



LOVE PEOPLE PEACEMAKER

Spiritual Outcome Defined:

Proactively engages in biblical conflict resolution and offers forgiveness, grace, and understanding to those who have offended or harmed.

Spiritual Outcome Described:

Conflict is a reality of friendship. The question is not *whether* conflict will happen, but when it does happen, how will it be handled and will it be handled well? The world abounds with examples of poorly managed conflict. Friendships are needlessly lost over miscommunication. Families are torn apart by stubborn refusal to give ground. Churches are split and rendered ineffective because a few people get overly determined.

Conflict is dangerous and can be highly destructive, but it can also be something else. Conflict, when handled well, can be highly effective and good at bringing about a greater unity and understanding amidst those involved. Marriages thrive when they have passed through the tunnel of conflict and come out the other side.

The bonds of friendship are strengthened when people go toe to toe and gain greater understanding of the other. Churches, too, are strengthened when people discuss their differences or wounds in an effort to root out the cancer of bitterness and unforgiveness. It's for these reasons that it's no surprise that Scripture says a great deal about conflict management, forgiveness, and accountability. "*Blessed are the peacemakers,*" Jesus said, "*for they will be called children of God*" (Matthew 6:9). With Scripture's abundance of teachings on conflict, one would think healthy conflict management would abound amongst God's people. And to be sure, it often does, but not always.

"If you have 120 volts of electricity coming into your house but you have broken wiring, you may turn on the switch, but nothing works... Why? Because you have broken wiring. The power is ready to do its work..., but where there is broken wiring, there is no power. Unity is necessary among the children of God if we are going to know the flow of power...to see God do His wonders."
-- A. W. Tozer

Engaging healthy conflict takes a great deal of energy and fortitude, which leads involved parties more often to find the easy escape routes of gossip, isolationism, and bitterness. But these escape routes are lethal. Unchecked anger leaves us with colored lenses through which we see everything—especially the people around us—far differently than we would if that anger were removed. Scripture's teaching on engaging and healing conflict is both clear and compelling. Familiarity with these teachings is essential, only to be exceeded by the importance of practicing them.

Evidence of this Spiritual Outcome in a Person's Life:

- Knows and can explain the basic teachings of Scripture on conflict management.
- Does not have any unresolved conflict with another person where they have not done all Scripture would counsel them to do.
- Can identify a time in the past three months where they have apologized to another person.
- Can identify a time in the past year where they have humbly approached a person who has offended them without having first spread the offense by explaining it to others.

Guidance

Read each passage multiple times. Then write your observations about the passage and any thoughts you have from the discernment question. What do you notice in the passage, and what does this reveal about your life?

Proverbs 16:28

Observations:

Discernment Question: Thoughtfully and prayerfully consider your own words and actions. In the past, how have your own words and actions created conflict? In the present, how are your own words and actions creating conflict?



Proverbs 20:19

Observations:

Discernment Question: Are you trustworthy? Are you a good friend? Why or why not? Do you speak despairingly about others when they're not present—even in humor—or are you careful with your words?

Proverbs 26:20

Observations:

Discernment Question: Thoughtfully consider a past or present conflict you had with others. How did your words and actions increase the conflict? How did your words and actions bring about healthy resolution?



Proverbs 27:5

Observations:

Discernment Question: How welcoming are you of correction? How effective are you at bringing correction to others in a way they will receive it?

Proverbs 28:23

Observations:

Discernment Question: Do you speak thoughtful encouragement to others, or do you flatter them with dishonest encouragement?



Matthew 5:21-26

Observations:

Discernment Question: How intentional are you about reaching out to those who are angry with you? Do you make the effort or do you wait for them to make the effort?

Matthew 18:15-20

Observations:

Discernment Question: How effectively do you live out Jesus' teaching in this passage? When someone offends you, do you go to that person or go to others? When conflict continues to go unresolved, do you thoughtfully bring in others who could help, or do you give up and move on?



Matthew 18:21-35

Observations:

Discernment Question: If God forgave you to the extent you have forgiven others, would you be forgiven of your sins?

Romans 12:17-21

Observations:

Discernment Question: Do you take revenge, even in little ways, on those who offend you?



Next Steps

What are practical next steps you will do from what you have discovered in this survey of Scripture on peacemaking? Include insights offered from others in your Life Group that could be applied in your own life as well.

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Memory Verses:

Romans 12:18 NIV

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Ephesians 4:2-3 NIV

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

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