

The Peacemaker

by Shane Idleman

In 'The Peacemaker,' Shane Idleman emphasizes the importance of grace and truth in resolving conflicts and fostering peace in our lives.

Duration: 50:52

Scripture: Matthew 5:9, James 4:1

Topics: "Conflict Resolution", "Christian Character"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of being a peacemaker, focusing on the need to overcome selfish desires that lead to conflicts. It highlights the significance of responding with gentleness, sharing contributions to conflicts, and restoring relationships gently. The message encourages seeking peace through humility, grace, and love, reflecting the character of God in resolving conflicts.

Transcript

I'm actually going to talk tonight about the peacemaker. The peacemaker. The reason is simple.

Last week I talked about Christ bringing division. Right? That Christ is going to bring division into our homes and our workplace. Everybody left here going, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

I don't need it. Yeah. All the fights I'm getting into, you know, it's their fault.

It's because I'm following Christ. And Jesus said, do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.

For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's enemies will be those of his own household. People say, Jesus said that? Yeah, the reason is, once the light of the world came here, the darkness hates the light.

People don't like for me to talk about Jesus. They don't want to pray in Jesus' name. They don't want to have anything to do with Jesus.

So when you stand for Christ, when you stand for truth, that in and of itself is going to bring division, right? And so we left here going, yeah, I don't care. I'm on fire for God. I don't care if it brings division.

I don't care if it hurts people. James said it. Well, now we need to stop, and we need to make sure that's not the case.

Because although the truth offends, right? The truth is going to offend people. Our attitude shouldn't. And I said that last week.

I actually want to do a whole sermon on this, because if you look around, conflict is everywhere. Or is it just me? Oh, good. That was a close one.

Right? It's in our homes. It's in the workplace. It's in our families.

And guess where else it's at? You knew that already, right? Conflict is everywhere. Conflict is everywhere. So I didn't want us running out of here thinking, well, if I'm divided with somebody, that's their problem.

Shane said that the truth is going to bring division. And it will. When you stand up for truth, you've seen this, right? Those who stand up for truth, they talk about Jesus Christ, people say, get out of here.

I mean, look at now the Navy chaplains. They want to remove prayer. They want to, well, throw the Army, Marines, everybody else in there, right? The whole military.

They get prayer out of it. You can pray to everybody, except don't pray to Jesus Christ. That name offends, that name upsets people.

And there's no peace. There's conflict. Because when the light of this world came here, and there's now conflict with the Prince of the Air, the Prince of Darkness, it's a conflict that we cannot escape.

But Jesus says, here's how you need to act when you go into conflict. Because that's important truth to remember, that the truth will offend, but our attitude shouldn't. Well, how in the world do you pull that one off? Hence the need for this sermon, right? We desperately need this.

And I want to throw this out there. There's a recommended, sometimes I recommend a book. I'm reading one this week.

It's called The Peacemaker by Ken Sandy. It's endorsed by a lot of people that we look up to. It's a very good book on this whole issue.

And if it doesn't convict your heart, nothing will. But I want to draw a little bit from that. But I want to draw primarily from Scripture.

And when I talk about this topic of the peacemaker, I like what his definition is. He says the peacemaker is someone who breathes grace into a conflict. So if you're a peacemaker, you're going to bring grace into the conflict.

You're going to breathe grace into the conflict. That's what a peacemaker does. Doesn't mean that it's void of conflict.

Doesn't mean they're a master negotiator. Doesn't mean they flee conflict. It doesn't mean they beat everybody up and win the conflict.

We actually breathe grace into the conflict. So when there's a conflict in my home, right? Well, it's hard because you've got a pastor and a pastor's wife. So they're both better be breathing grace into conflict,

right? Or with my children or in the workplace, you breathe grace into that conflict.

Not the flesh. There's a big difference there. One will get you in trouble.

The other one will help lead that conflict to where the direction it needs to be. And I want to clarify, I'm not talking about being a doormat. I'm not talking about fleeing.

I'm talking about taking conflict to God and breathing grace into it and being the instrument that God has called us to be. And the introduction to this message is pretty short. I just want to start with this.

Peace must be fought for. It does not come naturally. Did you realize that? If you want peace in your homes, you want peace in your workplace, you want peace, it will not come naturally.

If you just say, well, just whatever comes, you know, it will, it'll get ugly. It'll get worse because peace has to be fought for. You have to fight for peace.

The reason is because your flesh wants to do this. God says do this. So there's this constant tension.

You've got to, you've got to fight for peace. And I want to just encourage you tonight, if you want peace in your homes and your workplace, make a commitment tonight. I'm going to work on peace.

I'm going to fight for peace because it's not just going to happen. And don't we do that a lot? Well, if I just ignore it for a few days, that'll get better, right? And then what happens? It doesn't get better in the same way that a fire doesn't get smaller when you put gasoline on it. When you allow conflict to grow, it actually does grow.

It gets worse because days, nights, weeks, it just grows and grows. And then you have angry tantrums. You fly off the handle.

You say words that I haven't said in 15 years. Where did that come from? Anger, throwing things, hitting things. It just explodes because it wasn't dealt with initially.

That's why this area of peacemaking is so important. And Paul doesn't let us off the hook, Romans 12, 18. If possible, what Paul's saying here, if it's possible, because sometimes it's not possible.

You can try to make peace. You can be the bridge builder. You can do all you've done, but people are still going to ignore you, be mad at you, and not want to talk to you.

Well, at least you've done all that you can do. So Paul says, if possible, so far as it depends upon you, be at peace with all men. So there's no wiggle room here.

Paul's saying, if it's possible, as much as depends upon you, be at peace with all men. And I've found during the studies, when there's conflict, God isn't necessarily saying that both parties will be resolved, both parties will be filled with the Spirit of God, both parties will do things right. He says, as much as it depends upon you.

Not what this other person does. And I would, man, if I could get this one point across in marriage counseling, more than anything else, somebody's got to be the peacemaker. If not, here's what keeps happening.

No, no, no, no, I'm not going to do it, they're going to do it, I'm not going to, years later. So God says, as much as it depends upon you, be the peacemaker. Be the peacemaker.

Because normally what happens is when you become the peacemaker, the other person says, you know what, I've been wrong in this area too. I need to work on that too. I'm not good in this, can you, and you just, you just, you just stopped the whole argument because you became the peacemaker.

That's why Paul and Jesus, many times you'll see, you'll see these hard commands in the New Testament, right? Like as much as it depends upon you, live at peace with all men and submitting to government and all these things and submitting to authority. The reason is the gospel and the New Testament tells us to err on the side of grace. Like I have no problem erring on the side of the flesh.

That'll come naturally. If I don't do anything, it'll, that'll happen. So that's why, err on the side of grace, err on the side of being the peacemaker.

As much as it depends upon you. You can fill in your name in that blank, right? As much as it depends upon you and you, and you, you be the peacemaker. But guess what? Unless you're different than me, I don't like that.

They need to say they're sorry. They need to come to me as I wait. Right? And we say, I didn't do anything wrong.

No, I sure didn't. They did it. They took it wrong.

No. And we just wait there. And he says, no, as much as you go.

And I found if you're going to make peace, a lot of times you've got to be the initiator. Another hard one is, this can be a hard sermon I'm telling you up front. If you don't like it so far, there's the back kick sound I can tell anybody, but you've got to be the initiator.

You've got to initiate peace. If you wait for it to happen on its own, it will not happen. So Paul's crystal clear.

If it depends upon you, be at peace with all men. And in Matthew 11, Jesus says, come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Isn't that interesting that rest and peace are synonymous? You can't have one without the other, right? Anytime you think of God's peace, you think of God's rest.

Anytime you have rest, there's peace in your house. If I'm resting in my home while four little kids are in bed, and when they get up, there's not peace. They go together.

But listen, that sentence might be for somebody, and I felt this in the first service too. Jesus is saying, if you come to me, see, I don't know where you're at with God. I have no idea where anybody's at in this room.

I know some people are in a fire for God. I know that some have slipped away. I know some that's searching.

I know that some just outright reject him. Whatever it is, Jesus has a promise here. He says, if you come to me, and you're laboring, you're heavy laden, you've got guilt, you've got shame, take it to the cross.

Take it to me. I will give you rest. Listen, this isn't some pie-in-the-sky philosophy that we can't come up with.

This is truth. I like the song that they sing that God came down from heaven to save us, and it hit me during the first service that we're this little blip on the map of the universe. We're nothing, and God came down.

He said, I'm going to save you. I'm going to redeem you, but you cannot continue to reject me. You must turn to me, and when you do, then I will give you rest.

Come to me all year week and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. There's initiative. There's something in our part.

We have to do that. We have to accept that. We have to embrace it.

And then he goes on to say, take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls, for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. And that tells me there is a yoke to carry. There is a burden that we have to carry.

I'm hoping to bring it next week, but it was in the paper today. I wrote about, does God have a wonderful plan for your life? And I spoke about that a week ago. And we have to realize that sometimes there's a burden to carry.

It's hard. Life is difficult, and we need to prepare people for that. Listen, but his yoke is light.

If you allow him to carry the burden, you give him the fear and the doubt and the anxiety. You give it to him. There's a little yoke to carry, but it's light compared to what you have to do without him.

But it starts with come to me. Come to me all your week and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. And I've noticed this, that doing it God's way in regard to peacemaking, doing it God's way releases the heavy load and brings peace.

Even though it's hard, when we do it God's way, it brings a lot of peace, and the load has been lifted. You know, don't you hate those turmoil that, oh, I've got to make that phone call? Seems like I do that every week now, but it's like, you know, you're constantly in turmoil, and you've got to, God says, listen, if you give this to me, if you do it my way, yes, there's going to be a yoke. There's going to be a burden.

It's going to be, but if you do it my way, there will be a release. There'll be a peace after that. Because if you just carry around conflict, it doesn't just go away.

I believe in toxic emotions. I believe that you can carry anger and unforgiveness and bitterness and just carry it around. You're dying inside spiritually.

And one conflict on top of another, on top of another, you have people say, I've had it. I've had enough, enough. Why? Because of all the conflicts that are not being resolved, and they're holding on to it.

That's why when we do it God's way, we release it, we release it. I can honestly say that as weeks go by, when I give the conflicts to God, when I do it God's way, not Shane's way, and even though relationships might be fractured or hurt a little bit, there's peace. We've done as much as it depends upon you, live at peace with all men.

And I know what many of us are doing right now. I wish such and such was here to hear this one. Right? And it's usually the better half who's not sitting next to you.

Don't worry, I'll get the video out. We'll make sure they hear it. But for now, I think God's speaking to us in this area.

If we, but we don't want to. If I negotiate, not negotiate, if I initiate, see that's what I want to do, right? That's what you want to negotiate. But when you're a peacemaker, if you initiate it, God will bless that.

He'll bless that attitude. You'll be filled with the Spirit of God. You're doing things right, even though the other person is not.

But we're so worried about the other person that we don't do things right either. And what happens? Nobody wants to take, be the initiator in this area. And honestly, I don't like this part about forgiveness and peacemaking, but it requires that I take the step.

If somebody has an offense against me, I take the first step. And I don't like that. Right? Do you? They need to come to me.

And in the church it happens a lot. With this many people, I sometimes offend people. I know it's hard to believe.

So I have to take that step. Hey, if I said the wrong thing, if I did the wrong thing, if I forgot to say hello, if I forgot to include you, if I've, you know, I have to take that initiative. It's a constant thing.

But then the load's been lifted. The offense has been dealt with. And it's all been worked out.

So you have to fight against what you don't. Because I know nobody wants to do this. I know this is one of the top 10 sermons that people do not want to do.

Oh, Shane, tell me about repentance and worship and faith and trusting God and all these things. But don't talk about, you know, peacemaking. That's a hard one.

And you know why it's hard? Pride. Can we be honest tonight? Pride is why we don't initiate peace. God says, I hate pride.

I hate the proud look. Because you take on, it's funny, in this area of peacemaking, conflict, you either take on the nature of Christ or you're playing into the devil's hands. One or the other.

I'm either breathing grace into the situation or I'm adding to the conflict. And the enemy loves that. He is the deceiver.

He comes in and brings deception and backbites. So the next time you're having huge conflict, you have to ask yourself, okay, what's coming out of me? Because when a vessel is struck, what's inside comes out. And I believe that conflict shows us the true condition of our heart.

Who we are is not who we are right now, smiling, hey, brother, how's it going? Good, love you. Who we are is going to be when we get home and things aren't going our way. That's who we really are.

Then people say, I'm just not myself today. Oh, that's who you are. That's who I am.

We just come here and we play. We play. But then we go home.

That's who we really are. And I think God wants to help us in this era of peacemaking. Matthew 5, 9, I love this verse.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. A.W. Tozer said, whoever defends himself will have himself for defense. But let him come defenseless before the Lord, and he will have for his defender no less than God himself.

Wow. Thanks, Matt, for sending me that one this week. Whoever defends himself will have himself for defense.

And I think a lot of times we are defending ourselves. I mean, do you have battles at work or with other people? And nobody's going to give. You're trying to defend.

They're trying to defend. You don't see my side. You don't see my side.

And you just go through life that way. But when you allow the Lord to defend us, but let him come defenseless before the Lord, and he will have for his defender no less than God himself. And what he means by that is you don't just come defenseless.

Part of our defenselessness, if that's even a word, is you give it to God. You're saying, Lord, I have to conduct myself in the power of the Holy Spirit. I have to do this graciously, and I have to do it the right way, and I'm defenseless without you.

And let him come in and be your rear guard. Let him fix the situation. And the Bible talks a lot about bearing with one another, right? Colossians 3.13, if you bear with one another.

And that means kind of like put up with. I mean, people do things you don't like? Or is it just me? Okay, good. Thank God.

Wow. But people do things you don't like. Paul is saying bear with one another.

So if we're supposed to model forgiveness, if we're supposed to bear with one another and forgive each other as the Lord has forgiven us, how can we do this unless we've been offended? So look at offense next time as the way to apply Scripture to your life. I mean, I think we want to go through our whole life. No, I don't want to get offended.

I'm going to try to avoid all this. But no, God says, listen, when you get offended, this is the way to exercise the power of the Holy Spirit in your life. When you don't like something, bear with one another.

When you get offended, forgive one another. So he's telling us how to do it. So the next time you get offended, just remember this.

It's going to happen on this side of heaven. But how we respond to that is vitally important. I want to clarify this too.

See, peacemaking does not involve negotiating the truth. When you make peace, you don't negotiate the truth. Peacemaking involves changing our attitude and actions to match the character of God.

So when I go into a peacemaking situation, you're not there to negotiate the truth, right? A.W. Tozer said God loves the peacemaker, but he abhors the religious negotiator. So when churches get together in this ecumenical movement, let's just all come together and have peace at the expense of truth, that's not good. So peace never means negotiating the truth.

It involves changing our attitude and actions to match the character of God. And what I mean by that, I don't know if I should clarify, but a lot of times churches come together, you've got interfaith movements, and a lot of different churches, not just Christian, a lot of different beliefs coming together for the sake of peace and unity. But truth can't be negotiated with, truth can't be bargained, truth can't be, you know, we'll take out the cross of Christ and you can have this, you can't.

Why can't all religions come together? Because they're either all wrong or there's one that's right. You can't negotiate and be, now I can treat people with grace and love and forgiveness, and I can show the character of God in my life to them, but I cannot be one with them in regard to truth, if that makes sense. In other words, if you've got all these different religions wanting to get together and have peace and unity, but you've got to compromise the truth, that's not peace and unity.

That's compromising the truth. So always remember that. Peacemaking is about changing our attitude and actions to match the character of God.

And I've noticed that I want to say things a lot, a lot of times that make me feel better, right? In the midst of conflict, I want to say something that's going to make me feel better, but it won't make me look better. We want to get the last word in, we want a little shot here, a little right hook, a little left hook. We want to say things that make me feel better, but it doesn't make me look better in the end.

It's all about demonstrating the character of Christ. And I know this is a hard one, but I make no apologies because I know that we can do it, and I know that you'll benefit from it. So how can we undo the emotional pain that we experience from conflict? How? First, understand that it's a spiritual battle.

Our mind is where battles are won or lost. Those who do not forgive or release bitterness, anger, and hurt never experience freedom, happiness, or true restoration. Did you catch that? Those who do not forgive or release bitterness, anger, and hurt never experience freedom, happiness, or true restoration.

And some people say, Shane, you don't know what they did to me. You don't know what they did. I can never forgive.

You don't know. No, I don't know. But you have to remember, forgiveness isn't saying that you were wrong and the other person was right.

All forgiveness is you're saying, Lord, I release this. I can't hold this toxic emotion in anymore. Lord, I release this.

Doesn't mean they're right. It means I'm not gonna hold it anymore. I'm gonna give it to you, God.

Yeah, they caused me tremendous pain. Yeah, they upset me. I'll never trust them again.

That's okay. But you can't hold on to all this unforgiveness. It'll become toxic and aware on you.

And I think sometimes we forget that. We think forgiveness means I was wrong. You're right.

I forgive you. It's actually the opposite. They wronged you.

They wronged you. And you're saying, I'm giving that to God. Let him be the judge.

I forgive you. I release you. I don't wanna hold that on anymore.

And then the freedom that comes from that. Because if God's word says it and we don't do it, that's not a good place to be. Anytime God's word says to do something and we don't do it, there are negative ramifications.

Life is difficult. Life is a lot more challenging than it needs to be. It's hard as it is.

Why in the world would we wanna carry around all these emotions? I've had to forgive people in some difficult situations, but I'm so glad I did because now I've been released. Because that's how you experience true happiness and joy. Ephesians 4, 31, 32 says, let all bitterness, it's interesting, let all, that tells me we can do it.

See, as Christians, we can do this. It's not like, oh, the devil made me do it. Oh, I just can't help myself.

Oh, I'm just passionate. No, you're just angry. So we can do this.

Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice. You might say, what are some of those words? Well, clamor, do you know what clamor is? Come to our house and all of our kids are acting up. That's clamor.

A lot of noise, not productive. Oh, one's crying, one's, like clamor. He's saying, listen, some of our lives are like this.

Noisy and loud and unproductive. He says, put all that clamor away and evil speaking and with all malice. Malice is the action of evil.

So you're putting away the action of evil and evil speaking, saying, put away all this and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God and Christ forgave you. Wow. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted.

That would stop a lot of arguments. In a nutshell, it's saying this, remove your cutting remarks, negative comments, arguing and destructive words and replace them with gentleness and sensitivity. Forgive one another quickly and completely as God forgave you.

Here's the thing to remember, conflict will linger as long as we let it. Have you noticed that conflict doesn't just disappear? It just sits there and just waits. Just waits.

It'll go a week or a month or a year. It just sits there and waits. Thanksgiving might bring it up.

I haven't seen some family members in a while. Me and my wife are laughing about this. The holidays are supposed to be fun and relaxing and now it's almost like walking on eggshells.

I can't say this to that family member. I can't say this to that. And you're just walking on all this tension, all this stress.

A lot of times, unresolved conflicts, things that have never been discussed, that should have been discussed but never have. So conflict will linger as long as we let it. So here's a few points I want to get into.

Number one, in resolving conflict, you have to count the cost. Actually, this is number one. This is an introduction to the points.

You have to count the costs. Count the cost of conflict. First ask, can I overlook this? Can I overlook this offense? Proverbs 19 says, good sense makes one slow to anger.

And it is His glory. It's His glory to overlook an offense. Meaning it's to your benefit.

If you overlook an offense, it's to your benefit. So the next time somebody upsets you, welcome to my life on a daily basis, right? It's to your glory, it's to your benefit if you overlook it. If it can be.

I'm talking about little things, right? Here's a few examples. Facebook, right? People go on there, they saw my email three days ago. And they still haven't responded.

Or people get mad at me, Shane, you looked at my email two days ago and you never responded. Oh yeah, I was going to, I was busy, I didn't know you needed a response. And the offense, so we're holding these offenses.

We just hold these offenses. You know how we get people back? Well, I'm just not going to email them back. I'm just not going to text them back.

They're not going to see my face for a few weeks and we think we're getting them back. No, we're not getting them back. You're hurting yourself.

And then pride gets in the way, right? We get prideful. I'm just going to show them. But God says release these things.

These are little, those are so little. So little. The offenses.

I just went, I went to visit John Washington this morning. He's a quadriplegic. I accidentally said paraplegic a few weeks ago.

I told Mike I'd fix that. He's a quadriplegic, can't move his arms and legs. And I saw him this morning.

I even had to give him a drink of water, you know, talking to him. And he's got some, he's got more joy than most people I know. And I leave there convicted every time going, God, what is wrong with us? In a hospital bed? For months? We have the audacity to, they took my parking spot.

They didn't say hi. They didn't get back to me. God, help us.

I mean, this, this is, this is unbelievable how we can allow these little offenses. And that's what the enemy does. He'll use these.

Remember the Bible talks about, I think it's Nehemiah, that the small foxes, not Nehemiah, Ecclesiastes. The small foxes ruin the vine. It's the little things that get in.

The little things that destroy your marriage. The little things that destroy your walk with God. It's the little things.

And then they get bigger and they get bigger and they get bigger. So you have to count the cost. Can you overlook it? Can it be overlooked? Because most offenses, the little ones, I would tell you right now, should be overlooked.

But what do we do? We put it in a special little compartment of our heart. Throw the key away. And we just hold it right there.

And I'm gonna get them back this way. I'm gonna get them back this way. And we just hold these things.

And he says, it's to your glory. Just let this go. And Jesus said in Matthew five, come to terms quickly with your accuser while you're going with him to court.

And he paints this picture of two guys walking down Avenue M, right to the courthouse. I'm gonna sue you. No, you're not.

And he says, listen, don't even go there. You don't know what's gonna happen. Just work it out.

Just resolve it right now. Because if not, he'll hand you over to the judge and the judge might hand you over to the guard and the guard will put you in prison. So it's about counting the cost.

And if you look at how many frivolous arguments do we get into for months, whether money or property, we should have count the cost. We should have never went into that. I just read in the paper somewhere, I wish I would have printed the article, a guy, he won \$250,000 on a lawsuit, but by the time he paid his attorneys, he ended up with \$1,000.

And he said the emotional toll of going to court and all this, and he just took, so we gotta count the cost. Is it really worth it? And look ahead, look at what this is gonna cost you. Come to terms quickly with your adversary.

Don't try to fight them. Of course I'm not talking, and some people, somebody always gonna come and say, well, Shane, what about this? What about this? Well, of course, there's some things you can take to the Lord. And like Paul said, hey, I'm a Roman citizen.

Why are you treating me such way? You exercise your rights. But a lot of other times we can lay our rights down. It's not worth it.

A couple of examples, I think I've given one before, but years ago when I first started in real estate, that's what I did before I planted this church, is I was showing, my mom wanted a house up in Tehachapi, a little house, and I couldn't make it up there, and she called the agent on the sign, and said, hey, I just wanna look in this house. My son's a real estate agent. I'm not gonna use you.

I just need to look in this real quick. And they're like, oh yeah, no problem. I'll just open it for you.

It's her listing anyway. You think she'd want the business. So never hear from her again until the deal's in escrow.

And now she says, I'm coming down with the broker of Keller Williams, and we want full commission. I'm like, how did this happen? So long story short, they come down, we're in this boardroom, and they're gonna take it to the realtor board, and I'm like, oh gosh, how did this, you know, how'd this happen, right? So I said, how can we work this out? What do you want? She goes, well, we'll take \$500. Okay, here you go.

Bye. I mean, we're not, you could lose the whole thing. You could go to, you know, you could be drawn, yeah, but Shane, you could have fought for that.

You didn't, yeah, but count the cost. She knew my stance. Count the cost.

Was it really worth it to go and maybe lose this and reputation? And, you know, this guy, you know, I was a procuring cause, she said, and I was the reason, and look at this guy, and he, you know, so you just lay that down. Another example, my wife will remember this, is we sold her Mazda Tribute car, little truck, I think, I don't know what they're called, half SUV, and about three days, \$5,000. Two days later, three days later, maybe, I get a phone call, and he says, hey, the light came on this.

I'm like, okay, I mean, what do you, you're in Simi Valley, I'm here, and you bought it. I don't know what you want me to do. He goes, well, I took it in a transmission place, it's \$2,700.

You told me this, I'm taking you to court, you know, pastor, he sells lemon vehicle on the paper, you know, right? So I said, hey, bring it back, I'll buy it, I'll give you your money back tomorrow. He said, oh my gosh, I can't, you know, thanks, he gave me a handshake, I gave him one of my books, right, talking about God a little bit, this is what I did, I said, I'm a Christian, I want to do, okay, so the whole situation was turned around. Now, I don't want you to think, oh, Shane, you're so great at this stuff.

No, I'm not. Those are just two examples in five years, but this whole point of counting the cost, do you really want to go to court for that long? But, and it's always my right, it's my right. Not really.

It's your choice. Yes, you can go to court, yes, you can probably win. In some cases, court's fine, that's what it's there for.

But a lot of times, God calls us to just ask ourselves, does this glorify God? Can people see the nature of Christ in me, and in my decisions? And count it, is it even worth it? Should I just reconcile? And there's so many times, isn't there, where I just want to be, man, I was right, darn it. Man. All that, I just thought of this one too.

Christmas is coming up. I think it was the first year we started, this church said, we're meeting on Saturday nights, and Christmas Eve fell on a Saturday night. And they said, I think I've told you guys this before, you have to apologize for my repeat stories.

But they said, you know, we actually need the building on Saturday night for our Christmas Eve service. So, maybe you guys can move your service to earlier time. You know, everything starts, you know, the flesh comes out, right? What? We can't do that.

How are we supposed to notify? So, knowing what the Bible says, not with my flesh, hey, no problem, sounds good. Gave us three weeks, I think, got postcards out, changed time just for that day, and it was full. It was a great service.

No big deal. But the flesh, wanted to go down to the office, right? Wait a minute here, this isn't going to happen. And how would that look? So laying down those rights, counting the costs, and I'm just walking through this, because I'm not perfect in this area.

I can think of other times where I didn't do this, and it didn't result in anything good. So that's the first thing, ask, does this glorify God? And will it glorify the Christ they see in me? Will it reflect the nature of God? Now, sometimes you have to take a hard stance, and people aren't going to like it, and as long as your heart's right, and you did what you could do, and you're gracious and loving, that's okay. So the second thing, is which we all know this one, remove the log out of your eye first.

Jesus said, you hypocrite, first remove the plank from your own eye, and then you'll see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. So, you see how many conflicts could go bye-bye, if we did the first two? It's not even worth it, I'm going to overlook it, and while I'm removing the plank out of my eye, because when somebody truly removes the plank out of their eye, truly, I'm not talking about, you know, a lot of people say, yeah, I've done this, and I know I'm wrong, but, but, and yeah, I've removed the plank, yeah, no, no, no, it's just a bunch of hot air. When somebody truly removes that plank, their attitude makes an entire 180.

Instead of attack mode, they're being gracious, and loving, and forgiving, and humble. Instead of claiming this, and wanting this, they're doing the opposite. They're humbly approaching the situation, they're breathing grace into the situation.

So you can tell when somebody truly removes the plank, from their own eye first. And if they have to tell you they did it, they probably didn't do it. Right? It's like if the husband has to go home and say, I'm the husband of this house.

Not going a good direction. Right? If you have to tell people that, if I have to come up here and slam, I'm the, I'm the pastor here, you better listen. Problem.

Big problem. Because, right? The attitude's not right. Same thing with this, and I hear people say this, I have removed the speck.

I have removed my speck. She hasn't. Let's camp out there, and talk about what removing the speck looks like.

Removing the speck does not look like that. It's, you know, right? I don't need to keep blabbering that point. Number three, each party, this is huge, and it's hard.

Two H's. It's not easy to do. Each party shares their contribution to the conflict.

Each party should share their contribution to the conflict. When someone mistreats or opposes us, our instinctive reaction is to justify ourselves, and do everything we can to get our way. This selfish attitude usually leads to impulse decisions that only make matters worse.

That's from Ken Sandy in that book, Peacemaker. See, when each party shares their contribution to the conflict, both are coming with the right attitude. So when somebody says, listen Shane, listen, I can see how you feel that way.

I came across wrong. It takes two to tangle, right? Now, not every time, I'm clarifying, because sometimes, through no fault of their own, there's a problem there, and you didn't do anything. But you can at least share in the contribution by saying, I wasn't aware I did anything.

I'm sorry. I will work on that. We can share in that.

Anytime you're trying to play this game, and point fingers and have them be the only responsible party, you're not going in a good direction. You have to both take responsibility. And then the fourth point is to restore gently.

You restore the relationship gently. Paul encourages us to let our gentleness be evident to all, in Philippians 4, 5. Let your gentleness be evident to all. So think about this.

In our home life, is our gentleness evident to all? Oh, a lot of people are laughing. I guess not. What'd your kid say? Oh, he's so gentle.

My dad's so gentle, loving, and gracious. Or they say they're an angry man throwing temper tantrums. Or vice versa, the spouse.

Listen, guys, I'm not saying this to just be funny. I'm saying this to bring us to repentance. Myself included.

This sermon hurt me too. Let my gentleness be known to all. And how we handle conflicts, gentleness must be evident to all people.

And I like what else he wrote in that book, Peacemaker. He said, this is especially appropriate when the person who wronged you is exercising unusual stress. The wrong done against you may be a symptom of a deeper problem.

By responding in a gentle, compassionate way, you can minister powerfully to the other person. And that never really crossed my mind until I read that this week. That when somebody's lashing out, sometimes they're not just lashing out at you.

Sometimes they've had a hard week and you just feel the brunt of it. So when you respond gently, you can actually minister to that person and help them. It's a powerful thing there, how we respond.

It's not easy though, is it? It's how we respond. If we can respond in gentleness. Again, I want to make this point clear.

Forgiveness is not trust. And forgiveness does not mean I was wrong and the other person was right. Forgiveness is a release.

When I say I forgive somebody, it doesn't mean I trust them. A lot of times when you forgive somebody, it doesn't mean you're going to have to earn my trust back. Trust is a process.

Forgiveness is a decision. I forgive you, but trust is a process. We have to allow people to go through that process if they're genuinely going in the right direction.

We have to have a heart of a peacemaker. Breathing grace into a situation, right? Breathing grace and being gentle. I don't know if you, maybe I'll try to get in the bulletin next week, but the Christian Post picked up an article I wrote about, you know what's going on in Ferguson, right? All hell's about ready to break

loose when the grand jury makes a decision.

And they picked it up. It's national now, and we're getting a lot of response from it. But I wrote this, it's not the whole thing.

But I said, what if more people knew that many of America's founders did not support slavery? What if we remember that all parents, black and white, who lost sons fighting for freedom during the Civil War, what if we truly comprehended that we are all made in the image of God? There's no hierarchy related to race or color. What if the black community knew that many of us still look up to God and that many white Americans wept the day he died? What if many of America's leaders and pastors encouraged unity, regardless of color? What if more white pastors and leaders could truly feel the heart of suffering and allow it to break our hearts and motivate a deeper prayer and devotional life? What if we didn't always assume that a white or black person was a racist? What if we allow our hearts to break together and take fear, frustration, and anger to the cross? What if we acknowledge the true source of conflict, that it's a spiritual battle? So you could breathe life into that situation. But that's what we do in our homes and our workplace and the church.

We either breathe life and grace or we breathe death and destruction by the words. Now you know what that scripture means when it talks about life and death are in the power of the tongue, the words. Our words carry weight.

They either build up or they destroy and tear down. I've heard a ton of words. I haven't mastered this, but I sure want to try.

I sure want to try. I actually got, I'm still not over, my son gave me a good compliment yesterday. I came home, I couldn't believe it.

We're driving, he goes, Dad, why aren't you mean? Why aren't I mean? Yeah, why aren't you mean? Well, I haven't mastered that area, buddy, but I mean, it's a, God's changed my heart, He's changed my life, and there are times that I think I'm trying, I'm trying, but for him to say that, man, I'm making, I think it was because earlier that morning I just picked him up and carried him out to the car and he was crying, but I don't know, just out of the blue how that just made my day, it's like he breathed grace into my difficult day and saying, why aren't you mean? Of course, what does my flesh want to do? I don't know. See, remove the plank out of your eye first, but that's what gentleness, and I'm learning, man, this is a hard one for type A people. It's easy for you folks who like to go hide and go the other direction, type B or C or D, whatever they call it, but type A, aggressive, confronting, get to the point, in your face people, this is hard stuff, I think this area of peacemaking is huge, huge, I mean, many challenges and difficulties we go through on a weekly basis, this has got to be something we have to focus on because it will not happen on its own.

This is the challenge of the peacemaker, it's to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit. That's your greatest challenge will be to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit. Let me show you what this looks like, 1 Corinthians 13, many of you are familiar with this verse, love is patient, love is kind, it does not envy, it does not boast, it's not proud, it does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrong done against it.

So think about this, love is patient and kind, that means we listen and we seek to understand and we are gentle in our response. What would be to the person who always wants to talk and never listen? That's not true love, love is patient, it's kind. Don't you love when people listen? I mean I hate it when they're already,

as soon as I'm done talking, they're just coming out, just quiet, give me 10 minutes, I just gave you 15, give me 10 minutes.

There's no love there. There's no love, that's not love is patient and kind and now my wife is going to hold me to all of this when I get home. But isn't that what true love is, And I learned something, true love wants to reconcile.

If we truly love the person, we want to sit down and listen and reconcile, if we truly love them. If we want the flesh to get in and the pride it's not going to be pretty and it does not envy, it does not boast, that simply means that we are not in attack mode. Boastful prideful people are in attack mode.

My pride's coming after you. Anytime, anytime I'm in attack mode, if we're in attack mode, it's because our pride's been hurt and we need to come down off our high horse and learn from scripture. And I would just encourage you to, once you do this, the peace of God that comes over your life, the grace that comes over your marriage, is worth 10 times the trouble because that peace comes in that surpasses all understanding.

God breathes, I mean most challenging situations, there's no way out of this one, God just breathes grace on it and rewards your obedience and the whole thing just, you get a call to say I was wrong, I'm like, this person's telling me that? So God blesses that. He blesses the peacemaker. What causes quarrels? Do you know what causes quarrels among us? James 4 tells us, do they not, where do wars and fights come from among you? Don't think of ISIS, think of among us.

Don't think of Afghanistan, Iran. Where do the fights come from among us? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? What he's saying there is, many times we want, I don't want this, it's not comfortable, it doesn't feel good. The desires, in a selfish desires.

So when you get upset at somebody, it's because they did something you didn't want to do or you didn't want to happen. These selfish desires come up. You lust and you do not have, you murder and you covet and you cannot obtain, means you hold anger in your heart.

You fight and you war, yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and then you do not receive because you ask amiss that you may spend it on your pleasures. So not only does conflict hurt us spiritually, it hurts our prayer life.

With the things we're asking for, we're asking amiss. We're acting like a loose cannon. We have our emotions out of control.

We're just angry at everybody. And God says, listen, get those members under control. Submit them to Christ.

Repent of these wrong attitudes. Get back on the right track. Love your spouse, even though you maybe don't like them right now.

Love your children. Do these things. Allow the Holy Spirit to move in your life.

And there's power in that. I'm with you. My peace I give to you.

Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let them be afraid. So I want to talk to two groups real quick.

I want to talk to a Christian, a believer who maybe you're not experiencing a lot of peace right now. Your life's in turmoil. You don't even know where to look.

You don't know what to do. Look what Christ says. He's going to give you his peace, but you got to come to him.

The peace that surpasses all understanding only happens when we give him everything. When we say, Lord, I give you this area. You need to move here.

And there might be another group of people here who you don't know God. You might say, I don't like what this guy's saying, or I don't know this, but you know you don't have peace. You know you don't have peace in your heart, and the only way to have true peace is to be in right relationship with God.

That's the only way. If you don't want to take my word for it, I want to know you. Show me.

That's a prayer he will answer. And that's the peace that surpasses all understanding. That's why Christians can die in peace.

That's why we can get through life. Not perfectly. You'll see us make a lot of mistakes because we got the sin nature still at war within us, but there's tremendous peace when we give it to God.

So I would just encourage you, one of the two groups tonight is to give him anything that you've been holding onto and saying, Lord, I know I need to work on this area. I give it to you tonight. He would change your heart from the inside out.

Close with this quote from Neil Anderson in a good book called The Bondage Breaker. For any of you who suffer with addiction, it's a good book, The Bondage Breaker. He said, freedom from spiritual conflicts and bondage is not a power encounter, God versus the devil.

It's a truth encounter. Truth is a liberating agent. People in bondage are not liberated by what I do as the pastor, but by they choose to believe, confess, renounce, and forgive.

So if you want to be set free, you have to believe that God is who he is. You have to confess. You have to repent.

You have to renounce a sin, and you have to allow forgiveness to penetrate your heart, the forgiveness of God. That's how people are changed. That's why I realize everything I'm saying right now is of little effect if the heart's not engaged.

What's the point? We just wasted a whole bunch of time, right? If the heart's not engaged. And that's why we end in worship and prayer, so the heart can be engaged.

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