



THE GOSPEL *and* RELATIONSHIPS



Lesson Nine Peacemaking (Part III)

God, grant me the
Serenity to accept the things I cannot change;
Courage to change the things I can;
and Wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time;
Enjoying one moment at a time;
Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;
Taking, as Jesus did, this sinful
world as it is, not as I would have it:
Trusting that You will make all things
right if I surrender to Your will;
That I may be reasonably happy in this
life and supremely happy with You
forever in the next. Amen.

Reinhold Niebuhr

PEACEMAKING (PART I & II) RECAP

In Context

Each and every moment and circumstance is imbedded in God's loving provision from eternity past, through the present into eternity future. God would have us respond to each moment and circumstance for the purpose of His glory, motivated by love of Him and of neighbor.

Though we are fallen and repeatedly fail, through the Gospel of Christ, we have been forgiven, justified, reconciled and adopted by God. We have been given the ultimate model and indwelling power for our response to conflict.

In conflict, God provides opportunities to (1 Cor. 10:31-11:1):

- Glorify God (by trusting, obeying, and imitating him)
- Serve other people (by helping to bear their burdens or by confronting them in love)
- Grow to be like Christ (by confessing sin and turning from attitudes that promote conflict).

Peacemaker Biblical Principles

Biblical principles for responding to conflict include:

- Glorify God.
- Get the log out of my own eye.
- Gently restore.
- Go and be reconciled.

Glorify God — Instead of focusing on our own desires or dwelling on what others may do,

- we will rejoice in the Lord and bring him praise
- by depending on his forgiveness, wisdom, power, and love, as we seek to
- faithfully obey his commands and
- maintain a loving, merciful, and forgiving attitude. Ps. 37:1-6; Mark 11:25; John 14:15; Rom. 12:17-21; 1 Cor. 10:31; Phil. 4:2-9; Col. 3:1-4; James 3:17-18; 4:1-3; 1 Peter 2:12.

The Key Question: How can I please and honor God in this situation?

Get the Log out of Your Own Eye — Instead of blaming others for a conflict or resisting correction,

- we will trust in God's mercy and take responsibility for our own contribution to conflicts—
- confessing our sins to those we have wronged,
- asking God to help us change any attitudes and habits that lead to conflict, and
- seeking to repair any harm we have caused. Prov. 28:13; Matt. 7:3-5; Luke 19:8; Col. 3:5-14; 1 John 1:8-9.

The Key Question: How have I contributed to this conflict and what do I need to do to resolve it?

This is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says: "In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it." Isaiah 30:15

Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God. Your sins have been your downfall!

Take words with you and return to the Lord.

Say to him: "Forgive all our sins

and receive us graciously, that we may offer the fruit of our lips.

Assyria cannot save us; we will not mount war-horses.

We will never again say 'Our gods' to what our own hands have made,
for in you the fatherless find compassion."

"I will heal their waywardness and love them freely,

for my anger has turned away from them. Hosea 14:1-4

The Westminster Confession Of Faith Chapter 15: Of Repentance Unto Life

5. Men ought not to content themselves with a general repentance, but it is every man's duty to endeavour to repent of his particular sins, particularly.

Search me, O God, and know my heart;

test me and know my anxious thoughts.

See if there is any offensive way in me,

and lead me in the way everlasting. Psalm 139:23-24

To what extent have I:

- accepted the righteousness of Christ in exchange for my sinfulness
- accepted passive righteousness from Christ yet demanded active righteousness from others

- looked at a woman lustfully;
 - committed adultery in my heart;
 - had a heart that has committed adultery thousands of times in the past
 - had a heart prone to continue to do so;
 - been unfaithful to God and my wife;
 - violated the hope and trust God and my wife have placed in me;
 - etc.
 -

- been angry at my wife for making us late to church
 - said “you fool” to her at least in my heart
 - murdered her in my heart
 - had a heart prone to murder
 - justified, excused, minimized, blamed others for, or defended my murderous heart
 - usurped God’s role as judge and executioner
 - purposed by approval by self or others rather than for God’s glory
 - been motivated by my frustration, comfort and/or convenience rather than love of God and my wife
 - loved her as Christ loved the church; i.e. been willing to die to self for her
 - been harsh with her in thought, word or deed
 - claimed my anger was intended to bring about the righteousness God desires
 - judged her without first removing the these logs which distort my vision
 - asked her how I could help without first removing the these logs from my eyes

Lord, please make me desperate to repent and trust in you.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense--Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. 1 John 1:9-2:2

Cautions, caveats and concerns:

In each and every moment and circumstance of God's loving provision; but especially in conflict which can be very painful, complex and full of risk:

- Our guide is the Spirit in the application of the Gospel of Christ, not just the compliance to or utilization of certain biblical principles.
 - We are not talking about a set of directions or even an accurate map but an ongoing communication with an omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, loving guide.
- Look to all of scripture. Do not cherry pick. When in doubt regarding seemingly conflicting biblical directions, look for appropriate additional guiding principles. (e.g. Proverbs 19:11, Matthew 18:15 Matt. 22:37-39)
- Be careful to be motivated by the Spirit's leadings, conviction, godly sorrow and love rather than by family heritage, duty, habit, guilt, shame and/or a weak conscience.
- Seek to learn and understand what biblical principles might be applicable and how they work together.
- Seek however much loving care and help you need for your healing and support.
- Seek whatever wise, mature, godly counsel and accountability you need to best know and do God's will. (Psalm 19:12a; Prov. 15:22; Jer. 17:9)
- Use whatever time God allows you for the process of seeking peace with Him, yourself and others.

I am aware that the grief, trials and conflicts of which we will be speaking may range from long-past, inconsequential inconvenience; through current annoyance; to long-standing, repetitive, intolerable, overwhelming, and/or ongoing suffering. I believe God invites us to trust and rely on Him especially in our suffering. Through all His provision, God invites us to engage with Him as Christ did (e.g. intimately; intentionally; in praise, thanksgiving, supplication, fellowship, etc.) or in repentance. He may express his grace by relieving us of our suffering or by refining us and redeeming our experience.

GENTLY RESTORE

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

Key Question: How can I help others to understand how they have contributed to this conflict?

Gently Restore

Another key principle of peacemaking involves an effort to help others understand how they have contributed to a conflict. When Christians think about talking to someone else about a conflict, one of the first verses that comes to mind is Matthew 18:15: "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you." If this verse is read in isolation, it seems to teach that we must always use direct confrontation to force others to admit they have sinned. If the verse is read in context, however, we see that Jesus had something much more flexible and beneficial in mind than simply standing toe to toe with others and describing their sins.

Just before this passage, we find Jesus' wonderful metaphor of a loving shepherd who goes to look for a wandering sheep and then rejoices when it is found (Matt. 18:12–14). Thus, Matthew 18:15 is introduced with a theme of restoration, not condemnation. Jesus repeats this theme just after telling us to "go and show him his fault" by adding, "If he listens to you, you have won your brother over." And then he hits the restoration theme a third time in verses 21–35, where he uses the parable of the unmerciful servant to remind us to be as merciful and forgiving to others as God is to us (Matt. 18:21–35).

Jesus is clearly calling for something much more loving and redemptive than simply confronting others with a list of their wrongs. Similarly, Galatians 6:1 gives us solid counsel on what our attitude and purpose ought to be when we go to our brother. "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently." Our attitude should be one of gentleness rather than anger, and our purpose should be to restore rather than condemn.

Yet even before you go to talk with someone, remember that it is appropriate to overlook minor offenses (see Prov. 19:11). As a general rule, an offense should be overlooked if you can answer "no" to all of the following questions:

- Is the offense seriously dishonoring God?
- Has it permanently damaged a relationship?
- Is it seriously hurting other people? and
- Is it seriously hurting the offender himself?

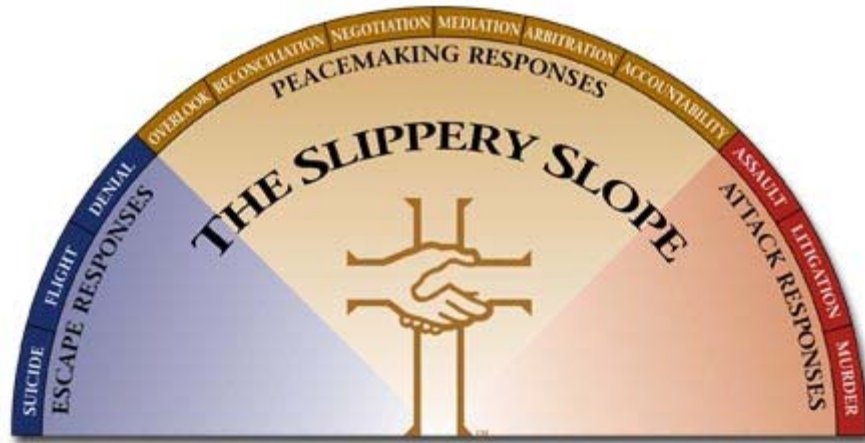
If you answer "yes" to any of these questions, an offense is too serious to overlook, in which case God commands you to go and talk with the offender privately and lovingly about the situation. As you do so, remember to:

- Pray for humility and wisdom
- Plan your words carefully (think of how you would want to be confronted)
- Anticipate likely reactions and plan appropriate responses (rehearsals can be very helpful)
- Choose the right time and place (talk in person whenever possible)
- Assume the best about the other person until you have facts to prove otherwise (Prov. 11:27)
- Listen carefully (Prov. 18:13)
- Speak only to build others up (Eph. 4:29)
- Ask for feedback from the other person
- Recognize your limits (only God can change people; see Rom. 12:18; 2 Tim. 2:24-26)

If an initial conversation does not resolve a conflict, do not give up. Review what was said and done, and look for ways to make a better approach during a follow up conversation. It may also be wise to ask a spiritually mature friend for advice on how to approach the other person more effectively. Then try again with even stronger prayer support.

If repeated, careful attempts at a private discussion are not fruitful, and if the matter is still too serious to overlook, you should ask one or two other people to meet with you and your opponent and help you to resolve your differences through mediation, arbitration, or accountability (see Matt. 18:16-20; 1 Cor. 6:1-8).

The Slippery Slope



Escape Responses: Denial, Flight, Suicide

Attack Responses: Assault, Litigation, Murder

Conciliation Responses

The Gospel Is the Key to Peace. A true peacemaker is guided, motivated, and empowered by the gospel, the good news that God has forgiven all our sins and made peace with us through the death and resurrection of his Son (Col. 1:19-20). Through Christ he has also enabled us to break the habit of escaping from conflict or attacking others, and he has empowered us to become peacemakers who can promote genuine justice and reconciliation (Col. 3:12-14).

The six responses found on the top portion of the slippery slope are directed at finding a just and mutually agreeable solution to a conflict. These responses may be divided into two categories: personal peacemaking responses and assisted responses:

Personal peacemaking responses are carried out in private between the parties themselves. Although it is appropriate for one or both parties to seek advice on how to implement these responses, they should normally try to resolve their differences one-on-one before asking others to intervene in the dispute.

Overlook an offense—Many disputes are so insignificant that they should be resolved by quietly and deliberately overlooking an offense. *"A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense"* (Prov. 19:11). Overlooking an offense is a form of forgiveness, and involves a deliberate decision not to talk about it, dwell on it, or let it grow into pent-up bitterness or anger.

When we might easily consider overlooking an offense:

- How important is it? three day rule; five year rule
- Is it easy to explain and/or excuse?
- Is it an isolated incident, not a pattern?
- Consider the cost and potential benefit of my response to me, my family, my ministry, my testimony, church peace, etc.

Ways that might help us distinguish between appropriately *overlooking the offense* and *denial*:

- Is my decision based on what would most please and honor God?
- How is my decision influenced by the fact of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ?
- Is my decision based on love of God and neighbor or on protection of self?
- Is my decision based on what is best (or easiest or safest) for *me* or best for *us*?
- Is my decision being made with a sense of freedom of choice or a sense of coercion, constraint, fear, guilt and/or shame?

Under what conditions should I not overlook an offense and move to discussion and reconciliation?

- When my brother has something against me, God always trusts and hopes that I will take the initiative by going to my brother and discussing and attempting to resolve the difference(s).
- When an offense is too serious to overlook? As a general rule, an offense should be overlooked if you can answer "no" to all of the following questions:
 - Is the offense seriously dishonoring God? (Romans 2:21-24)
 - Is it seriously hurting other people? and
 - Is it seriously hurting the offender himself?
- When it has permanently damaged our relationship because I cannot overlook it without discussion.
- When it is a pattern of behavior that seems to prevent charitable interpretation without discussion.

Reconciliation—If an offense is too serious to overlook or has damaged our relationship, we need to resolve personal or relational issues through confession, loving correction, and forgiveness. "*[If] your brother has something against you ... go and be reconciled*" (Matt. 5:23-24). "*Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently*" (Gal. 6:1; see Matt. 18:15). "*Forgive as the Lord forgave you*" (Col. 3:13).

Potentially helpful definitions:

- Forgiveness - a unilateral choice to release the other from personal accountability to me for past behavior.
- Reconciliation - a bilateral (or multilateral) change of attitudes and behaviors intended to repair past harm, rebuild trust, and restore the relationship.

Reconciliation

- is more urgent than worship. Discussion may best start (and possibly end) with my confession.
- Loving Correction (Gal. 6:1; Matthew 18:12-15, 21-35) is about gentle restoration.
- Engage by using appropriate creative metaphor, story, parables.
- May require confrontation as a last resort.
- Consider God's examples in the prophets and personally

Potential benefits of discussion and reconciliation:

- provides an opportunity for any confession I need to make
- may be able to clarify a misunderstanding
- may help me see where I am in error
- may serve the other person by modeling forgiveness, modeling confession, and helping them see where they have contributed to the conflict.
- may lead to mutually beneficial resolution of personal and material differences.
- Glorifies God, serves the other person, and allows me to grow to be more like Christ.

“Be not angry that you cannot make others as you wish them to be, since you cannot make yourself as you wish to be.” Thomas a Kempis, Imitation of Christ

A PEACEMAKER CHECKLIST

Gently Restore

- When I am estranged from someone else, I will ask God to help me discern the most effective way to approach him to confess my sins or show him his fault
- Even if I work through other people at first, I will do all I can to talk face-to-face eventually so we can both express and confirm repentance, confession and forgiveness
- When I learn that someone has something against me, I will go to that person to talk about it, even if I don't believe I have done anything wrong

I will consider a sin too serious to overlook if it:

- Is dishonoring God
- Has damaged our relationship
- Is hurting or might hurt other people
- Is hurting the offender and diminishing his or her usefulness to God

When I need to show others their fault, with God's help I will:

- Draw on God's grace so that I can breath grace to others
- Do everything I can to bring hope through the gospel by focusing on what God has done and is doing for us through Christ
- Listen responsibly by waiting patiently while others speak, concentrating on what they say, clarifying their comments through appropriate questions, reflecting their feelings and concerns with paraphrased responses, and agreeing with them whenever possible
- Make charitable judgments by believing the best about others until I have facts to prove otherwise
- Speak the truth in love
- Talk from beside people, not from above them, as a fellow sinner who needs forgiveness and grace as much as they do
- Help others examine the desires that may be ruling their hearts
- Choose a time and place that will be conducive to a productive conversation
- Talk in person whenever possible
- Engage others by using stories, analogies, and metaphors that touch their hearts
- Communicate so clearly that I cannot be misunderstood
- Plan my words in advance and try to anticipate how others will respond to me
- Use "I" statements when appropriate
- State objective facts rather than personal opinions
- Use the Bible carefully and tactfully
- Ask for feedback
- Offer solutions and preferences

- Recognize my limits and stop talking once I have said what is reasonable and appropriate

If I cannot resolve a dispute with someone in private and the matter is too serious to overlook, with God's help I will:

- Suggest that we seek help from one or more spiritually mature advisors who can help both of us see things more objectively
- If necessary, ask one or two others to talk with us
- If necessary, seek help from our respective churches and respect their authority
- Go to court only if I have exhausted my church remedies, if the rights I am seeking to enforce are biblically legitimate, and if my action has a righteous purpose

SHOE LEATHER SEMINAR OR SOUL WORK

Individual, open-book quiz:

Conflict is an o_____ to

G_____

S_____

G_____

The four basic principles of peacemaking are

G_____ (How can I please and honor God in this situation?)

G_____ (How have I contributed to this conflict and what do I need to do to resolve it?)

G_____

G_____

By God's grace I will apply these principles as a matter of s_____.

Success, in God's eyes, is not measured by results but by f_____,
d_____ o_____.

(Studies indicate that a participant's compliance to a prescribed course of action is increased by the ability of the participant to remember the purpose and the components of that course of action.)

Group Case Study:

Your son, David, home for the weekend after his first two week at college, reports that he and his new dormitory roommate, Edward, are having serious conflicts. You already know that David and Edward come from very different cultural and family backgrounds. David reports that Edward is bright but arrogant, blaming, insecure and tries to control the people and circumstances around him rather than controlling himself. You recognize that these are traits that you have noticed in both yourself and David. David reports that Edward is unmotivated, undisciplined, unorganized and stays up and sleeps late. You know David is highly structured almost to the point of rigidity in these areas. David complains that he has trouble sleeping because Edward frequently stumbles in late, often plays music late and, on the rare occasion that he studies, starts after David has gone to bed. David reports he has often argued with Edward and complained to just about everybody on the floor.

Now home for the Thanksgiving break of his freshman year of college, David, reports that he is doing well but that he is concerned about his roommate, Edward. He reports that he and Edward have gotten along relatively well after a bumpy start. He tells you how he sat down with Edward, confessed his own behavioral and attitudinal contributions to their conflict, gently offered Edward some ideas about Edward may have contributed, discussed both their mutual and divergent interests, and negotiated a mutually agreeable, respectful, workable plan for playing, visiting, studying and sleeping. Save for a few lapses by each of them, he says it has worked well.

His concern is that Edward's drinking habits, though not directly effecting David, seem to be negatively effecting Edward's attitude, grades, health and relationships.

He asks if you have any ideas.

What ideas and principles might you share with David?

How would what you say differ depending on what you knew of David's spiritual condition? Of Edward's?

In what ways might role-playing various conversations with David help?

What other principles might apply if this were an analogous situation in a work environment? A conflictual marital environment?

Exercises Alone with God: Take some time to

- *Ask God what conflict (or any other experience) He would have you attend to at this moment.*
- *Examine and consider with God whether He allowed this conflict.*
- *Examine and consider with God your attitude regarding His having He allowed it.*
- *Ask for and submit to any changes in your attitude or behavior that He would have you make.*
- *Ask God what conflict (or any other experience) He would have you attend to at this moment.*
- *Examine and consider with God how you have and have not responded to the conflict in ways that bring Him glory, serve others, and grow you to be like Christ.*
 - *Seek answers to "To what extent ..." questions in this study*
 - *Seek .to know and do His will regarding any necessary confession to others.*
- *Seek, as necessary, a robust confessional conversation with God.*
- *Examine and consider with God what other principles He would have you consider in this conflict.*
- *Ask for and submit to any changes in your attitude or behavior that He would have you make.*
- *Ask God to show you the patterns of your behavior in conflict to which He would like to have you attend and change.*

The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict, by Ken Sande, Updated Edition (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 2003).

For more information about biblical peacemaking, visit the Peacemaker Ministries web site at www.Peacemaker.net or contact Peacemaker Ministries at PO Box 81130, Billings, MT 59108 (406/256-1583).

PEACEMAKER MINISTRIES RESPONSES TO COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT FAMILIES IN CONFLICT

Abuse

Question 5: *My husband is both verbally and physically abusive. Some friends say I should just forgive and submit. Others say I should get out. What does the Bible say I should do?*

Answer: The Bible calls us to love our enemies and do all we can to resolve conflicts in a way that will lead to complete forgiveness and reconciliation. It also teaches that we should submit to those whom God has placed in authority over us. But neither of these commands cancels other biblical principles that apply to domestic abuse.

Matthew 18:15-20, Luke 17:3, and Galatians 6:1-2 clearly command us to lovingly yet firmly confront someone who is caught in a sinful habit pattern. There is nothing in the Bible that says a wife should not follow these passages. If your husband is sinning against you through verbal or physical violence, God says you should do everything in your power to help him repent. If you cannot confront him safely on your own, you should go to your pastor and ask him to talk with your husband (Matt. 18:16). Or you could appeal to your husband to go to counseling with you. If he refuses to respond to counseling, then you should ask your church to exercise discipline in an effort to bring him to repentance (Matt. 18:17-20). (If your pastor is inexperienced in dealing with domestic violence, encourage him to read the CCEF booklet on [Domestic Abuse](#)).

If your husband refuses to respond to church counsel or discipline, and if you or your children are in danger of serious harm, it is appropriate to separate temporarily and seek help from the police and civil courts (Rom. 13:1-5). Sometimes a violent man has to face civil consequences before he sees the seriousness of his behavior.

Even while you pursue these avenues, you also need to follow other biblical commands with regard to your own heart and conduct. While nothing would justify abuse on the part of your husband, Jesus still calls you to take responsibility for your contribution to the situation, even if it seems small (Matt. 7:3-5). As God enables you to change things you may be doing that aggravate conflict in your marriage, it may be easier for your husband to submit to counseling and make lasting progress in controlling his anger.

As God brings repentance and confession to your husband, you can grant forgiveness and experience a genuine reconciliation in your marriage, thereby demonstrating the redeeming power of God's love and forgiveness.

Question 6: *My father abused me as a child. Although I've never discussed it with him, I think I've been able to forgive him. My mother doesn't know about any of this. Should I still try to talk with him about this, or should I just let it go?*

Answer: There are two stages to forgiveness. First, we need to have an *attitude* of forgiveness, which is a willingness and desire to truly forgive someone and not dwell on how they wronged us. We should ask God to give us this attitude even before the other person repents (Mark 11:25). The second stage is the *granting* of forgiveness, which is a promise not to talk about someone's sins or hold them against him ever again. These promises should normally be made after someone has repented of and confessed his sin (Luke 17:3). Such promises open the way to genuine reconciliation.

It sounds like God has given you an attitude of forgiveness, which is a gift of grace. But it is unlikely that you will be genuinely reconciled to your father, tearing down all the walls between you, unless he confesses his sins and you explicitly grant him forgiveness.

Furthermore, it may be that your father is still haunted by the memory and guilt of what he did to you. If he doubts that you would forgive him, he would naturally keep those shameful memories hidden. Therefore, going to him to talk about this and to indicate your desire to forgive him could open the way for him to find release from a terrible burden.

At the same time, you need to be prepared for the fact that he may deny the abuse and become angry if you approach him. If he does, reaffirm your love for him and your desire to forgive, and let him know that you are willing to talk whenever he wants to do so. Then pray that God will use your words to plant a seed of hope and a longing for forgiveness in his heart, which will eventually lead your father to confess his sin to you.

It may or may not be helpful to involve your mother in this conversation. Ideally, it would be best to work things out with your father first, and then the two of you could prayerfully decide whether your mother would benefit from learning about your conversation.

If your father is manipulative and you are vulnerable to be hurt again, it would be wise to consult with your pastor or a Christian counselor before approaching him. They may be able to help you prepare for his possible reactions, and in some cases it would be wise to have one of them come with you when you talk with him. If there is any danger that your father might still be abusing someone else, then you should work even more quickly and carefully to confront him.

Above all else, when you talk with your father, do not make his sin the major focus of your conversation. Although his behavior does have to be discussed candidly, give equal attention to building hope. No matter how badly any of us has sinned, we can find deliverance through Jesus. We may still have to bear some worldly consequences, but our sins can be forgiven and our relationships can be restored because of what our Lord did for us on the cross.

Children

Question 7: *My children are far better at causing conflict than they are at resolving it. I've corrected and lectured them until I'm blue in the face. Is there anything I can do to help them learn to be peacemakers?*

Answer: Yes, there is a great deal that you can do. Every one of your children's conflicts provides a teaching opportunity. If you resort to lecturing in the heat of a conflict, however, your irritation and frustration will cause them to put up walls and miss what you are trying to teach. Instead, develop a long-range strategy where most of the instruction takes place during a calm time when they are open to listening, and actual conflicts are used as a time to practice what they have been taught.

If you download the article "[Peacemaking: A Key to Socializing Children](#)," you will find a detailed plan on how to use this approach to teach your children to be peacemakers. It takes time and commitment, but the results are worth it!

Question 8: *The major source of conflict between my wife and me is disagreement on how to raise our children. Discipline, education, clothes, spending; you name it, we've fought over it. What can we do to end our constant disagreements and give our children a better model of resolving conflict?*

Answer: You will probably always disagree about some aspect of your children's lives, but by God's grace you can learn to handle those disagreements in a constructive manner. Since you've already spent many hours arguing about these issues, make a commitment to spend a few hours learning how to respond to these conflicts in a biblical manner. (If you skimp on learning, you'll just continue to spend this time arguing.)

Start by looking at two pages on this web site: [Basic Principles](#) and [The Heart of Conflict](#). If this whets your appetite, read through [Peacemaking for Families](#) together, or listen to the audiotapes for our [Peacemaker Seminar](#). To dig deeper, encourage your church to sponsor a [Sunday school class or small group Bible study](#) on peacemaking, where you can discuss these principles with other couples that wrestle with the same problems in their families.

Pay particular attention to learning and practicing the [PAUSE principle](#) of negotiation. As you improve your ability to understand and look out for your spouse's concerns about raising your children, you will be more effective in channeling disagreements in a constructive direction.

At the same time, ask your church to recommend some biblically solid material on raising children. Put your new communication and negotiation skills to practice by discussing and seeking agreement on various parenting issues.

If you get stuck on an issue, don't slip into a quarrel or ignore the problem. Seek out one or two couples in your church that seem to be raising their children effectively, and ask for their advice. If you listen to this advice, you will not only speed agreement, but also model to your children the wisdom of seeking counsel from others when they cannot resolve a conflict on their own.

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