



False Peacemakers

Love Deeply Tool



False Peacemakers

EMOTIONAL MATURITY AND CONFLICT

At the heart of true peacemaking is acknowledgment, once again, that we are human beings made in God's image. The likeness to our Creator, along with Christ's example, puts us on paths that desire to live in the truth and not in pretense, even when that means a conflict may result. Yet most Christians I meet are poor at resolving conflict.

There are at least two reasons for this: the first relates to wrong beliefs about peacemaking and the second relates to a lack of training and equipping in this area.

Ignoring Conflict-False Peacemaking

A tragically misinterpreted verse in the New Testament is Jesus' proclamation: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God" (Matthew 5:9). Most people think that Jesus calls us in this verse to be pacifiers and appeasers who ensure that nobody gets upset. We are to keep the peace, ignoring difficult issues and problems, making sure things remain stable and serene.



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When, out of fear, we avoid conflict and appease people, we are false peacemakers. For example: Karl is upset about the behavior of his spouse who constantly comes home later after work. He says nothing. Why? He thinks he is being like Christ by not saying anything, although he does give her a cold shoulder. He is a false peacemaker.

Pam disagrees with her coworkers at lunch when they slander her boss. She is afraid to speak up. She goes along. I don't want to kill the atmosphere by speaking up and disagreeing, she thinks. She is a false peacemaker.

Bob goes to dinner with ten other people. He is tight financially, so he orders up and only a salad and appetizer. Meanwhile, the other nine order appetizers, steak, wine, and desserts. When the bill comes, someone says, "Let's divide up the bill equally. It will take forever to figure it out." Everyone agrees. Bob is dying on the inside but won't say anything. He is a false peacemaker.

Yolanda is engaged. She would like more time to rethink her decision but is afraid that her fiancé and his family will get angry. She goes through with the wedding. She is a false peacemaker.



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Ellen loves her parents. They are both quite critical about how she raises her children. Each holiday is filled with tension. Ellen doesn't say anything because she doesn't want to hurt their feelings. She is a false peacemaker.

Sharon thinks her boyfriend is irresponsible but feels bad for him. He has had so much pain already in his life, she thinks. How can I add to that? So she backs down from telling him the truth about the way his behavior is slowly killing their relationship. The relationship dies a slow death. She is a false peacemaker.

The problem with all these scenarios is that the way of true peace will never come through pretending what is wrong is right! True peacemakers love God, others, and themselves enough to disrupt false peace. Jesus models this for us.



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Embracing Conflict-The Path to True Peace

Conflict and trouble were central to the mission of Jesus. He disrupted the false peace all around him-in the lives of his disciples, the crowds, the religious leaders, the Romans, those buying and selling in the temple. He taught that true peacemaking disrupts false peace even in families: “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household” (Matthew 10:34–36).

Why? You can’t have the true peace of Christ’s kingdom with lies and pretense. They must be exposed to the light and replaced with the truth. This is the mature, loving thing to do.

In the Beatitudes, Jesus explains to us the characteristics we need to display if we are to engage in true peacemaking-poverty of spirit, meekness, purity of heart, mercy, etc. (Matthew 5:3-11). He also follows the call to true peacemaking by stating that persecution will follow for those of us who follow him in this.

Nonetheless, unresolved conflicts are one of the greatest tensions in Christians’ lives today. Most of us hate them. We don’t know what to do with them. Instead of risking any more broken relationships, we prefer to ignore the difficult issues and settle for a “false peace,” hoping against hope they will somehow go away. They don’t. And we all learn, sooner or later, that you can’t build Christ’s kingdom on lies and pretense. Only the truth will do.



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LEARNING SKILLS TO BE TRUE PEACEMAKERS

Most of us believe loving well is learned automatically, that it is just a “feeling.” We underestimate the depth of our bad habits and what is needed to sustain long-term, Christlike change in our relationships.

This belief led Debi and me, over eleven years ago, to begin learning from a variety of sources, gathering exercises and tools, so people could learn how to practice loving well. Our desire was to help followers of Jesus obey the command to love well. We wanted to move people from defensiveness, reactivity, and fear to openness, empathy, and vulnerability. We realized they needed to experience a new kingdom-way of relating that was outside their comfort zone. Practicing new skills like the ones that follow will cause a level of discomfort initially. They are easy to understand but difficult to implement. But by repeatedly practicing mature, godly behaviors, we have seen people freed from lifelong cycles of emotional immaturity. They have served as a helpful link in moving people into becoming mothers and fathers of the faith.

We have collected a number of tools and exercises. The following, however, are a few we use in all kinds of relationships—our marriage, parenting, staff team, and wider church. They each, in their own way, contribute to helping us follow Christ in becoming true peacemakers and lead us to love well.



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Speaking and Listening

Speaking and listening are the essences of having a healthy relationship with another person. Everyone knows that communication is essential to all relationships. People take courses in high school, college, and beyond to learn more about it. Yet few people do it well. This is especially true under stress and in conflict.

For many of us, our childhood was an experience of invisibility. For this reason, simply being the speaker and expressing your wishes and hopes can be a very healing, powerful experience. Moreover, this process of speaking and listening creates a fresh connection between two people, slowing them both down.

I encourage you to see the following structure as a spiritual practice of meeting God through your time with this person. Ask God to help you be prayerfully present. Ask him to help you receive this person as if they were Jesus. How might Jesus Christ want to come to you through this person? Ask God to clear the noise from your mind so you can be still enough to enter the speaker's world.



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AS THE SPEAKER

- Talk about your own thoughts, your own feelings (speak in the “I”).
- Be brief. Use short sentences or phrases.
- Correct the other person if you believe he or she has missed something.
- Continue speaking until you feel you’ve been understood.
- When you don’t have anything else to say, say, “That’s all for now.”

AS THE LISTENER

- Put your own agenda on hold. Be quiet and still as you would before God.
- Allow the other person to speak until he or she completes a thought.
- Reflect accurately on the other person’s words back to him or her. You have two options: paraphrase in a way the other person agrees is accurate or use his or her own words.
- When it appears the speaker is done, “Is there more?”

The purpose of repeating back what the other person says is to be sure you are hearing them accurately. This requires you as the listener to put your ideas and responses on hold. Validate the other person, letting them know that you really see and understand his or her world and point of view. You recognize they are different. Typical validation phrases might include: “That makes sense ...” or “I can see that because ...” or “I can understand that because. ”



False Peacemakers

The Bill of Rights

Respect is not a feeling. It is how we treat another person. Regardless of how we might feel about another human being, they are made in God's image and of infinite value and worth. Next to each "right" are examples from our family's life.

Bill of Rights

Respect means I give myself and others the right to:

- Space and privacy (e.g., knocking on doors before entering, not opening one another's mail, respecting each other's needs for quiet and space);
- Be different (e.g., allowing preferences for food, movies, the volume of music, and how we spend our time);
- Disagree (e.g., making room for each person to think and see life differently);
- Be heard (e.g., listening to each other's desires, opinions, thoughts, feelings, etc.);
- Be taken seriously (e.g., listening and being present to one another);
- Be given the benefit of the doubt (e. g., checking out assumptions rather than judging one another when misunderstandings arise);
- Be told the truth (e.g., counting on the truth when asking each other for information-from "Did you study for the test that you failed?" to "Why were you late coming home?");
- Be consulted (e. g., checking and asking when decisions will affect others);Be imperfect and make mistakes (e.g., leaving "room" for breaking things, forgetting things, letting each other down unintentionally, failing tests when we have studied, etc.);
- Courteous and honorable treatment (e. g., using words that don't hurt, asking before using, consulting when appropriate); and
- Be respected (e. g., taking one another's feelings into account)



Thank You!

We hope you found this tool helpful for you and your partner. If you're looking for more helpful resources like this one, check out our website.

Kevin

@KEVINDALY

WWW.BROKENCHAINSINTL.COM

INFO@BROKENCHAINSINTL.COM