers.
  - The basis or ground for reconciliation with other believers is the presence of the Holy Spirit in all Christians.
  - Does God want you to pray about assisting the Peacemaking Team?

3. Our Church: a dwelling place for God? (vv 19-22)

- We can be confident because the foundation of the church is built on the solid foundation of Christ.
- Replacing the old Jerusalem temple, the new community built on Christ is now the new temple of God, built to be a dwelling where God lives by his Spirit.

Conclusion: We have a great calling as Christians to be peacemakers because of the peace we have in Christ. We have a great calling as Christians to be reconcilers because we've been reconciled. We have a great calling as Christians to be a people where God chooses to live by his Spirit.

Challenge: Can we be a dwelling place for God? It sounds like too much for us. But Eph 3:20-21 gives us confidence and hope in the God who does unthinkable things through his church.

## **Appendix Seven – Director of Mission Sermon for Church Seminar**

### **THE PEACE PRODUCING PRINCIPLE OF UNITY**

(Psalm 133 - Mark 3:24-25 - John 17:21-23)

Psalm 133:1-3 A Song of degrees of David. Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! [2] It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; [3] As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.

Mark 3:24-25 And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. [25] And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.

John 17:21-23 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. [22] And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: [23] I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

### **INTRODUCTION**

In a Peanuts cartoon Lucy demands that Linus change the television channels. She threatens him with her fist if he did not change the channel. Linus says, "What makes you think you can walk right in here and take over?" "These five fingers," says Lucy. "Individually they

are nothing but when I unite them together into a single unit, they form a weapon that is a terror to behold.” “What channel do you want?” asks Linus. Walking away, Linus looks at his fingers and says, “Why can’t you guys get organized with oneness like that?”

What is the greatest sin of the Church? "The greatest sin of the Church is not lying, stealing, drunkenness, adultery, not even murder, but the sin of disunity. Because disunity in the Body is more prevalent than these other sins and just as truly ties the hands of the Holy Spirit, it causes more souls to be lost than these flagrant offenses. The Holy Spirit cannot deal effectively in the conviction and conversion of sinners where the "saints" are divided ... The most important, momentous, crucial, but the most ignored, neglected, and unsolved problem that has faced the Church from its infancy to the present is the problem of disunity ... it has been Satan's master strategy. The sin of disunity has caused more souls to be lost than all other sins combined. Possibly more than anything else, it is the one thing that binds the hands of the Holy Spirit and thwarts His work of convincing of sin, righteousness, and judgment." Disunity is the most heinous and destructive sin of the church. (Paul Billhimer, *Love Covers All*)

It is no surprise that Jesus in praying for the church in John 17 prays 3 times for unity. “Holy father, keep them in thy name that they may be one.” Why did the Lord put so much attention in his prayer for the church to live dwelling in unity?

Answer is given in Mark 3:25 “And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.” Jesus knew if the church was not one and not dwelling together in unity, the church and its ministry would be greatly wounded and ultimately would not stand. It is when God's people are joined together that the Church marches forward in the blessings of God. It is in the spirit of oneness that the Church finds its greatest power to serve God.

Hear me when I say that while God has done great things here at Elizabeth Baptist Church, God wants to do even great things through Elizabeth Baptist Church in the days ahead. The key to God's best and fullest blessing is unity.

Psalm 133 is a biblical commentary on the peace producing principle of unity. I want us to look the text in a moment but first I want you to understand what biblical unity is not.

Biblical unity is NOT mere union. You can have union and be together in a body but not have biblical unity. A cemetery has union but there is no life in a cemetery. You can tie the tails of two cats together. You might have union but you will have no unity.

Neither is biblical unity mere uniformity where everyone looks and dresses alike. The Bible does teach that all Christians should look alike in terms of Christ-likeness. We all are to growing in being molded and shaped by the Holy Spirit of God working through the Word of God to look like, talk like, and behave like Jesus. But God's people are not required to show uniformity in our dress, hair style, or food preference.

Neither is biblical unity mere universal absence of conflict. A church can look real nice on the outside and not have biblical unity. In fact, I submit on scriptural authority that no relationship, no church can escape times of conflict. The question is not will we have conflict. The question is whether we will process conflict in the power of the Holy Spirit and according to the Word of God.

Neither is biblical unity an understanding to agree to disagree. There are some things where this might be true. There are other things we can't just agree to disagree. Evangelism, the authority of Scripture and the Lordship of Christ are not up for disagreement among Christians. Amos 3:3 says, "Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?" Seventeenth century German

theologian Rupertus Meldenus said, "In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; in all things, charity." (Chuck Swindoll, *Dropping Your Guard*, Waco: Word, 1983, p. 73)

In essential beliefs, we should have unity. "There is one body and one spirit ... there is one lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and father of us all" (Eph. 4:4-6). In non-essential beliefs, we should have liberty. "Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters...who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls ... so then each of us will give an account of himself to God ... so whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God" (Rom. 14:1,4,12,22). In all our beliefs, we should show love (Charity). "...If I hold in my mind not only all human knowledge but also the very secrets of God, and if I have the faith that can move mountains, but have no love, I amount to nothing at all" (1 Cor. 13:2 (Phillips)).

If unity is not union, and not uniformity and not universal absent of conflict, and not an understanding to agree to disagree, what is biblical unity? Biblical unity is an inward commitment to the lordship of Christ that results in outward obedience to obey the great commission. 1 Corinthians 1:10 says, "Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. Philippians 1:27 says, "Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel. This is why Jesus prayed in John 17 for oneness, "that the world may believe that thou has sent me."

With this understanding, please note the following peace producing principles of unity in our text.

## I. THE BRETHREN OF UNITY - Verse 1

Most common word in the NT to refer to believers is the word “brethren.” Brethren includes men and women. Brothers and sisters in Christ. Unity is to exist not in a building but in a body... not in inanimate objects but in people. The Bible teaches that all who turn from sin and trust Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior become brothers and sisters in Christ.

The text says it is good and it is pleasant for brethren to dwell together in unity.

Ephesians 4:5-6 says “We have one lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and father of all, who is above all, and through all and in you all.”

The “good and pleasant” for the brethren of unity flows from what we have in common, not in how we differ. The emphasis is upon the “brethren dwelling together” in unity. As God’s people, living under the lordship of Christ, we relate to each other in biblical unity. The description of God is that it will be “good and pleasant” for us.

Let me help you to clearly understand what God is saying. When we obey God’s Word and seek oneness to glorify God and God alone, we live in the land of good and pleasant. When we obey God’s Word and seek oneness to serve Christ and Christ alone, we live in the land of good and pleasant. When we obey God’s Word and seek oneness to walk by faith and not by sight, seek oneness to walk by the Spirit and not by the flesh, seek to strive together for the faith of the gospel and not our agenda, seek to pray for one another, love one another, forgive one another, be humble to one another, and to serve one another, we live in the land of good and pleasant.

It is when we disobey God’s Word and become hell’s agent of disunity that we live absent of goodness and pleasantness from God. An issue of *National Geographic* included a photograph of the fossil remains of two saber-tooth cats locked in combat. To quote the article:

“One had bitten deep into the leg bone of the other, a thrust that trapped both in a common fate. The cause of the death of the two cats is as clear as the causes of the extinction of their species are obvious.” When Christians fight each other, everybody loses. As Paul put it, “if you keep biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other” (Gal. 5:15). We are to be brethren of unity.

## II. THE BOUNTY OF UNITY – Verse 2 and 3a.

David gives us some imagery to help us visualize the goodness and pleasantness of unity. He says, "It is like the precious oil upon the head, running down on the beard, the beard of Aaron..." One pastor, preaching on this verse called his sermon "Happiness is an oily beard!" The picture is that of anointing oil used to sanctify Aaron as the high priest for his temple service. Exodus 28-30 gives a detailed list of instructions for how to anoint the high priest. Note in v.2 of the text that the priest was anointed with "precious oil." In Exodus 30:22-25 gives God's recipe for "holy anointing oil." It contained 12 pounds of liquid myrrh, 6 pounds of sweet-smelling cinnamon, 6 pounds of sweet-smelling cane, 12 pounds of cassia, and 4 quarts of olive oil. All blended together by a perfumer, this was a wonderfully aromatic substance. It wasn't only "precious" it was "holy." It was to be used only to consecrate the high priest, his sons, and the instruments of the tabernacle. Jesus was anointed as our high priest in the NT (cf. Mk14).

The "holy anointing oil" of course symbolized the anointing of the Holy Spirit on the high priest. In the same way, the unity of our church is a symbol of holiness. I don't think we stretch the Scriptures to say that a unified church creates an atmosphere in which the presence of the Holy Spirit can be sensed just as the smell of the "holy anointing oil" could not be missed.

Picture now the "precious oil" as it poured "upon the head" of Aaron the high priest. It was not just a little cup full of oil, but a barrel full. Remember that recipe I mentioned a moment ago. I'm not speaking of sprinkling the priest with oil, but coving him with it. The image we should have is when a football team wins a championship game and a whole five-gallon cooler of *Gatorade* is dumped on the coach. They dumped a barrel of this "precious oil" on Aaron. It is no wonder it ran "down on the beard." David said it was also "running down on the edge of his garments." He didn't just get a little oil, he was covered in oil! Even the very hem of his priestly robe was drenched in the holy oil. It flowed over his breastplate and the inscribed names of the 12 tribes, a symbol of the Holy Spirit unifying this diverse people.

The oil covered the priest from head to toe. So it is in the church when unity rules. No one is left out. Everyone is touched. Everyone is blessed. Everyone is anointed. When the pastors, the elders, the deacons, the teachers and other leaders are unified, the goodness and pleasantness flows down to everyone. It penetrates every part of the body.

Not only is Christian unity like "precious oil," but King David gives us a second metaphor. In v.3, he adds that it is "like the dew of Hermon." What is "Hermon?" "Hermon" is Mount Hermon in the far northern reaches of Palestine some 40 miles northeast of the Sea of Galilee. It has a majestic peak that reaches some 9,101 feet above sea level. It is the highest point in all of Palestine and is perpetually snow-clad. It is said that the snows on Mount Hermon can be seen for miles across the burning deserts below. The melting glacier fields from the mountain in the spring raise the Jordan river to flood stage. In reference to Psalm 133:3, biblical scholar Merrill F. Unger writes, "The Psalmist speaks of the 'dew of Hermon.' The snow on the mountain condenses the vapors during the summer so that abundant dews descend upon it while

the surrounding country is parched. One of the tops is actually called *Abu-Nedy*, i.e., ‘father of dew.’”

The unity of believers, the presence of the Holy Spirit in a church is like "precious" anointing oil and like the "dew" on a mountaintop. What does "dew" do? The most significant thing about "dew" is its arrival. It doesn't fall or rise. Scientifically speaking, "dew" forms. "Dew" relates to the condensation of the moisture of the air. "Dew" forms or appears when the atmospheric conditions are just right. This is called the "dew point." Dew forms silently. You don't hear it as it appears on your roof or lawn. It doesn't make a loud noise or call attention to itself. Yet, its presence is unmistakable; it is obvious. You don't go out on the front lawn and ask, "Is there dew this morning?" You know immediately whether the atmospheric conditions were right or not.

The atmospheric conditions within a church must be right before the anointing oil of the Spirit descends. When the spiritual conditions are right, when we "dwell together in unity," the "dew" of the Spirit of God drenches us and we all get wet! The atmospheric condition that brings the out-pouring of God's Spirit is unity. When we set aside our petty differences, preferences, legalistic rules and worship the Lord in Spirit and in truth, the dew of heaven falls. For the dew to fall, there must be repentance.

### III. THE BLESSINGS OF UNITY – Verse 3b

The text teaches that the blessing of unity is the commanded blessing of God upon God's people and God's Church. Picture heaven with a room filled with endless blessing and there is a sign over the room, your Baptist Church. God in heaven waits to see if the brothers and sisters in Christ of your Baptist Church will dwell together in unity, so He can command the blessing upon

the church in souls being saved, lives being changed, and every provision made for every need in the church.

### CONCLUSION/INVITATION

Unity is attainable. It's up to you and me. Some years ago a magazine carried a series of pictures that graphically depicted a tragic story. The first picture was of a vast wheat field in western Kansas. The second picture showed a distressed mother sitting in a farmhouse in the center of the field of wheat. The accompanying story explained that her 4 year old son had wandered away from the house and into the field when she was not looking. The mother and father looked and looked all day but the little fellow was too short to see or to be seen over the tall wheat. The third picture showed dozens of friends and neighbors who had heard of the boy's plight and who had joined hands the next morning to make a long human chain as they walked through the field searching. The final picture was of the heart broken father holding his lifeless son who had been found too late and had died of exposure. The caption underneath read, "O God, if only we had joined hands sooner." I hope EBC does not have to stand before Jesus someday. And have Him to show us the blood on our hands, the souls that went to Hell because we refused to join hands for the sake of the gospel.

I invite you today to come to Christ for salvation. You must be willing to turn from your sin. God will help you if you are willing. Put your trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior who died for your sins and arose from the grave. Surrender control of your life to Him. I invite you, Christian, today to come to Christ for forgiveness if as a Christian you have let yourself become an agent of hell and contributed to disunity by what you have said or done. Claim I John 1:9. I invite you as a believer to dedicate yourself afresh to the Lord Jesus Christ to be a peacemaker.

## **Appendix Eight – Permission from Peacemaker Ministries**

From: Mike Miller [mailto:mfba1@embarqmail.com]

Sent: Wednesday, April 25, 2012 4:06 PM

To: Mail@Peacemaker.net

Subject: Time Sensitive Request

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Mike Miller. I am Director of Missions of the Middle Florida Baptist Association. I am working on a Doctor of Ministry Degree from Temple Baptist Seminary. I am doing my project on Conflict Resolution. Years ago I bought for my library most of the materials you produce. From viewing your website, I can see other or updated resources.

My purpose in writing is to ask your permission to use with reference and footnote documentation, materials produced by peacemaker in my Doctor of Ministry Project. Please let me know as soon as possible if it is ok to draw from and reference your materials.

Yours in Christ,

Mike Miller – Director of Missions (MIDDLE FLORDA BAPTIST ASSOCIATION)

850-973-8607

Mfba1@embarqmail.com

From: Kris Hart [mailto:khart@peacemaker.net]

Sent: Wednesday, April 25, 2012 7:12 PM

To: mfba1@embarqmail.com

Subject: Your Time Sensitive Request

Dear Mike,

Thank you for your request. We are pleased to hear that you value our materials and would like to use them in your project. We are happy to grant your request. Using the usual format for citations will be sufficient.

One requirement on our part is that you only quote from the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of *The Peacemaker* by Ken Sande. It was published in 2004, and was substantially different in many parts from the previous two editions. If you see on our website other updated versions of resources you'd like to quote, we'd appreciate your obtaining them also, but we don't require it.

Would you please send me your mailing address for our records? Blessings on your research and writing!

*Kris*

Kristin H. Hart

Executive Assistant

Peacemaker Ministries [www.Peacemaker.net](http://www.Peacemaker.net)

406.294.6801 (direct line)

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