

Colossians 15 – Peacekeeping Vs. Peacemaking
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As I prepared to preach I was thinking about honoring mothers today. Mothers have many roles – life-giver, nurturer, cook, cleaning, loving, teaching, disciplining, taxi driver and the list goes on and on.

One of the main roles is peacekeeper. They work to keep the peace in their homes. Peace with their husband – peace with their children – and the big one – peace between the children.

As I thought about this – it hit me that there is a big difference between a peacekeeper and a peacemaker. That’s what I’m preaching on today – Peacekeepers vs. Peacemakers.

I want to begin by asking you, what’s the difference between a peacekeeper and a peacemaker? Jesus said in Matthew 5:9

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

I want you to see that the Bible says nothing about being a peacekeeper! Scripture calls us to be peacemakers.

Peacemakers strive to create peace and attempt to reconcile things and people that are at odds with one another. Peacekeepers, on the other hand, work hard to avoid all conflict.

For example – the United Nations has peacekeeping forces that are deployed around the world in places where there is civil war or tribal conflict. They are there to try to keep conflict from breaking out. But they do not make peace.

Or think about the DMZ – the Demilitarized Zone between North and South Korea. There are armed forces on both sides of that border to keep the peace. But they are not there to make peace. Hopefully, that will happen soon – but other people will do that.

What I want you to see is that peace is more than the absence of conflict! The Bible talks about a different kind of peace in 2 Thessalonians 3:16

Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you.

We know that this verse is not talking about the absence of conflict. God says He wants to give us peace at all times in every way.

That means that the peace God gives is not defined as the absence of war or the absence of problems. It is peace that we have even in the midst of conflict! Peace is having inner calm in spite of outer turmoil.

Peace is having inner tranquility despite other's hostility.
Peace is being at rest in spite of the mess.

God wants us to experience peace no matter what is going on around us. This peace was promised by Jesus in John 14:27

Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

Peace that Jesus gives is not the absence of trouble, but is rather the confidence that He is there with you always. We must pursue peace and resist fear and a troubled heart.

Earlier I mentioned how parents work to keep the peace between children. It hit me that there are some homes where the children work to keep the peace between the parents! When parents are fighting – some kids hide, but some try to be peacekeepers.

Now – children don't usually have any real power – but they learn quickly the ground rules for peacekeeping:

- Peacekeepers walk on eggshells in order to not upset anyone
- Peacekeepers don't share how they really feel so they don't start an argument. They don't want to be the cause of any conflict.
- Peacekeepers feel responsible to keep everyone else happy
- Peacekeepers avoid conflict like the plague and apologize for things that they haven't even done
- Peacekeepers always feel taken advantage of and find their identity in not making waves.
They are devastated if other people get upset with them because their identity is based on what other people think of them.

Many people learn these rules at an early age and live their lives trying to keep the peace everywhere they go.

They've confused peacemaking with peacekeeping.

They equate being passive with peacemaking.

They consider peace to be the absence of conflict.

They confuse avoidance with unity.

They mistake people pleasing for peacemaking.

Peacekeepers withhold truth and don't speak how they are really feeling, thinking that they are doing what is best for the relationship. The by-product of living like this is resentment and distance and passive-aggressiveness and hurt and surface level relationships. They think peacekeeping helps the relationship, but they are actually fracturing it even more. They have no real peace! The avoidance of conflict is not real peace!

Maybe you've been hurt; you've been let down; you've been disappointed - and you haven't said anything in an effort to "Keep the peace" - but the truth is you don't have real peace at all.

Maybe the key to peace for you is to stop keeping peace and start making peace. Peacemakers are different from peacekeepers.

Peacekeepers are thermometers. They reflect the spiritual and emotional temperature of the room. Even though they know the atmosphere should be different, they do nothing about it. They enter a room and come under whatever is already there.

On the other hand, peacemakers are thermostats. They initiate the needed temperature change that the room needs. They don't dictate it, they just carry health and peace in them.

Here are some characteristics of peacemakers:

- Peacemakers are ruthlessly committed to truth-telling.

When they are offended or hurt, they communicate their feelings honestly. They speak the truth in love because they know that withholding truth will never lead to intimacy.

- Peacemakers walk in forgiveness.

When they have hurt others, they own their mistake and ask for forgiveness. When others hurt them – they are quick to forgive.

- Peacemakers are humble enough to pray for people that hurt them.

An amazing thing happens when I pray for someone that has wounded me...God changes my heart. There are times that God changes them, but God always changes me when I humble myself to pray for that person.

- Peacemakers pursue reconciliation at the risk of their own discomfort

Peace is something you must pursue; it won't just happen.

1 Peter 3:11 says: *Seek peace and pursue it.*

Conflict happens automatically, but peace must be pursued.

Avoidance isn't peacemaking. Avoiding conflict will never build intimacy.

You will never grow closer to your sister by ignoring her.

You will never reconcile with your dad by not going home for Christmas. You will never grow closer in your marriage by pretending there is no conflict. Sometimes the best way you can build peace is to embrace confrontation.

Solomon said in Proverbs 10:10:

People who wink at wrong cause trouble, but a bold reproof promotes peace.

In an effort to keep the peace, peacekeepers wink at sin and wrongdoing rather than reproofing them. But peacemakers understand that peacekeeping must first be disrupted in order to allow for true peace making. They speak up, anticipate discomfort, and hang on because they know that sometimes it has to get worse before it gets better.

For example – some Southern whites who were against Jim Crow segregation were actually complicit with its perpetuation because they were peacekeepers, rather than peacemakers. They wanted to maintain things as they were without discord or conflict. They wanted to keep the peace as it was—which was really racism disguised as peace. “You stay in your place and we’ll stay in ours and that will keep the peace.”

But remember – absence of conflict is not really peace. Civil rights activists like Dr. King had to disturb the peace in an effort to make room for real peace.

Peacemakers are a powerful group of overcomers who shift the atmosphere for relational health. Their life creates an invitation for others to enter wholeness, simply because they live and breathe reconciliation. In fact, they demonstrate it far more than talk about it.

Just being around a peacemaker makes you want to grow up in how you do relationships. They call people to drive out the strongholds and deceptions that keep unity from operating.

The key to being a peacemaker is to have peace in your own heart and life. You cannot make peace with others if you don’t have peace within! That’s our verse from Colossians today - Colossians 3:15 – which says:

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

Peace should rule our hearts. What does that mean?

The Holman Standard Bible says:

And let the peace of the Messiah, to which you were also called in one body, control your hearts. Be thankful.

The Complete Jewish Bible says:

Let the shalom which comes from the Messiah be your heart’s decision-maker, for this is why you were called to be part of a single Body. And be thankful.

As I studied this more, I learned that when Colossians says -

Let the peace of God rule in your hearts.

The word “rule” literally means “umpire.”

An umpire directs and decides athletic contests.

In baseball, an umpire – calls you safe or out.

So, this verse is saying:

Let the peace of God call the shots in your life.

Let the peace of God be the umpire in your life and actions.

Let the peace of God act as referee in your emotions and decisions.

Let God's peace control you.

After all – think about it – when you lose your peace you usually get out of control!

So – if peace is our umpire – that means when we have peace when we make a decision, we are safe. But if we have no peace, the umpire is saying, “You’re out.” That could be God saying, “Hold up.”

In other words – don’t keep pressing forward if you have no peace. When in doubt – don’t! The Amplified version of Colossians 3:15 says

Let the peace which comes from Christ rule (act as umpire continually) in your hearts (deciding and settling with finality all questions that arise in your minds).

Many people struggle when it comes to hearing God. I did at first. I learned to hear the voice of God the hard way – by ignoring it. I would have what I would call a gut feeling – but I didn’t listen to it because I thought it was just me. But I eventually learned that was one of the ways God spoke to me.

I’m trying to help you see that God can be speaking to you at times when you’re not aware of it. You don’t have to hear an audible voice or see God’s handwriting in the sky! God can speak through things like a gut feeling or the presence or absence of peace.

Beginning to listen and obey will help us develop spiritual discernment. And that discernment grows only when we use it! Heb. 5:14 says discernment comes to those *who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*

The word for use means practice.

The word for senses means perception.

The word for exercise means to train, as an athlete trains for a game.

So – we can paraphrase this verse to say discernment is the ability to know whose voice you are listening to and this ability comes through continually training and practicing our spiritual perception.

We’ll never get infallible in our ability to hear God. But we can improve. We can learn to discern. Remember - the issue is not trying to get God to speak. But we must overcome the things that hinder our ability to hear God.

What I’m about to tell you is very important! We all hear from God differently.

That's because we use different spiritual senses to hear God. Some people hear God through a word that comes to them as a spontaneous thought. Others hear God through pictures – they see things in their mind. They are called seers.

I remember a woman who used to go to church here complaining that she never heard from God. I said, "Let's pray about it." So, I prayed with her and asked God to speak to her. When I was done I asked if she heard anything and she said, "No."

I was kind of disappointed until she said, "But I did see something." She went on to tell me about seeing a door that had been locked open up. I asked her if there was some closed door in her life that she had been asking God to open. She said, "Yes."

Then it hit me – she's a seer. She hears from God through pictures or images in her mind. When I told her that - it was a huge revelation that she was indeed hearing from God – but she was hearing through pictures when she thought she should be hearing a voice.

Some people hear God through words. Others hear God through pictures. Others hear God through feelings. This happens to me sometimes in our worship services. It's one way that words of knowledge come to me.

For example – there have been times in a service where I've felt pain in my body that I knew was not pain from sickness or injury. It was God leading me to pray for people with that physical pain.

There have been other times where I've been in worship and experienced intense emotional feelings like grief or sadness. I didn't have anything causing grief or sadness at that time, so I knew this was God wanting me to pray for people experiencing that emotional pain.

My point is that God can be speaking to you at times in ways you haven't thought of. I want to expand your thinking about hearing God so you can put that to use rather than losing out on hearing God.

Sometimes – what we call a "gut feeling" is actually God speaking to us. I learned that these "gut feelings" were actually what I call now a "check in my spirit." That's one of the major ways God speaks to us – by a still small voice in our spirit saying, "Whoa! Don't go there." Another way to say this is an "absence of peace."

If we are going to be peacemakers – we need to let the peace of God rule our hearts and lives! And notice the end of that verse adds: *And be thankful.* It almost seems like an afterthought – but it's not! Peace and praise go together! Philippians 4:6-7 says:

In everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Peace is a result of prayer and praise. And that peace will guard our hearts and our minds! Peace is like a band of soldiers standing watch to protect you. Peace keeps out worry, fear, and anxiety.

Notice that peace transcends, or goes beyond, our understanding. You will have no peace if you live by your own understanding.

Your own understanding will not get you through job loss or financial difficulties. You need something more.

Your own understanding will not get you through family problems or a spouse leaving you. You need something more.

Your own understanding will not get you through medical problems or the loss of a loved one. You need something more.

That something more is the peace of God that passes understanding. The Bible says we receive that peace when we pray and praise instead of being worried and afraid.

Jesus wants you to be a peacemaker. And if you really know Christ, the Prince of peace, you're going to be a peacemaker, not a troublemaker. You will build people up, not tear them down. You will compliment more than you criticize. You will love people the way Jesus loves people.

But before you can be a peacemaker, God must bring peace into your life. Before you can give peace – you must receive peace from God.

And the peace OF God begins by receiving peace WITH God!
And peace with God only comes through Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:1 says:

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Some of you are experiencing storms in life and conflict in relationships. You've tried everything to try to find inner peace and rest, but nothing seems to help.

You've been searching for something to bring rest to the turmoil of your life. I assure you, there is no peace without the Prince of Peace.

I urge you to accept God's gift of peace by accepting Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. If you do, you can leave here today in peace.