In Part 1 of this series, I explained what peacemaking is and isn’t as well as the four foundation stones of peacemaking. If you haven’t had a chance to read that article yet, please go back and read it.

The four foundation stones teach that peacemakers are blessed to represent the God of peace, pursue the peace of God, and share the gospel of peace. The eight practices of peacemaking exhort us to pray for peace and give practical ways we can proactively pursue peace with everyone.

THE EIGHT PRACTICES OF PEACEMAKING

1. Pray for peace.

Prayer marks the hidden, “behind-the-scenes” work of peacemaking. Praying for peace is both commanded and modeled throughout the Scripture.

“The LORD bless you, and keep you; the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; The LORD lift up his countenance on you and give you peace [shalom]” (Numbers 6:24-26, New American Standard).
“Pray for the peace [shalom] of Jerusalem: ‘May those who love you be secure. May there be peace [shalom] within your walls and security within your citadels.’ For the sake of my brothers and friends, I will say, ‘Peace [shalom] be within you’ (Psalm 122:6-8. See also Psalm 125:5; 128:6).

Paul the apostle prayed for peace in every one of his letters and exhorted Timothy to “fight the good fight” by praying for peace:

“I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone— for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:1-4).

2. Pursue peace with all.

God’s peacemaking plan addresses every human divide. It is multidimensional and comprehensive.

“If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone” (Romans 12:18).

“Make every effort to live in peace with everyone” (Hebrews 12:14).

We have already noted what Paul taught about peacemaking in Romans 12:18. The author of Hebrews added a further dimension. We are commanded to “make every effort” toward peace with everyone, indicating intensity of effort on our part. In a world of conflict, peace doesn’t just happen. It takes work.
Thus peacemaking pushes us beyond our comfort zones and outside the walls of our churches. It challenges us to live out the peaceable ways of Jesus with our neighbors and our enemies. No borders. No boundaries. We need to pursue peace with everyone: Muslims, atheists, gays, illegal immigrants, Democrats, and Republicans.


Peacemaking practices 3-7 are best discussed as a unit because they often organically emerge from the same text. In a few cases we will examine specific texts related to a specific practice (Love 2001; Sande 1992). We begin with the Sermon on the Mount:

“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to that person; then come and offer your gift. Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way…” (Matthew 5:23-25).

This passage illustrates all five of these peacemaking practices either explicitly or implicitly. “First go and be reconciled” teaches that we take responsibility for broken relationships. Even if I don’t have anything against my brother or sister, if he or she has something against me, I must take initiative. To go and be reconciled implies that reproof has been given and received, forgiveness requested and granted.

“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in someone else’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye?
You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from the other person’s eye” (Matthew 7:3-5).

This text puts the emphasis on taking responsibility for our sins. It commands us to get the log out of our own eye before anything else. But note that Jesus went on to say that once that is done, we could remove the speck from the other person’s eye (i.e., we can reprove that person).

“If a brother or sister sins, go and point out the fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over” (Matthew 18:15).

This passage also either explicitly or implicitly teaches five practices of peacemaking. I am commanded to go (take responsibility) and show them their fault (reproof). If they listen to me (accept reproof), I have won them (forgiveness has been requested and granted).

The immediate context of this verse (Matthew 18:16-17) especially highlights the necessity of accepting reproof. Four times in this short paragraph Jesus used the word “listen.” The one who listens to “life-giving reproof” lives in peace with the community.

“If a brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. Even if he sins against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him” (Luke 17:3-4).

Four of the five peacemaking practices are explicit in this passage. We are commanded to rebuke the one who sins (rebuking is the functional equivalent of reproofing). If they repent (accept reproof and ask for forgiveness) we are commanded to forgive them.
“Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the head, that is, Christ” (Ephesians 4:15).

“There whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent” (Revelation 3:19).

These two texts describe the importance of loving reproof. Revelation 3:19 describes Jesus’ motive in confronting the sins of the church. He rebukes and disciplines out of love. Ephesians 4:15 teaches that reproof includes speaking truth, and doing it in love.

“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32).

“Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you” (Colossians 3:13).

In both Ephesians and Colossians Paul the apostle exhorted us to forgive one another. In each text Christ’s prior forgiveness was the motive or rationale for our forgiveness. We forgive because He first forgave us.

It is hard to overstate the importance of forgiveness for peacemaking. As Miroslav Volf notes, “Revenge multiplies evil. Retributive justice contains evil....Forgiveness overcomes evil with good” (Volf 2005:161). Forgiveness breaks the chain of hate (Henderson 2002).

Taking responsibility, lovingly reproving, accepting reproof, asking for forgiveness, and forgiving others describe the core competences of peacemaking. But there is more. Jesus pushes us beyond our communities into a broken, often angry, world.
8. Love your enemies.

Jesus’ teaching about love of enemy is at once the most radical and the most ignored command in the Bible. Many Christians think this command reflects an unrealistic and idealistic standard. Because of this, too many Christians spend time figuring out ways to interpret it so it doesn’t apply to their lives.

But this teaching is part of Kingdom ethics in the Sermon on the Mount. We can’t ignore the fact that it is Jesus’ command. Nor can we ignore the fact that there are thirteen explicit commands related to this topic.

These commands (e.g., turn the other cheek, pray for those who persecute, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you) demonstrate that “loving our enemy” should not be interpreted in sentimental terms. In this context, love refers to acts of kindness. We can choose to do these acts in obedience to Jesus whether we feel like it or not. As Martin Luther King, Jr. said,

“Like is sentimental, and it is pretty difficult to like someone bombing your home; it is pretty difficult to like somebody threatening your children; it is difficult to like congressmen who spend all of their time trying to defeat civil rights. But Jesus says love them, and love is greater than like. Love is understanding, redemptive, creative, good will for all men” (Washington 1991:47).

One of the most powerful examples of obedience to this command has happened in my lifetime. Martin Luther King, Jr. showed that loving one’s enemies is not the impossible dream. We can love our enemies.

A more recent but less well-known example can be found in Nigeria. A Christian pastor named James and a Muslim Imam named Ashafa founded the Interfaith
Mediation Centre to bring about reconciliation and peace in conflict-ridden Kaduna, Nigeria. Here is their story:

Pastor James was born in Kaduna... As a teenager James joined the Christian Association of Nigeria, and at 27 became general secretary of the Youth Wing. When fighting between Christians and Muslims reached Kaduna in 1987, James became the head of a Christian militia. James used Scriptures to justify the violence.

At age 32 a fight broke out between Christians and Muslims over control of a market. The Christians were outnumbered, and 20 of them were killed. James passed out and when he woke up he found that his right arm had been sliced off with a machete.

Imam Ashafa comes from a long line of Muslim scholars. In 1987 when religious violence hit Kaduna, Ashafa, like James, became a militia leader. He says, “We planted the seed of genocide, and we used the Scripture to do that. As a leader you create a scenario where this is the only interpretation.” But Ashafa’s mentor, a Sufi hermit, tried to warn the young man away from violence.

In 1992, Christian militiamen stabbed the hermit to death and threw his body down a well. Ashafa’s only mission became revenge: he was going to kill James. Then, one Friday during a sermon, Ashafa’s imam told the story of when the Prophet Muhammad had gone to preach at Ta’if, a town about 70 miles southeast of Mecca. Bleeding after being stoned and cast out of town, Muhammad was visited by an angel who asked if he’d like those who mistreated him to be destroyed. Muhammad said no. “The imam was talking directly to me,” Ashafa said. During the sermon, he began to cry. Next time he met James, he’d forgiven him entirely. To prove
it, he went to visit James’s sick mother in the hospital.

Slowly the pastor and imam began to work together, but James was leery. “Ashafa carries the psychological mark. I carry the physical and psychological mark,” he said... At a Christian conference in Nigeria... a fellow pastor pulled James aside and said, in almost the same words as the Sufi hermit, “You can’t preach Jesus with hate in your heart.” James said, “That was my real turning point. I came back totally deprogrammed.”

For more than a decade now, James and Ashafa have traveled to Nigerian cities and to other countries where Christians and Muslims are fighting. They tell their stories of how they manipulated religious texts to get young people into the streets to shed blood. Both still adhere strictly to the scripture; they just read it more deeply and emphasize different verses.

Sadly, the imam is frequently accused of being a sell-out because he associates with Christians. He identifies himself very much as a fundamentalist and sees himself as one who emulates Muhammad. Although he and Pastor James don’t discuss it, he also proselytizes among Christians. “I want James to die as a Muslim, and he wants me to die as a Christian. My Islam is proselytizing. It’s about bringing the whole world to Islam.”

Such missionary zeal drives both men, infusing their struggle to rise above their history of conflict.... Pastor James still believes strongly in absolute and exclusive salvation mandated by the gospel: Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life.” He still challenges Christians to rely on the strict and literal word, and he’s still uncompromising on fundamental issues of Christianity.
Please note: both Pastor James and Imam Ashafa engaged in peacemaking and respectful witness! In a conflict zone, the Muslim carried out da’wa (the Arabic term for Muslim outreach), while the Christian evangelized – and yet they remained friends and worked together for peace. Peacemaking and evangelism are not mutually exclusive.

There is a striking parallel between being a peacemaker (Matthew 5:9) and loving one’s enemies. Both peacemakers and those who love their enemies are described as “children of God” (Matthew 5:9, 44; Luke 6:35) – implying a vital connection between peacemaking and love of enemy. God’s children pursue peace and love their enemies.

But the command to “love your enemy” should not just be understood as a mere peacemaking principle, an addendum to the main things of the Kingdom. In fact, it is rooted in the character of God. We are called to imitate a merciful heavenly Father who is “kind to the ungrateful and wicked” (Luke 6:35-36).

This command is also rooted in the cross. It comes from the one who modeled love of enemies. Jesus loved us and laid down His life for us, “while we were enemies” (Romans 5:10; cf. Col 1:21). After His enemies nailed Him to the cross, He prayed, “Father forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34). In other words, responding to enemies with self-giving, sacrificial love demonstrates the gospel. It highlights the profound relationship between peacemaking and the gospel.

**THE CHURCH IS A COMMUNITY OF JESUS-CENTERED PEACEMAKERS**

In one sense, God’s work of peacemaking can be compared to a continuum. We experience God’s peace through Christ. This results in increasing healing in our own lives (peace with ourselves). Jesus then leads us to live this out with His
people, with our neighbors, and ultimately even with our enemies.

The Church does peacemaking simultaneously in all five points on the peacemaking spectrum. Evangelism and all forms of witness lead people to peace with God. Counseling and prayer for inner healing helps people find peace with themselves. Most churches have specific ministries and formally appointed people to work in these two areas. But few churches have specific ministries or formally appointed people to do peacemaking in the church, with neighbors, or with their enemies. It is assumed that the pastor or other church leaders will handle the role of peacemaker. While church leaders do peacemaking (and some do it well), many are not trained in it and fail to provide training for their congregation.

PEACEMAKING AND EVANGELISM

I was talking about Peace Catalyst International (PCI) at a meeting when a woman exclaimed, “But if people don’t come to Christ, everything else is worthless!” Really? Worthless?
What is the relationship between peacemaking and sharing the good news? How do reconciling communities live out the ministry of reconciliation?

I have argued that peacemaking is comprehensive and multi-dimensional. It is first multi-dimensional. We call people to peace with God and neighbor. It is also comprehensive. The physical and spiritual dimensions of life are integrated. The good news is “holistic” – about both personal reconciliation and social transformation (Katongole 2008). We share the gospel of peace and pursue the peace of God. Ideally peacemaking and sharing the good news are integrated.

In practice however, peacemaking and sharing the good news don’t always go together. There are times when someone is reconciled to God but fails to reconcile with his or her neighbor. People like this need further teaching and encouragement to “obey all that Jesus commanded.” There are far too many professing followers of Christ who do not make peace with their neighbors, much less their enemies.

There are other instances when making peace between neighbors enables us to effectively bear witness to Jesus. People are drawn to the goodness of the gospel when they see our lights shine in this way. They want to know about the good news of God’s reconciling love in Christ. And they decide to follow Jesus.

Sometimes, however, people rejoice in the peace made between them and their neighbors, but do not want to follow Jesus. In this case, the good deed of peacemaking still finds favor with God. For Jesus said, “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). The good deed of peacemaking glorifies God.

That is not worthless!
CONCLUSION

I would like to conclude by quoting a famous Old Testament prophecy about peace.

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

“Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this” (Isaiah 9:6-7).

Jesus is the promised Prince of Peace. His Kingdom will be a kingdom of shalom. His peace will be a comprehensive peace (including justice and righteousness). His peace will be multi-dimensional (peace with God, social harmony, welfare, health, prosperity, and human flourishing). His peace movement is expanding and will endure forever.

God is on a mission to bring peace to earth. Contrary to popular opinion, He will be successful. For Isaiah says: “The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this!”
Works Cited


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