

Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called sons of God [notes]

"You're blessed when you can show people how to co-operate instead of compete or fight. That's when you discover who you really are, and your place in God's family"
The Message

Chat in your groups about conflicts that you've been involved in. Try and make sure the discussion is kept clean; make sure it doesn't turn into a "she-was-really-horrible-to-me" session! Try and keep the discussion as low level as you can, for example, about things that have affected the people on a personal level, not a society thing, or conflicts in their church or in the cu.

Peace Throughout the bible the concept of peace is wrapped up with justice and righteousness and is a requirement for God's people as to how they are to live.

Peace in biblical terms is a work of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-3). It is more than the absence of conflict, but one in which God's authority and power over his created order are seen to dominate his relations with his world, including both the material and the human spheres. In the OT, peace results from a person subjecting himself or herself appropriately to God. Peace is used to refer to international relations, conditions within a nation, interpersonal relationships, and personal serenity but above all to speak of God and the gospel (1 Thessalonians 5:23, Isaiah 9:6, Luke 1:79, John 14:27).

The bible makes it clear that the roots of conflict lie in our sinful self-centredness. See Mark 7:20-22, Galatians 5:19-21.

Thinking back to previous beatitudes mercy, meekness and purity of heart are essential as we mourn over the brokenness caused by sin, and so are moved to make peace, even when in many people's eyes it is the other person's responsibility to make the first move. While we were still sinners God made the first move, and gave Jesus, treating him as we deserved and us as Jesus deserved. God made peace with us when we were the ones who had caused the conflict by rejecting him. It is only when we see ourselves and others as God sees us, are filled with his righteousness and mercy, and have a single-minded desire to please God that we can begin to bear the cost of making (as opposed to just keeping) peace with others.

Peacemaking The Greek word that is used was used of ambassadors commissioned to negotiate peace with alienated parties, a task requiring courage, effort and perseverance. So "peacemaker" was a political position, an ambassador of peace-someone who ended wars, brought physical safety and health to people, sought people's well being, and brought justice. It involves strenuous and determined effort despite the attempts of Satan to disrupt us. Prayer is essential (1 Timothy 2:1-4, Matt 5:43-8), we are to avoid that which can break peace (Colossians 3:15, James 4, Proverbs 13:10, 15:1, 16:28) and effort is required in building bridges (Hebrews 12:14, Romans 14:19, 12:18).

Peacemaking is costly, with the next beatitude alluding to that. God doesn't care about ethnic, geographical or social differences. He calls us to love our neighbours. He calls us to love our enemies. These are immensely difficult things to do. He calls us to love the people who have caused us pain – to do good to them. There is wisdom in this as if we allow bitterness to take over it destroys us. God knows the best way to live. The costs may be to what we consider our rights, our pride, our time, our reputation. It may require us to: repent ourselves, take initiative, rid ourselves of prejudice, listen, try to understand opposing view, be prepared to accept we may be wrong, risk failure, take flak from others, risk being misunderstood. Others will think we are wasting our time trying to find and bring reconciliation in some circumstances, or with people who they think don't deserve it. Openness and sincerity are essential to all true reconciliation, even when we know it will hurt someone. We're going to have to do some serious thinking about what our attitudes are like. Does all the blame lie with who we see are the "guilty party"? Do we have to have a long hard think about how our often stubborn attitudes and our strange liking of being the victim are holding us back from forgiving and making peace? Do we even want to make peace? Maybe if we are obviously hurt and annoyed then whoever it was who hurt us will know it and they'll feel bad and we'll get to punish them for it – attitudes like this need addressed.

We keep going, knowing that we are undeserved recipients of God's grace, that his Spirit of peace is at work in us, and confident that God the one who is reconciling all things to himself is calling us to be part of his ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5).

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This beatitude is what God is all about. He is the author of peace; we can see it from the very start, no sooner does a conflict happen in the world, with blame being thrown about all over the place, than he has already hatched a plan to reconcile us Genesis 3:15. It's what he's all about, it's what he does. Who is going to die of shock to read that if we are peacemakers we will be recognised as sons of God? If we do what our Father does, isn't it a natural assumption that people will think like father like son? [The correct translation is son not children because the phrase 'son of..' often meant 'to bear the character of..']

This is going to be hard to think about. Being honest with people and bring things to them that we've been hiding isn't easy in the slightest; whether they are hurts or things we've done to hurt them. But this is something we've got to do; we can't go along with the classic "what they don't know can't hurt them" cop-out. But if you are feeling scared look that what the promise that comes with this beatitude is- we'll be called sons of God. Let it sink in how amazing that is! God treats his children pretty well, check out Mark 1:10, Zephaniah 3:17 and Jeremiah 31:20 if you need any extra convincing to being a child of God is something worth having.

Ephesians 2.11-22 The one great work of salvation on the cross removed enmity between both God and Jew and God and Gentile, both are part of the church now, one body, if we are both united to God through the cross, then we are united to each other- applies to all racial, cultural, denominational differences. The Jewish/ Gentile divide was a huge deal; in fact John Piper calls it "bigger than any divide we face today". In this passage we have Paul writing to Gentiles who feel alienated and separated from being God's people. Let's not forget that Paul was Saul, Paul was Pharisee McPharisee, Paul was Jew McJew, and for him to go on to tell these people that they are no longer alienated was a huge deal. So how did these people get from being alienated in v11-12 to being welcomed into God's family in v19-22, and how did Paul's attitude change so dramatically? It's only through the power of Jesus that things this dramatic can happen, and of course what he did on the cross didn't just bridge a gap between Jew and Gentile, but also between God and sinner. Jesus ultimate role was as a peacemaker between God and fallen people, and talk about coming at a cost. It wouldn't be too big an assumption to make to thin that we'd all hope to never have to settle and heal a conflict that causes us so much stress that we sweat blood over it. When we think of Jesus taking God's entire wrath to bring true and lasting peace to us we quickly find out that being a peacemaker will have big costly consequences. God also made the first move 'while we were yet sinners'....

Colossians 1.15-23. Jesus is reconciling all things to himself on heaven and earth. A central part of that is how God has made peace with us and we have salvation. But God's plan of salvation is huge – he is making everything new – including the physical universe. If we think God is just about saving people, we have too small a view of God and what he is doing. God is about renewing the cosmos, creating life to the full – that is more than just plucking people from hell. God's peace involves the whole creation in harmony

2 Corinthians 5.11-21. God has reconciled us to him and asks us to carry on the work of reconciliation. Bringing lost people into relationship with Jesus. We are God's representatives. Is the message we proclaim truly one of reconciliation with God and with each other? Do our lives demonstrate that?

We are a people who have been reconciled to God and have been given a ministry of reconciliation, how can we claim to be reconciled people if we do not seek to practice this reconciliation in our churches, families, relationships, and communities?

See how the beatitudes come together: to be prepared to make peace we need to be poor in spirit, meek, seeking to be filled with the ways of God, being pure in heart and merciful as we make peace.

Jesus prayed for the oneness of his people, that they might be kept from evil and in truth so our unity must not be at the expense of the central truths of the gospel – John 17. He also said people would know us as his disciples by the love we have for one another (despite difference in background, culture – think of the disciples – a freedom fighter and a collaborator – what a picture of the kingdom!)