

God does not want programs or projects; he wants *people*, which is why he so often scraps our pet projects. He wants us as people, and he wants our hearts. Of course, God uses programs and projects, and he calls us to plan and build. But he uses all these things to raise for himself a people so that we might glorify his name—the great name of the resurrecting God, the name of the risen Lord Jesus Christ—in all the earth.

We pastors, as the shepherds of his people, glorify his name in our lives when we stop trusting in ourselves and relying on our own abilities and instead start recognizing our unbelief and our desperate need for a Savior. Though well hidden in our subtle patterns of self-righteousness, our unbelief quickly manifests itself in a number of ways in the midst of suffering and conflict, including despair, anger, hatred, discontentment, complaining, envy (especially of other pastors), a critical spirit, gossip, blame-shifting, excusing ourselves, defending ourselves, neglecting our duties, failing to serve others, fear of failure, boasting, poor listening, neglect of others, and the list goes on. We will never come to Christ, to the God of resurrection, until we are laid low in our estimation of ourselves by recognizing these fruits of unbelief. Only then will we come to him crying out, “Lord, I need a resurrection. Lord, you are the resurrection and the life.” Only when we cry out in our weakness as peacemakers will we see anew God’s power to reshape us in the likeness of his Son—the Peacemaker.

Therefore, for a church to become a true peacemaking church, renewal must start in the hearts of the leaders by their hearing afresh the Good News that our God is a God who raises the dead—even dead pastors. Once we as leaders are gripped by this gospel of peace, we can call our churches back to biblical peacemaking, leading from weakness, not strength—or better yet, leading by God’s strength revealed in our weakness (2 Cor. 12:9).

Let us not underestimate, then, the present power of the gospel of peace, resurrection, and renewal. Christ’s bride, his church, remains a fragmented body because of sin, ignorance, unrepentance, and immaturity. Hearing the gospel anew is the only thing that will renew us and compel us to be ambassadors of reconciliation. The apostle Paul himself makes this very point in his second letter to the Corinthians:

For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves

but for him who died for them and was raised again. So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

2 Corinthians 5:14–20

Amen! O Lord, enthrall us by the gospel of your resurrecting power.

Using the Ordinary Means of Grace

The next step toward becoming a peacemaking church is the most ordinary and obvious. We must utilize the ordinary means of grace that God has given us to promote peacemaking in the family of God. As pastors, you and the other appointed church officers are called to preach and teach the Word, administer the sacraments, and exercise fatherly discipline over your flock. As you carry out these responsibilities, consider how the following means of grace can serve regularly as platforms for highlighting the gospel of peace and for calling your church to a life of peacemaking.

Worship. First, plan your worship. The corporate worship of the church on the Lord's Day is a prime venue for promoting peacemaking. Pastors typically can plan the worship service or work with others on a worship team toward that end. Seize the opportunity you have to better direct your people's attention to the character of God as Peacemaker.

One very direct way to worship God as Peacemaker is by planning special worship services during the year that promote or highlight the biblical truths about peacemaking. Just as many churches have a "Missions Sunday" (or week or month), you could also set aside one Sunday of the year as a "Peacemaking Sunday."

It is probably more effective, however, to speak a word of peace every Sunday. As you and your worship team plan next year's worship, think about what incremental changes you could make to more deliberately extol

Christ as Peacemaker and promote his gospel of peace. Ask yourselves some of the following questions:

- How might we exalt the great name of God as he discloses himself to Moses in Exodus 33–34?
- How can we continually call our people to confessing their sin, forgiving one another, and treating one another as brothers and sisters in the family of God?
- How can we regularly exhort our people to submit every thought and activity of life to the lordship of Christ our peace, seeking peace in all their relationships?
- At the same time, how do we apply these exhortations to the hearts of our people, encouraging them that as the great Reconciler, God is willing and desirous to help us in our daily conflicts?

Second, think of new ways to address your people, or explain to them how the common ways you address them are not empty expressions. Think of the ways in which the apostle John frequently uses terms of endearment as he affectionately addresses his congregation. He calls them “my dear children,” “dear friends,” and “brothers.”³ John is not unique. Paul, Peter, James, Jude, and the writer to the Hebrews all use various terms of endearment when addressing their people.

Furthermore, Paul takes every opportunity to make his heartfelt affection for his people known. For example, in his letter to the Philippians, he begins by expressing his love for them: “It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God’s grace with me. God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 1:7–8). Here Paul nearly oozes with tender feelings for his flock. He does not just think these feelings; he goes public with them (see also Gal. 4:19; Col. 2:1; 1 Thess. 2:6–8). Paul actually likes his people! His manner of pastoring is surely an example for us.

Third, think of ways you can introduce each song to underscore its message of atonement and forgiveness, its call to repentance, and its reminder of God’s goodness to recalcitrant sinners like ourselves whom he has delighted to call his children! If you are not the worship leader, you might want to take the time to give your worship leader a rich and robust theology of peacemaking.

Fourth, think of new ways to utilize Scripture readings or responsive readings during worship that focus on peacemaking themes such as confession of sin, forgiveness, judging one another, the use of the tongue, what causes conflict, and so on. You might also want to use the Peacemaker's Pledge as vow.⁴ We use the Pledge once a year in conjunction with our Peacemaking Sunday. It serves as a way for our entire congregation to renew their covenant commitment to peacemaking. Then when conflict arises, as it certainly will, we can refer to the Peacemaker's Pledge to remind the conflicted parties of their covenant commitment to God and to one another.

Fifth, think of how and for what you pray. The pastoral prayer ought to be shaped by the gospel of peace, just as the psalmist encourages us to pray for the peace of the church: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: 'May those who love you be secure. May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels.' For the sake of my brothers and friends, I will say, 'Peace be within you'" (Ps. 122:6–8). We ought to pray regularly in our worship services for peace—peace in our church, among our officers and lay leaders, and among the pastoral staff. We ought to pray for peace in our marriages, families, neighborhoods, work environments, schools and universities, cities, states, and country. And let us not forget to pray for peace for our missionaries. Conflict troubled and eventually divided the first mission team in the New Testament when Paul and Barnabas sharply disagreed over the selection of Mark as fellow missionary (Acts 15:36–41). And conflict weakens and divides many of our missionaries today. They desperately need our prayers for peace.

Finally, if you do not already, conclude your worship services with the great high priestly benediction of Numbers 6:24–26:

The LORD bless you
and keep you;
the LORD make his face to shine upon you
and be gracious to you;
the LORD turn his face toward you
and give you *peace*.

If you use this benediction frequently, take time occasionally to remind your people of its significance. The Lord our God wants us to be at peace with him and with each other.

Preaching the Gospel of Peace. One of the central elements of worship is the reading and preaching of God's Word (1 Tim. 4:13).⁵ Preaching the gospel is the best way to instill in your members God's own passion for peace as well as his sovereignty in times of conflict. And it is the most effective way to remind your people how he longs to see his children exhibit his mercy, truth, goodness, love, justice, and holiness by loving one another, looking out for one another's interests, confessing their sin to one another, and granting each other forgiveness.

According to Scripture, both the content and the goal of preaching are to declare the *gospel of peace*. Peter tells all who are gathered in the house of the Gentile Cornelius that God sent to Israel the message "telling the good news [gospel] of peace through Jesus Christ" (Acts 10:36). Similarly, Paul, writing to the Ephesians, describes Christ as the one who "preached peace" to Gentiles and Jews (Eph. 2:17). And later in the same letter he describes the armor of God as consisting of our feet fitted with "the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace" (Eph. 6:15).⁶

In these passages it is clear that Paul is alluding to the prophecies of Isaiah that foretell the great day of redemption that will be announced by the proclaiming of the Good News. He is referring particularly to Isaiah 52:7: "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'" Here is the Old Testament picture of a preacher preaching the gospel of peace. His feet are swift and his voice trumpets the words of joyous victory and redemption: peace, good tidings, salvation, your God reigns. This preacher is first and foremost Christ himself, as Paul argues in his great tribute to the Prince of Peace:

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

Ephesians 2:14–18

This entire passage exalts the person and work of Christ as the Peacemaker. The word *peace* resounds four times. And Paul uses other expressions to convey his multifaceted work of peace: making the two one (v. 14), creating one new man (v. 15), reconciling both of them to God through the cross (v. 16), preaching peace (v. 17), and being the Mediator through whom both Jews and Gentiles have access to the Father by the one Spirit (v. 18).

Moreover, Paul declares at the outset not simply that Christ is the Peacemaker but also that Christ *himself* is our peace (v. 14).⁷ Peace is a person before it is an activity. Peace is a person before it is a sermon. It is because Christ is the embodiment of God's peace that Christ can make peace as well as proclaim peace.⁸

In light of this grand picture of the supreme peace preacher, Jesus Christ, it becomes evident that all biblical preaching is aimed at preaching Christ our peace. And this preaching entails not just proclaiming biblical truths but declaring these truths in the power of the Spirit—and thus *in the presence of Christ himself*.⁹ When we preach, Christ is in our midst, speaking to us in the proclamation of the gospel, directing his words not merely to the individual in his vertical relationship to God but also to the covenant community in their horizontal relationships with one another.

These high and holy realities that Christ preaches peace, that he is our peace, and that he is present in our midst to make peace ought to embolden us to preach Christ more clearly as the Prince of Peace. For it is only through Christ and his gospel that we will know peace with God as well as with each other.

Perhaps the most effective way to preach this gospel of peace is by setting aside time to preach expository-topical sermons on peace themes.¹⁰ Of course, it works best to preach these sermons for the most obvious occasions. For example, when we have set aside a Sunday to conduct a special meeting for censuring a member, I will usually preach a sermon on a topic pertinent to either the exercise of the keys of the kingdom or the offense committed—without naming names.

Recently we excommunicated a single woman who wanted to marry an unbeliever more than she wanted to be united with Christ. She denied the faith, renouncing the four vows she took. So I preached on not being yoked unequally with unbelievers, with specific application to marriage. This act

of discipline afforded me the opportunity to speak the gospel of peace in a manner particularly edifying to the singles in our church.

Other topical sermons and sermon series on peace themes that I have preached have focused on the very issues we have studied in this book:

“Getting to the Heart of Conflict” (James 4)

“Confession, Forgiveness, and Church Discipline” (Matthew 18)

“Taking Your Brother to Court” (1 Corinthians 6)

“The Discipline of the Lord” (Hebrews 12)

“The Importance of Church Membership” (Heb. 13:17)

In each case I have presented the topic at hand in the framework of Christ as our peace, his church as our family, his grace as our power, and his truth as our guide.

Sacraments. If the sacraments are visible signs and seals of the gospel of peace, then we should find the sacraments and the times we administer them as great opportunities for displaying visibly Christ who is our peace. For example, baptism is a sign and seal of our engrafting into Christ, our partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace, and our engagement to be the Lord’s. Baptism is being inducted into God’s covenant family and being united to *one* body. Thus it is significant when Paul, in dealing with the conflicted church at Corinth, counsels them by reminding them of their baptism and what it signifies: “The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink” (1 Cor. 12:12–13).

Baptism is baptism into one body by one Spirit. Baptism unites us to Christ, and it is as his body that we stand in covenant community before God. Thus by merit of their baptism and their union with Christ that it signifies, Paul shows the Corinthians that they are to set aside the many things that divide them into different factions (Jews or Gentiles, free or slave).

Union with Christ is union in his peace. Union with Christ is union with his body. Consequently, in Colossians Paul grounds the command to “let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts” in the reality that “as members of one body you were called to peace” (Col. 3:15). And that reality that we are members of one body, in turn, necessitates the call to peace. In light of our union with Christ and what that entails, we can see that baptism into the

body of Christ carries with it the call to peace. It is here in the body of Christ, through his Spirit, that we are bound by covenant oaths to care for and look after one another. Here in the covenant body we confess our sins to one another and forgive one another as the Lord forgave us.

We ought to reinforce this call to peace when we baptize new members. In our own church, after a person has sworn his or her vows publicly and has been baptized, we ask our entire congregation to swear to keep the unity of the body in practical ways: “Do you, brothers and sisters, accept these as members of this body as Christ has accepted you? And do you promise to pray for them, to encourage, admonish, love, and look out also for their interests in all humility realizing that God has fit them into our body for our edification and his glory?” Baptism, then, like the gospel it reveals, is a rite proclaiming Christ as our peace and a proclamation declaring that the rule of his peace governs our relations.

The Lord’s Supper is another opportune time in the life of the church to remind your people of the reconciliation we have with God and with one another through Christ’s peacemaking blood. The Corinthians had not only forgotten this blood-bought reconciliation represented by the wine and the blood, but they were also defiling the Lord’s Supper by their peace-breaking! Thus Paul admonishes them for their blatant misconduct, and he warns them as to the manner in which they should take communion.

Paul specifically warns the Corinthians to examine themselves and to recognize “the body of the Lord” (1 Cor. 11:29). Biblical commentator Anthony Thiselton argues persuasively for understanding the phrase “recognizing the body” as referring to us Christians discerning our distinctive life as one body and “not as individuals.” He calls that distinctive life the recognition that we are “the having-died-and-being-raised-one-body-of-Christ” people.[11](#) In other words, our social identity rests upon and arises out of our union with Christ in his death and resurrection. And the sacrament, as a visible expression of his death and resurrection, marks our life as conformed to the crucified and risen Christ.

Therefore, as pastors, we should use the Lord’s Supper to remind our people that if we are united with Christ in his death and resurrection, we cannot carry on socially as the world does. We cannot look only to our own interests. We cannot think too highly of ourselves while looking down on others. And we cannot refuse either to confess our faults or to grant forgiveness.

One way I hold out this reminder is by guarding the table. I encourage my people not to partake of the sacrament if they are unwilling or have not yet taken steps to be reconciled to a brother or sister with whom they are presently at odds. I remind them of our Lord's own words in Matthew 5:23–24, “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.”

What is interesting in this passage is that Jesus pictures us remembering the conflicts in our lives during worship—true worship. Worship in Spirit and truth should result in remembering those with whom we are not yet reconciled. For we cannot worship the God of peace and hate our brother or sister, nor can we eat from the Lord's Table when our heart and mouth are full of bitterness. And true worship should encourage us that the God of peace will be with us if we need to go and get reconciled.

As you can see, the call for reconciliation and peace never will prove unnecessary. Conflict has an uncanny ability to make the best of theologians and saints live like brute beasts (Ps. 73:21–22). Thus we must be vigilant to incorporate peacemaking in its many forms—including mercy and justice, truth and goodness, confession and forgiveness—to our worship, our preaching of the Word, and our administration of the sacraments.

Utilize, then, the rich means of grace that God has given you. Peacemaking is best taught not in a single session nor on a given Sunday but frequently and in little bits. If we are to have peacemaking churches, we must build brick by brick, training our churches in the disciplines of peace.

Assessing Yourself, Your Leaders, and Your Church

Once the gospel is set front and center in our affections and the ordinary means of grace serve regularly to highlight this gospel, the next important step toward becoming a peacemaking church is for us as church leaders to assess ourselves. David, the son of Jesse, provides a great example for us in Psalm 139. He calls for an Independent Counsel to investigate his life, his heart, his thoughts, his practices, and his ministry. He calls for the Holy Consultant who does more than give counsel. He asks, “Search me, O God,

and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Ps. 139:23–24).

This prayer is where you and your leaders can begin. Ask the Lord to probe your heart and your ways to reveal those sins that keep you from effectively carrying out your calling. Pray this prayer not only as individuals but also as your church’s ruling body. Our churches will not change until we, the leaders, change.

As the Spirit answers your prayer and begins to reveal those sins that are creating obstacles to your ministries, you and your leaders must lead by confessing your own sins. You can start by asking some hard questions. Following is a sample of questions to ask yourselves with respect to peacemaking:

- How do we as leaders typically respond to conflict?
- How well do we practice biblical peacemaking?
- Do we view conflict as an opportunity (James 1:2–5)?
- Are we familiar with the biblical mandate to “make every effort” as peacemakers (Rom. 14:19; Eph. 4:3; Heb. 12:14; see also Ps. 34:14; Rom. 12:18; 1 Cor. 1:10; James 3:17–18)?
- What kind of orientation or training is provided to inform new leaders about their authority and about the principles and practices of peacemaking (for example, authority-responsibility structures, the appeal process, and peacemaking practices)?

Such self-assessments engender a culture of peace. A few years ago our deacons provided a great example of what it looks like for leaders to assess themselves. It began when we as elders recognized that over the years the elders and deacons had grown apart. As elders we were blind to the way we had contributed to our estrangement from our brothers. So we called for a meeting—many meetings. But the first meeting surprised us all. The deacons came with a confession of their sin. The president of the deacons started by detailing the way the deacons had undermined their elders. This corporate confession led to several other deacons individually confessing how they each had sinned against us elders.

Rather than using this first meeting as a forum to air all their complaints against us, the deacons seized it as an opportunity to assess all their leadership weaknesses and to confess their sins. Thus they did much to unite our hearts with theirs. While subsequent meetings were necessary and

important for addressing specific issues and finding solutions, it was this first meeting that radically shaped and renewed our drive to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

Once you and your leaders have walked through the vigorous but rewarding process of praying for God to reveal your sins, asking the hard questions, and confessing ministry-crippling sins, you should begin a study on peacemaking. Ken Sande's book *The Peacemaker*,^{[12](#)} which includes discussion questions at the end of each chapter, would be a great book to study with your leaders. You could cover it in about a year's time. If peacemaking is the mark of a son of God, how can we not make this study the most important item on our pastoral agenda?

Training Your Leaders

Once you have assessed your leaders and your church, the next step to take is to train your leaders in peacemaking.^{[13](#)} I would encourage you to begin by teaching the substance of this book. Instruct your leaders on the matters of the heart and how to wisely apply God's Word to the common issues of the heart (e.g., depression, anger, desires, and fear). My own church utilizes the wealth of resources offered by the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation (CCEF).^{[14](#)} I particularly recommend their pamphlets on anger, desires, and marriage. Walk your officers through a theology of God as Peacemaker and the church as the family of God, and spell out the implications of each for peacemaking. Teach your leaders and staff to make a good confession, to discern false views of forgiveness, and to practice forgiveness in light of its promissory nature. Finally, train them how to coach negotiation, and teach them the fundamental principles and processes foundational to mediation, arbitration, and church discipline.

In our own church, once our leaders committed to becoming a peacemaking congregation, we began to set aside funds each year for certain key members to be equipped by Peacemaker Ministries.^{[15](#)} Over time we have built up a small but powerful cadre of reconcilers. It is composed of nonofficers and officers, women and men—people to whom our members can turn for help in responding biblically when conflict occurs. I would encourage your church as well to take this opportunity to provide key members with further hands-on training in mediation.

Assessing Your Church

If your church is to become a peacemaking church, you cannot let the process of change come to a standstill after you have assessed yourself and your leaders. You must move a step further by assessing the church at large.

Recently our church went through an assessment utilizing the Peacemaker Ministries church assessment tool. It assessed both our leaders and our membership not only with respect to our peacemaking skill level but also with respect to our theology and attitudes that either promote or impede peacemaking practices.[16](#) I highly commend this church assessment tool to you.

As you make your own assessments and identify changes that your church needs to make, try to anticipate the objections and obstacles that you and your congregation will encounter as you seek to implement the necessary changes. It goes without saying that such foresight is necessary before you make any concrete changes. And again, whatever changes you do make must begin with you as leaders. Adopting peacemaking as a new way of life cannot be imposed from the top; it must be taught and modeled first by the pastors and church leaders.

Peacemaking and Covenant Membership

Finally, if you desire to see your church transformed into a peacemaking church, you must carefully address the issue of church membership—of *having accountable members who have formally and voluntarily submitted themselves to the body of Christ*. Church membership provides yet another platform from which pastors can promote the gospel of peace and draw out its implications for life in the body of Christ.

Paige Patterson, noted Southern Baptist statesman, in bemoaning the decline of church discipline and pleading for its recovery, insists that what the church must first restore is a biblical view of church membership:

Church discipline must be recovered as a practice of the local church. This proposal is especially hazardous in a litigious age. Furthermore, the abuses associated with church discipline in earlier eras leave little healthy precedent from the recent past. Radical pluralism and toleration of heresy or aberrant behavior of almost any variety are allowed, as the churches often shirk loving responsibility while hiding behind a misplaced sentimentalism

masquerading as “love.” . . . *Restoration of meaningful church membership* through such discipline would curtail shallow evangelism, and it would also restore a measure of *integrity to church membership*.^{[17](#)}

What Patterson says here about church discipline can and ought to be expanded to include all the disciplines of peace, for which this book has been an apology. In other words, in order to more readily recover and practice the disciplines of peace, the church must first have a robust view of church membership—of living as one body in covenant community—because peacemaking is not about making *individuals* peacemakers. It is about how we as members of the *one body of Christ*—who share in one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father—keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3–6). Christ has already made us to be one. Peacemaking is how we as a body, by his Spirit, seek to keep that unity.

Our failure to see peacemaking from this covenantal perspective is ultimately the result of buying into the lie from the Enlightenment period that faith is merely a private affair between our hearts and God. We have little sense of the corporate dimension of our faith, our responsibilities toward our brothers and sisters, our respect for church authorities, or the earnest care we ought to have for wayward Christians. Whatever the church may seem to us when we gather together on Sunday to worship in our solemn assemblies, at heart we are loners, each turned inward and traveling our separate ways. In short, we are a people who give no significance or value to body life, much less covenant membership, if we give it any thought at all.

Since this type of radical individualism defines the culture in which we live, along with privatized religion, mobile societies, and their corresponding tenuous relationships, we cannot assume that those entering our church understand the essence of covenant membership—of real accountability in the body of Christ. Even if they have been members of other churches, they still are likely to have a deficient view of biblical membership. For many churches present membership as being optional and uneventful, requiring little more than a two-hour informational class and promising little added privilege to one’s life in the church.

Thus it is incumbent on us to teach and model for our people (especially to those who are new to our congregation) the biblical foundation for

church membership and its implications for church life—especially if we are to recover peacemaking in the church. In my own church, the very first class for new members is spent doing just this—giving a defense for church membership.

The Biblical Basis for Covenant Membership

The justification for covenant membership rests firmly on what the Bible itself asserts about the nature of the church. Scripture implies that the local church has a clearly identifiable and accountable membership. It implies this membership in several ways.

First, Christ calls the church to administer baptism, the *rite of admission* (Matt. 28:18–20; 1 Cor. 12:12–13). As we saw earlier, baptism is baptism into one body. This body is not only the universal body but also the particular and local body—like the church in Corinth.

Second, the New Testament writers identify the churches *by their number and location*. In Acts, Luke tells us that a particular church consisted at one point of three thousand persons and later of five thousand persons (Acts 2:41, 47; 4:4; 5:14). The point is that the saints of a church can be counted. Members are countable, and thus they are accountable! The apostle Paul identifies members by their location. He addresses his letters not only to the church in Rome or Corinth or Philippi but also to the many house churches outside those cities (Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Philem. 1:2). You could have said in the early church, “I belong to the church that meets at the home of Priscilla and Aquila.” In other words, members can be located!

Third, Christ prescribes the process of discipline to restore the wayward brother, even to the point of removing a person from fellowship by a formal, judicial act of excommunication (Matt. 18:15–20). One cannot be excommunicated from those with whom he has not previously communicated! To be cast out implies by necessity that the person was once in.

Fourth, the New Testament writers assume that Christians can identify their leaders to whom they have voluntarily submitted themselves (1 Thess. 5:12–13; Heb. 13:17). And conversely, they expect the leaders of a church to be able to identify those members for whom they must give an account (Acts 20:28–30; 1 Thess. 5:12–13; Heb. 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1–4). If the sheep

must know their shepherd, so too the shepherd must know his sheep. Yet God will not hold a pastor liable for failing to discharge his duties as shepherd over sheep that he cannot determine are his own.

Covenant membership, then, wherein Christians function as the one body of Christ by binding themselves in oath to other Christians and placing themselves under submission to their respective authorities, is implied in a number of different passages throughout Scripture. To put it simply, church membership is the biblical norm. Scripture never envisions “Lone Ranger” Christians.

The Formal Membership Process

Scripture does not make explicit, however, the exact manner by which church leaders are to *knowingly* receive and *identify* a person as a member. Clearly, our Lord has allowed the appointed church officers latitude at this point. We can, nonetheless, justify three basic steps of church membership as warranted by the nature of corporate covenant-making so evident in Scripture itself.

First, those who enter into covenant cannot consent to the terms of that covenant unless they are *informed* as to its promises, stipulations, and attending sanctions.^{[18](#)} Even as the Lord informed his people when he entered into covenant with them, so too the local church must inform its prospective members of the tenets of the faith and the practices of the local church in order that they may give their informed consent to be joined in membership. For this reason, the church must provide some form of instruction. Therefore, the first step we require prospective members to take is *to attend the membership class that our church provides*.^{[19](#)}

True love informs and calls for knowledgeable consent. Thus, the subsequent lessons in membership class ought to adequately inform new members as to the doctrine and life of the church that may be distinctive to them. We do not want them, after they have become members, to be surprised by either our doctrine or life. We want to treat them as we ourselves would want to be treated. So from the first time a person is introduced to our church, there is not only an emphasis on peacemaking but also on speaking the truth in love, both of which are just an expanded way of speaking and preaching the gospel.

Second, just as those who enter covenant must bind themselves in covenant, so too must prospective members bind themselves to the church. One of the ways they bind themselves is by giving their informed consent to the appropriate church leaders—the leaders appointed to exercise the keys of the kingdom for the church. By giving their informed consent, prospective members acknowledge that their failure to keep these covenant promises may incur the judicial action of the church leadership to discipline or even remove them from membership. Thus the character of their informed consent obliges that it be *witnessed* (as a public and legal action), *formal* (so as not to be entered into lightly but with all sobriety), *standardized* (so as not to be handled differently with different members on an arbitrary basis), and *recorded* (for the better preserving and establishing of the agreement). For this reason, the church must provide a procedure of inclusion. Therefore, the second step we require of prospective members is *to verbally express and sign in writing their acknowledgment of the terms of covenant membership during an interview conducted by our elders.*

Another way prospective members bind themselves in covenant is by giving their informed consent to the larger church body. For this reason the church must provide a public membership ceremony. Therefore, the third step we require of prospective members is *to partake in this membership ceremony, wherein they take their vows before the church,* and, correspondingly, the entire church receives them.

In summary, peacemaking assumes church membership. Peacemaking needs church membership because we cannot learn to live in unity by living individually. Rather, we must voluntarily place ourselves in community with and in submission to the one body of Christ. Furthermore, Scripture implies church membership, showing that members are identified by several tangible and defining factors. Finally, the nature of covenant-making directs the process of church membership, calling for the church to inform prospective members of its life and doctrine and calling for prospective members in turn to give their informed consent to be joined to the body.

Practical Peacemaking: A Case Study

Many have questioned whether peacemaking really works. Will it really benefit my church? I can attest that it does. But let me answer with an anecdote from my own pastoral experience. The sharp edge of conflict could have destroyed our church so easily when we were faced with the decision as to whether we would receive into membership a convicted child molester. I will call him John.

After being called as pastor to Rocky Mountain Community Church (RMCC) in 1992, I learned about John over a period of five years through the reports and stories my elders shared. John, I was told, had been invited to RMCC by Karen, a member of our church. Karen was aware that John was despairing and troubled. His wife recently had been unfaithful to him and left him for another man. So she invited him to come to worship and hear the Good News of Jesus Christ. John came, and shortly thereafter, he confessed Christ as his Lord and Savior.

Then the church learned that John had turned himself in for sexual misconduct with a neighbor's child. By this time, the church was certain of the sincerity of John's conversion. Furthermore, he had convinced us that he had committed his crime in a drunken stupor, that it was a one-time event, and that this child was his only victim. (All the above were true, except for the last one. John had abused another child but had not told us.)

Armed with that knowledge, many of our elders and church members showed up in force before the local judge to vouch for John's changed character. The judge was convinced and did not press charges against John. But very soon after his court appearance, a local school counselor heard from John's daughter that he had molested her also. Based on this information, John was arrested and sentenced to five years in prison and five years of probation.

While John was in prison, several elders of the church wrote to him and counseled him, calling him to repent and believe in the Lord. It was only after spending one and a half years in prison that God used these letters to help John fully own his crime and repent of his sin. Up to that point, he blamed others for his imprisonment.

All these events happened before I was called to serve as the pastor of RMCC. When I came to RMCC, we began to send John my sermons on tape, and things appeared to be going well for him. Every so often the church would pray during public services for John to endure patiently the

hardships of prison life, to learn the lessons God was teaching him, and to wait patiently for the day of his release.

That day was fast approaching. As I look back, I see now that I was partly in denial and partly grossly ignorant of what his release would mean. It was about four months before his January 1997 release when things began to erupt. During one Sunday morning worship service in September 1996, the church leaders prayed for John's impending release and mentioned to our people the possibility of his return to Billings and his expressed desire to join our church. The entire church woke up that Sunday. Phones started ringing right after the service, and people called me for "counseling"—not to receive it but to give it. It was me they wanted to counsel.

Before long, two distinct kinds of responses arose in the church. On the one hand, there were those who threatened to leave. You can appreciate their reason: "We're not interested in a church that is not willing to protect our little girls." Neither was I. Up to this point, our elders had given our congregation few specifics as to what our reception of John would look like, so our people had reason to fear. I feared too. My own daughters were still young at the time, and I myself was having second thoughts about the wisdom of letting a convicted child molester into our church, much less into our lives.

Fear was not the only response. On the other hand, there were those who argued that since the gospel is a gospel of forgiveness and peace, we should open our arms to John and accept him as Christ had accepted us—*no strings attached*. I appreciated their reasons, suffering pangs of conscience when I thought of not accepting John into membership. What would we be saying about the power and wisdom of the gospel of Jesus Christ if we failed to receive this child molester as a "brother in Christ"? Could we really say, "The gospel is not for you. It's only for the 'not-as-bad-as-you' kind of people"?

Christ's very name and purpose would be at stake if we did not receive him. But it seemed we would be exposing our children to the potential of being violated if we did.

Neither of these positions was totally persuasive to us elders, yet both had to be addressed if our church was not to split apart. In order to navigate our way through this maze of conflicting desires, we studied God's Word and used the PAUSE Principle of Negotiation.[20](#)

First, we wanted to *prepare*. I remember going to the Department of Corrections and asking them to help us. John's probation officer informed us of the nature of John's probation and the stipulations required for his release. Interestingly, we found out later through the grapevine that they had never before had a church ask for help from their office.

We learned from John the exact time of his release. We also spent time hammering out the biblical principles on which we would take our stand. As we began to reevaluate the issue in light of these principles, we came to see it more clearly as an age-old issue: *How does sanctification relate to justification in the life of the church and in the acceptance and governance of her members?*

Second, we wanted to *affirm relationships* and emphasize our common love, cause, and purpose (Phil. 2:1–4). Our elders called for two special congregational meetings. At these meetings we sought to help our people work together (rather than against one another) in solving this problem by emphasizing our relationship in Christ. We reminded them over and over again that we are brothers, not enemies. Furthermore, we invited them to air their opinions, fears, concerns, and questions in brotherly disagreement. We wanted all to have the opportunity to speak and all to know they were being heard.

These meetings also gave us the opportunity to present to our people the theological basis for receiving John back into our church and eventually into membership. We explained to both sides the biblical relationship between justification and sanctification and how it applied to this issue. Thus we first affirmed those who wanted to receive John into membership on the basis of God's grace, showing that to refuse to accept him was tantamount to denying him the gospel of justification—the pardon for sin and righteousness of Christ that come by faith to *all* who believe. However, we also affirmed those who feared the consequences of allowing a child molester on the premises, acknowledging that gospel love does not eliminate gospel wisdom. We explained that if John was a true believer, then he was not only justified but he was also *being* sanctified. As a sanctified believer, John would be under Christ's lordship through the watchful oversight and discipline of the elders and would be willing to submit to our counsel and heed our correction.

Third, we sought to *understand interests*—God's and our own. In this situation, the issue was, *Should we receive into membership a convicted*

child molester? The positions were, *Yes, we should*, and, *No, we should not*. Of course focusing on issues and positions alone got us nowhere. But as we sought to understand interests, we began to look at the matters of the heart, including our desires, expectations, fears, and goals. We also identified common as well as differing interests, which provided us the opportunity to encourage our people to look out for each other's interests. One of the interests shared by many was that John be held responsible for lying to the church and violating our trust prior to his imprisonment. So we determined to see this incident addressed as part of his accountability plan. Throughout the larger process of seeking to understand interests, we came to agree on the biblical directives that should guide us as well as a plan for moving forward.

Finally, we tried to *search for creative solutions* and *evaluate our options* objectively and reasonably. There were several problems we had to resolve. Even though we had agreed on the theological issue of how justification and sanctification applied in this case, we still had to address the wisdom issue of how best to respond to John. After seeking to assess our options and choose the best solutions, we agreed to accept John into membership contingent upon the following conditions intended to promote his holiness, the safety of our children, and our growth together as the body of Christ.

Public Confession

First, if John were to return to our church, he would need to confess publicly to the congregation his sin of deceiving us prior to his incarceration. Many in the congregation still felt betrayed by his deception and for true reconciliation to take place, John had to confess his sin to the congregation. We understood the need to keep this confession "general" so as not to stir fear in the hearts of the children who were present. Yet on the other hand, it had to be specific enough so that our adults would know what he was confessing.

Oversight

Second, we told our congregation that the elders, deacons, and I would provide John with spiritual oversight. Specifically, I agreed to meet weekly

with John for counseling during his entire time of probation (five years).²¹ I asked John to allow full disclosure of all matters pertaining to his sin. Agreement was made between myself, John's sexual abuse counselor, and his probation officer to exchange all pertinent information to help John break a cycle of lying and concealing facts. One of the key factors in our oversight of John was full disclosure of his sexual sin to the entire leadership and membership. One of the key documents to hold all of us accountable to this was the Covenant Commitment.

Covenant Commitment

Third, we promised our congregation that we immediately would ask John to sign a "covenant agreement" with us stipulating the nature of our relationship with him and our expectations of him. We drafted this agreement with the help of John's probation officer (especially with respect to the terms of his parole) and his sex offender treatment counselor. More importantly, we based it on biblical wisdom.

This covenant agreement helped John as a convicted sex offender to know what we expected of him and what he could expect of us. It also served to assure our congregation that this man would be held accountable in an ongoing manner.

What this commitment consisted of besides John having to commit to our oversight and regular attendance in worship, included the following:

1. To honor the terms of John's parole and protect him from false accusations, John will scrupulously avoid having any contact with a minor child without the immediate presence of another adult. He will remain in the continual presence of adults during all church activities and whenever children are present. He will not be directly involved in any ministry involving minors.
2. Moreover, in keeping with the court order dated January 1, 2002, as issued by Judge Smith [not the judge's real name]:
 - a. John will not use or possess pornography, erotica, X-rated materials, videos, adult books that promote sexual immorality of any kind, particularly incest. Neither will John frequent any establishment where such materials are a chief item of sale or enter any adult book stores, topless bars, or massage parlors.

- b. Nor will John have any contact whatsoever with his victim(s) and/or their families by any means or in any manner: in person, by telephone, through writing, by email, by regular mail, or through a third party. John must also stay at least 1,500 feet away from the victims and their families for the duration of his sentence.
 - c. John will comply with all other conditions²² imposed by the court or his treatment program as presently administered under the care of Counselor Jones [not the counselor's real name] of the Christian Counseling Center's sex offender treatment program.
3. John may, at his own discretion, enjoy fellowship with families in the church who do not have minor children. He will not accept invitations for fellowship with families with minor children until he has met the following requirements:
- a. First, he must make sure that an elder has talked with the parents to inform them of John's limitations and how to properly minister to him.
 - b. Second, he must notify his Counselor of his intentions to fellowship with that family and his whereabouts during that time. This can be done simply by way of leaving a message at his Counselor's answering service.
4. John authorizes the elders to inform current and future friends and members of the church about his past and to describe his current walk with the Lord.
5. John authorizes his parole officer, professional counselor, the pastoral staff, and elders of this church to talk openly and candidly with one another and to disclose to one another any and all information, insights, or concerns they have regarding John.

I remember one day speaking with a couple who, upon learning about John, began to consider leaving our church. I asked them, "Where would you go?" They mentioned a well-known church in town. I then asked, "Do you know who the child molesters are in that congregation?" They looked a bit flustered by my question and realized they did not.

I then appealed to them by explaining why the safest church was ours. They were confident that we as a church were committed to peacemaking and church discipline. Furthermore, they knew that our elders had not hidden from the congregation information about John. And most important,

they heard in the covenant agreement exactly what measures we would take to guard John against reverting back to his sexual sins.

After further discussion, they looked at each other and the husband said to me, “Well, I guess we will stay after all. This is a safe church. We do know that you elders care for us and are willing to make the hard calls.”

In addition to serving our own church, the covenant agreement proved useful to others in our community. Our local Prison Fellowship ministry requested to modify and use it for their ex-prisoners. And God used it in the lives of both the probation officer and the sex offender treatment counselor to demonstrate to them the power of his grace and the wisdom of his Word. They were amazed any church would get this involved in a sex offender’s life.

Explanation to the Public

Fourth, we drafted a letter to send to our members and friends titled “Why Would We Invite a Convicted Criminal into Our Church?” It was a simple explanation intended for the widest public use. Hence, we neither cited various Scripture proof texts nor explained the theological basis for our attitudes and actions. This document proved helpful for convincing the reluctant to accept such a man into our midst. It reads as follows:

Why Would We Invite a Convicted Criminal into Our Church? An Open Letter from Your Elders to the Members and Friends of Rocky Mountain Community Church

Most child molesters have a difficult time overcoming their destructive habits. If someone does not help them to change, they are likely to hurt other children. In other words, if we in the church shun such people, we are actually increasing the odds that other children will eventually be harmed.

We see this as an opportunity to break the destructive cycle in at least one man’s life and to increase the likelihood that he will never hurt another child. We believe that the best way to do this is to offer him genuine friendship, provide him with meaningful accountability, and help him to change the destructive attitudes and habits that led to his prior offenses.

We enter this relationship with our eyes wide open. We recognize and grieve over the seriousness of his previous crimes, and we know that there is a risk that he will offend again.

Yet we are hopeful. We have seen the power that Jesus Christ has to deliver people from their sins and transform their lives beyond recognition. We have experienced that forgiveness and change in our own lives, and we pray that Jesus will use us to help this man find similar freedom. As you can see, the emphasis is, “We’d rather help this man, so that he doesn’t offend again, than do nothing and see other children get hurt.”[23](#)

Challenge to Our People to Be Christ’s Church

Finally, we challenged our people to see that our Lord was giving us a precious opportunity to witness to his goodness, wisdom, grace, and power to change lives. Many in the church responded enthusiastically to our challenge. Some invited John over to dinner (giving the necessary notices and taking the necessary precautions). Others invited him to join them for family outings. And several encouraged him to attend our annual family camp. All of these experiences incorporated John into body life and helped him see what it means for both husbands and wives and fathers and daughters to relate to one another.

Furthermore, a local Christian businessman had a job waiting for John when he was released from prison. A couple of years later one of my elders hired John—because John was qualified. As an employer, this man willingly agreed to have the probation officer and sex offender counselor inspect his business site to make sure it was a safe place for young female employees to work alongside John.

One evidence of God’s great grace was when an elderly Christian couple, whose grown children attend our church, found out about John’s housing needs. They graciously took John in as a renter of their downstairs apartment and proved to be much more than just landlords. They were like a father and mother to John—baking him goodies, encouraging him, and seeking his help to watch their dog and care for their house. My point in sharing all these examples is that reconciliation takes a church, and in our case, the church universal.

The Heart of the Conflict and the Greatness of God

The biggest trial for me was yet to come. Once John had been admitted to our church, had publicly confessed his sin to us, and had signed his covenant agreement with us, I visited his probation officer to seek his advice and counsel. He told me that it would be necessary for us to inform all our new members of John's offense during the tenure of John's probation—that is, for the next five years!

You can imagine the look on my face when I realized that for the next five years, during the course of our annual membership class, I would have to tell all the prospective members that we have a convicted child molester in our congregation. That would really make them want to join our church! I remember complaining to God, "How can I grow the church if I have to tell new members of our special member?" I feared I would see my ministry dry up and wither right before my eyes.

Though I believe intellectually that conflict provides opportunities to glorify God, to serve others, and to grow to be like Christ, at that moment I believed none of these truths in my heart. Instead, I began to view this conflict as a curse, as an obstacle to my ministry, as a very bad accident. Truth be told, I became rather godless.

It was while reading the letter of James that the Spirit began changing my heart, helping me to consecrate this conflict rather than curse it (James 1:2–5). I began to see how God has sovereignly placed it in my life to give me the opportunity to magnify the greatness of his wisdom, power, and mercy. And he had sovereignly placed it in the life of my church to turn us from fear to faith, to grow us in wisdom, and to show us that when we are weak, he is strong (James 3:18–4:12).

God is so good! What at first appeared to be a great evil turned out to be the *high point* every year in our membership class. After presenting the biblical teaching on the gospel, peacemaking, and church discipline, I would introduce the story of John, sharing how God had mercifully guided us through the process of receiving a sex offender as a brother in Christ.

By the time I had finished speaking, many eyes glistened with gospel tears. It was then that I would have John step out of the group and introduce himself in person. At that point, tears were streaming down people's cheeks. Here was no abstract message on peacemaking, but walking, living proof of God's gospel of peace.

John would wonderfully and graciously invite them to ask any questions. Typically, the people were dumbfounded. There was not a whole lot to say. Sometimes, though, a few would ask how he was doing. And he would tell them about sharing meals and going to local games with some of our families and about attending our church family camp. His life was a picture of one growing each day in grace, and his face was the face of a man finally at peace with God and others.

Making Changes to Address the Need

One lesson we learned the hard way was that our oversight plan was not thorough enough. We had overlooked the obvious and learned the need for impromptu house checks when, about a year and a half into John's probation, we received a call from his boss. He informed me that John's probation officer had taken him from his workplace and demanded to search his house. The search produced several books on incest as well as pornographic magazines.

For this breach of his parole, John was incarcerated and tried. I made several visits to him in the local county jail and used this time to help him trace the steps leading to his fall into pornography. At his trial, the court placed more strictures on John, including the requirement to enter a sex offender treatment program. After his release, John appeared before the church court (which consists of our elders) and confessed his sin using the Seven A's of Confession.

John's confession prompted us elders to ask ourselves how we could better care for him. Knowing that the life of addiction is one of deceit and fantasy, we wanted to be certain that John was not reading or looking at pornographic material. So we drafted a house check agreement that would allow us to periodically and spontaneously enter John's house and search for any contraband material. The pertinent section of the Covenant read as follows:

John willingly agrees to give permission to any of the pastoral staff, elders, and deacons to make spot checks on his home in order to hold him accountable to the terms of this covenant. These checks will seek to determine whether John is keeping his home clean and orderly and whether or not he is in possession of prohibited materials as specified above in this covenant.

With this revised plan in place, John's change with respect to his habit of sexual sin became evident day-by-day, month-by-month. One of the clear evidences of his change was that John stopped blame-shifting and began more and more to take responsibility for his own choices, sin, and crime. At the appropriate time, and under the counsel and direction of his sexual abuse counselor, probation officer, and myself, he reconciled with his daughter, who lived out-of-state. A similar attempt was also made to reconcile with his neighbor and her daughter, though to no avail.

Celebration and Thanksgiving

On January 27, 2002, our church held a special congregational meeting to honor John for successfully completing his probation and sex offender treatment as well as to honor a few of the most prominent people in his life who helped him—his counselor, his landlord, and his employers. It was a great day and a great time of celebrating and giving thanks. It reminded me of the passage in 1 Corinthians 6:9–11:

Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Finally, though my story has made John appear somewhat passive, he was anything but passive. None of the requirements we placed on John would have turned out for the good had the Lord not mightily converted him. John humbled himself again and again, getting the log out of his eye, confessing his faults, and working very diligently to comply with an immense amount of practical work with respect to his sanctification.

He memorized Philippians with me, and then, on his own initiative, he went on to memorize James. He dealt with anger, loneliness, frustrations at work, and personal care issues, and he willingly shared the most intimate details of his life.

John's willingness to submit to our agreements, to submit to the counsel of his secular and church advisors, and to introduce himself every year to our prospective members are much of the reason why he succeeded. He turned first to God, humbling himself in God's sight, and God gave him much grace. No wonder he is a man we love. He is our brother in Christ!

Conclusion

Does peacemaking work? Does it really benefit a church? John's story is my answer. Peacemaking works because Christ is alive, and he is our peace. He makes us to be at peace; he forgives all our sin; he restores our souls; he purifies our hearts; he replaces old sinful habits with holy habits; and he makes us a people, his people, his sons and daughters. What does it take to make peacemaking work? It takes the *doctrine* and *discipline* of peacemaking. These must direct us as we aim to lead our churches in becoming peacemaking churches.

Specifically, we must strive for the regular preaching, teaching, and ministry of the Word, the practice of humility, the continual turning to the gospel, and the frequent confession of sin received with the equally frequent response of forgiveness. And as church leaders, we must seek to exercise patience, kindness, restraint, and discipline toward those who oppose us. These doctrines and disciplines of grace are what make disciples of peace.

We live in an age that rejects both doctrine and discipline. It seeks to achieve peace through other means—means that have shown themselves to be most evident failures. We live in an age when people do not like fences. But it is fences we need—not the fences of Pharisees but the boundaries of God's law and gospel. In his book *Orthodoxy*, G. K. Chesterton reminds us of the value of such fences:

Doctrine and discipline may be walls; but they are walls of a playground. . . . We might fancy some children playing on the flat grassy top of some tall island in the sea. So long as there was a wall round the cliff's edge they could fling themselves into every frantic game and make the place the noisiest of nurseries. But the walls were knocked down, leaving the naked peril of the precipice. They did not fall over; but when their friends returned to them, they were all huddled in terror in the centre of the island; and their song had ceased.[24](#)

In the same way, the regular use of the ordinary means of grace along with the specific policies and practices of peacemaking are the very things that make for a peacemaking church. Like the rules of a game and the lines drawn on the field, so too, the doctrine and discipline of peacemaking make for great play!

Change, lasting change, often happens incrementally. God transforms our lives one step at a time, one breath at a time. So it is with becoming a peacemaking church. Implementing peacemaking principles and practices is less about instituting specific seminars and programs than it is about continually preaching, counseling, and living the gospel of peace. There is nothing magical about peacemaking other than the “magic” of the gospel itself. God has already given us the ordinary means of grace that work in extraordinary ways to create, shape, and transform sinners into the sons of God.

NOTES

Introduction

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2 . Dean R. Hoge and Jacqueline E. Wenger, *Pastors in Transition: Why Clergy Leave Local Church Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 39.

3 . John C. LaRue Jr., "Profile of Today's Pastor: Ministry Preparation," *Your Church*, March/April 1995, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/cbg/features/report/5y2056.html> (accessed March 15, 2006).

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8 . Glenn Taylor and Rod Wilson, *Helping Angry People* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997).

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Chapter 1: Hope for a Heretic

1 . C. FitzSimons Allison, *The Cruelty of Heresy: An Affirmation of Christian Orthodoxy* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 1994), 23.

2 . John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, ed. John T. McNeill (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 1:108.

3 . T. S. Eliot, "Burnt Norton," in *Four Quartets* (New York: Harvest/HBJ Book, 1943, 1971), 14.

4 . Robert Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 536.

5 . R. S. Thomas, *Poems of R. S. Thomas* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 1985), 60–61.

Chapter 2: The Paths of Conflict

1 . Sande, *The Peacemaker*, 29.

2 . For other passages where the disciples are prone to wonder who is the greatest, and for Jesus's response to such quests for power, see Matt. 23:11–12; Mark 9:34–35.

3 . Jeffrey J. Ventrella, "When Preference Becomes Precept," *New Horizons*, May 1999, http://www.opc.org/new_horizons/NH99/NH9905d.html (accessed February 12, 2005).

4 . Sande, *The Peacemaker*, 259–61.

5 . Ibid., 22. Ken Sande is president of Peacemaker Ministries (www.hispeace.org). Peacemaker Ministries' purpose is to equip and assist Christians and their churches to respond to conflict biblically. Peacemaker Ministries provide a great array of Christ-centered, gospel-driven resources for pastors, church leaders, and local churches to recover the lost ministry of reconciliation.

6 . Ibid., 24.

7 . Suicide can also be a way of attacking another person. The person attempting suicide does so in order to get back at the person(s) with whom he or she is in conflict. Expressions such as "I hope you're happy now" and "See what you've led me to do" are the language of attack for some who choose suicide.

8 . #1–[Teenage-Suicide.com](http://www.1-teenage-suicide.com): *Prevention and Treatment for Teenage Depression*, <http://www.1-teenage-suicide.com> (accessed May 1, 2002).

9 . Sande, *The Peacemaker*, 24.

10 . Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1973), 21.

11 . Adapted from Sande, *The Peacemaker*, 22.

12 . Christopher W. Moore, *The Mediation Process: Practical Strategies for Resolving Conflict* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1986), 14.

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1 . Barna Research Group, "Family: Divorce (2001)," Research Archive, <http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=Topic&TopicID=20> (accessed March 15, 2006).

2 . Everett L. Worthington Jr. and Douglas McMurry, *Marriage Conflicts* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 39.

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5 . Maslow says, "What makes people neurotic? My answer . . . was, in brief, that neurosis seemed at its core, and in its beginning, to be a deficiency disease: that it was born out of being deprived of certain satisfactions which I called needs in the same sense that water and amino acids

and calcium are needs, namely that their absence produces illness. Most neuroses involved . . . ungratified wishes for safety, for belongingness and identification, for close relationships and for respect and prestige.” Abraham Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being*, 2nd ed. (New York: Van Nostrand, 1968), 21.

[6](#) . For a secular critique of need theory, see Philip Cushman, “Why the Self Is Empty: Towards a Historically Situated Psychology,” *American Psychologist* (May 1990): 599–611.

[7](#) . See Edward T. Welch, “Who Are We? Needs, Longings, and the Image of God in Man,” *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 13, no. 1 (1994): 25–38.

[8](#) . See Alfred Poirier, “Revival in the Church,” *Equip Magazine* 2, no. 6 (November/December 1996): 7–9.

[9](#) . Scripture has many stories to this effect, but see 1 Kings 21 for one vivid illustration of this dynamic in the life of Ahab, the king of Israel, when he does not get what he wants from Naboth the Jezreelite. See also 1 Samuel 25 where David reaches for his sword to murder Nabal and his men when they refuse to give David what he wants.

[10](#) . Calvin speaks here of having inordinate desires. See his comments under James 1:13. John Calvin, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, trans. John W. Fraser, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960).

[11](#) . The theme of “idolatry as adultery” is prevalent in the Old Testament. For example, in Ezekiel 23:37 the Lord says of Israel, “They committed adultery with their idols.” And the prophecy of Hosea begins, “Go, take to yourself an adulterous wife . . . because the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the Lord” (Hosea 1:2).

[12](#) . J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (1923; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 47–48. Citations are from the 1981 edition.

[13](#) . Jack Miller in personal conversation. The late Jack Miller was pastor of New Life Presbyterian Church and founder of World Harvest ministry. His legacy continues through the work of World Harvest Missions and especially their Sonship discipleship materials.

[14](#) . This is an allusion to Augustine’s famous quote about God’s grace: “Give what you command and command what you will.” This is the quote that provoked Pelagius to controversy and resulted in Augustine’s great expositions on the nature of saving grace. See Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), book 10.29, 10.31, 10.37; pages 202, 206, 214, respectively.

[15](#) . J. A. Moyter, *The Message of James* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1985), 150.

[16](#) . Such “helps” make up the lion’s share of counsel in conflict resolution. Matters of the heart as well as the God-directedness of the heart surprisingly are omitted. This is not to say, however, that learning how to use one’s tongue in a godly fashion is unnecessary. James 3 and Proverbs both give instruction as to how to use our tongues to edify others.

Chapter 4: God’s Glory in Conflict

- [1](#) . Of course, this is exactly what our response should be according to James 1:2.
- [2](#) . Many of the ancient cosmologies begin with a big bang—gods fighting with gods, and from the aftermath of their wars, the world is created.
- [3](#) . For excellent expositions on the doctrine of the Trinity, see Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Protestant and Reformed, 2004); Millard J. Erickson, *God in Three Persons: A Contemporary Interpretation of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995).
- [4](#) . Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology*, 536 (italics added).
- [5](#) . One cannot help but see the language of “grace and peace” in the Aaronic blessing and wonder if Paul’s own salutation is but a variation of this priestly blessing.
- [6](#) . The New Testament is replete with references to the new peace that is the result of Christ’s redemptive work (e.g., Rom. 5:1; Eph. 2:13–15; Heb. 13:20–21).
- [7](#) . In his article on the Hebrew word *ykh*, John E. Hartley argues that as a verb *ykh* is synonymous with *ryb*, and means “to contend or to initiate a lawsuit.” But here, it means “to arbitrate, judge, or rule.” Hartley cites Isaiah 2:4 as an example: “In the last days, Yahweh will rule over an era of global peace, for he will judiciously arbitrate disputes among all peoples.” See John E. Hartley, “xky (*ykh*),” in *New International Dictionary of the Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, vol. 2, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 441–45.
- [8](#) . E. F. Harrison, “Glory,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 443.
- [9](#) . Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), 557.
- [10](#) . The word *stiff-necked* serves as a dramatic motif in this narrative. It heightens the question as to whether the Holy God can live among this rebellious people (see Exod. 32:9; 33:3, 5; 34:9).
- [11](#) . Stated both negatively (“he does not acquit”) and positively (“he punishes”).
- [12](#) . See Thomas Manton, who says, “but the main of his name is ‘his mercy and goodness.’” From Thomas Manton, *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton*, vol. 9 (London: James Nisbet and Co., 1872), 465. See also Romans 9:18–24 for further proof that God’s justice or wrath serves the greater display of his mercy. John Piper, *The Justification of God: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Romans 9:1–23*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993).
- [13](#) . According to S. R. Driver, “The character of the people of Israel is here made the motive for being treated with favour and forgiven.” S. R. Driver, *The Book of Exodus: In the Revised Version with Introduction and Notes* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 367. See also John Piper’s discussion in Piper, *Justification of God*, 81 and n. 8.
- [14](#) . As argued above, Exodus 33:18–34:7 is one of the most significant theological passages in the Old Testament, as it is the first extended self-description by God of himself. Its significance is proved in part by how frequently it is appealed to throughout the rest of Scripture (see Num. 14:18; 2

Chron. 30:9; Neh. 9:17; Pss. 86:5, 15; 103:8; 111:4; 116:5; 145:8; Jer. 9:23–24; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2; Micah 6:8; 7:18–19; Nah.1:3).

[15](#) . It is a new day because it is the eschatological day of the Lord. Jeremiah 31:31 begins by announcing what God will do in the “days that are coming.” While God’s promises of forgiveness and of being Israel’s God are old promises, the *newness* of the new promises will be their effectiveness—an effectiveness that is a direct result of the eschatological event, Christ’s coming in the flesh.

[16](#) . So Carson, Köstenberger, and Ridderbos affirm in their commentaries. Yet as Ridderbos notes, “Though most interpreters acknowledge the connection with Exodus 33 and 34 at least in regard to the expression ‘grace and truth,’ only a few explore this link more deeply.” Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 57. See D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 129, and Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 45.

Chapter 5: Peacemaking in the Family of God

[1](#) . I would like to thank Professor Allen Mawhinney for suggesting this image. Sonship is the biblical doctrine of God’s relationship to his covenant people as Father and us as his adopted sons. Dr. Mawhinney is one of the few contemporary theologians who has sought to make up for the lacuna in theological studies on the subject of biblical sonship. See, for example, “Baptism, Servanthood, and Sonship,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 49, no. 1 (Spring 1987): 35–64. Also see Sinclair Ferguson, *Children of the Living God* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1987).

[2](#) . I cannot trace the precise source of the quotes attributed to Russell and Twain. The French and German proverbs are found in *The International Thesaurus of Quotations*, comp. Rhoda Thomas Tripp (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1970), 82.

[3](#) . John Murray, the late professor of systematic theology at Westminster Theological Seminary, calls adoption “the apex of grace and privilege.” See John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 134.

[4](#) . J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1973), 182.

[5](#) . See also Colossians 3:1–17 where Paul unites peacemaking with “new creation” language.

[6](#) . While the word *son* is not found in Genesis 1:27, we find that it is implied in the concepts of “likeness” and “image.” Genesis 5:1–3 and Luke 3:38 both make this dynamic explicit. Adam is God’s *son*.

[7](#) . This “new man” theology underlies Paul’s understanding of Christ (see Rom. 5:12–19; 1 Cor. 15:45–49; 2 Cor. 4:1–16; 5:17; Col. 3:1–17).

[8](#) . Paul makes this connection explicit in Romans 13:14 when he tells us to *clothe* ourselves with *Jesus Christ*.

[9](#) . Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 331.

[10](#) . We should not miss how even this last verse (Eph. 4:32) mirrors the character of God found in our study of Exodus 34:6–7. This connection only strengthens our contention that God’s glory is the revelation of his mercy to undeserving sinners. God’s glory is forgiving his enemies and being reconciled with them.

[11](#) . God as “Father” is found only about 15 times in the Old Testament, but 245 times in the New Testament (which is only a tenth of the size of the Old).

[12](#) . See Packer, *Knowing God*, 181–208.

[13](#) . D. A. Carson provides an excellent discussion of this difference between exegetical and systematic domains of discourse (which often leads to theological conflict) in D. A. Carson, “The Vindication of Imputation: On Fields of Discourse and Semantic Fields,” in *Justification: What’s at Stake in the Current Debates*, ed. Mark Husband and Daniel J. Trier (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 46–78.

[14](#) . Robert Banks, *Paul’s Idea of Community: The Early House Churches in Their Historical Setting*, rev. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 49. Banks, I believe, overstates himself when he speaks of this image of the church as God’s family as the *essence* of Paul’s thinking on the church. Paul adopts several models or pictures of the church. However, I would not suggest that all of these images are equally valuable. Unlike other images, such as the body of Christ, the image of family of God/sonship is of a fundamental biblical and theological nature undergirding both the *historia* and *ordo salutis*.

[15](#) . Paul S. Minear, *Image of the Church in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 172.

[16](#) . The term *oikos* is used in 1 Tim. 3:15; elsewhere *oikeios* is used (see Gal. 6:10; Eph. 2:19).

[17](#) . We must not misconstrue Jesus’s point as supportive of a works-righteousness view of salvation. Rather, Christ merely points out that we know true believers by their fruit. Believers demonstrate true belief by forgiving others.

[18](#) . See more on confidentiality in chapter 12, “Church Discipline Practices.”

[19](#) . John Owen, *Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1965), 36.

Chapter 6: Confessing Our Sins to Another

[1](#) . Consider Pharaoh, who continued to oppress God’s people (Exod. 9:27); Balaam, who continued to seek Israel’s destruction (Num. 22:34); Achan, who hid the idols instead of destroying them (Josh. 7:20); Saul, whom the Lord rejected as king (1 Sam. 15:23); and Judas, who hanged himself (Matt. 27:3–4).

[2](#) . Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q.A. 87 in *Westminster Confession of Faith: Together with the Larger Catechism and the Shorter Catechism with the Scripture Proofs*, 3rd ed. (Atlanta: Committee for Christian Education and Publication, 1990), 27.

[3](#) . The grammatical difficulty is the phrase “you, loyal yokefellow.” The forms are singular. But, if singular, who then is *gnesie syzyge*? Is this someone in the congregation? Epaphroditus? Moisés

Silva comments: “On the basis of our limited information, the most reasonable interpretation is that the appellative is in effect Paul’s way of inviting the various members of the church to prove themselves loyal partners in the world of the gospel. (On Paul’s use of the second person singular to address the recipients of the letter, cf. Rom. 2:1, 17; 8:2; 9:20; 11:17ff; 1 Cor. 14:17; 15:36; Gal. 6:1. Most of these instances, however, are negative in tone.)” Moisés Silva, *Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 222.

4 . Sande, *The Peacemaker*, 126–34. The more serious the offense, the more necessary it is to make full and detailed confession.

5 . To apologize means to acknowledge one’s regret for wrongdoing. I subsume this act under admitting specifically because there is sufficient overlap in these two to present them as one. The idea is to express regret about *some specific thing*—not some amorphous, abstract “fault.” Equally, we do not simply admit a list of specific items; we express emotional and moral regret for having done them.

6 . Former Senator Robert Packwood, as reported by the Associated Press, “Oregon Senator Accused of Many Sexual Advances,” *Billings Gazette*, December 11, 1992.

7 . I am not at all suggesting that confession can only be true if one confesses every specific sin. In that case, none of us could render a complete confession. Rather, I am seeking to counter the common error people make by confessing only very generally that they have sinned and done wrong.

8 . Passages rich and explicit in gospel promises of forgiveness or salvation pervade Scripture. Some I commonly use are Exod. 33:18–34:7; Ps. 103:8–13; Jer. 31:34; Ezek. 18:30–32; Rom. 3:9–26; 5:1–11; 8:1; 2 Peter 3:9.

9 . Internal letter written to David Edling of Peacemaker Ministries. Used with permission.

10 . From the *Book of Common Prayer* (New York: Seabury Press, 1953), 6.

Chapter 7: Granting True Forgiveness

1 . For example, Leviticus 4:1–6:7 speaks of unintentional and intentional sins, sins of omission, and willful sins. See Westminster Larger Catechism, Q.A. 150–51 in *Westminster Confession of Faith*, 109.

2 . See my booklet, Alfred J. Poirier, *Words that Cut: Learning to Take Criticism in Light of the Gospel* (Billings, MT: Peacemaker Ministries, 2003).

3 . Calvin understands “glories” to refer to civic or ecclesiastical authorities. In contrast, other translators see Jude’s reference to “glories” as referring to angelic beings. Either way, the strength of Jude’s disapprobation arises from the fact that the wicked reject those of eminency and authority.

4 . See Westminster Larger Catechism, Q.A. 151, 3 in *Westminster Confession of Faith*, 112.

5 . Burghard Siede, “Take, Receive,” in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 3, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 750. The *pro* acts as an intensifier of the verb.

[6](#) . See Gary Thomas, “The Forgiveness Factor: Social Scientists Discover the Power of a Christian Virtue,” *Christianity Today* 41, no. 1 (January 10, 2000): 38–45.

[7](#) . See my article on contemporary Christian integrationist views on forgiveness in Alfred J. Poirier, “Taking up the Challenge,” *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 18, no. 1 (Fall 1999): 30–37. To see how the “therapeutic” worldview has pervaded our culture, see Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith after Freud* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966, 1987).

[8](#) . See L. Gregory Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness: A Theological Analysis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), for his extended discussion of these two general trends.

[9](#) . “Weakness is being lied into something meritorious . . . an impotence which does not require into goodness of heart; anxious lowliness into humility; subjection to those one hates into ‘obedience’ . . . inability for revenge is called unwillingness to revenge, perhaps even forgiveness.” In Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, *Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (1967; repr., New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 1st essay, sec. 14, 47. This volume contains both titles by Nietzsche. See also Simon Wiesenthal, *The Sunflower* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976). Wiesenthal relates a story in which a Nazi begs forgiveness from a Jewish prisoner for crimes committed against the Jewish people. The Jew finally leaves the man in the misery of his guilt and thereby leaves the reader with the question: would I, should I, have forgiven the man? Accompanying this story are responses by thirty-two of the world’s great theologians, ethicists, and philosophers each trying to answer the question Wiesenthal poses.

[10](#) . Lewis Smedes, *Forgive and Forget: Healing the Hurts We Don’t Deserve* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1984; San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1996), 133. Page citations are from the 1996 edition. In another definition of forgiveness, note the result clause: “Forgiveness is overcoming negative thoughts, feelings and behaviors . . . so that the forgiver can be healed” (italics added). Found in J. M. Brandsma, “Forgiveness,” in *Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology and Counseling*, 2nd ed., ed. David C. Benner and Peter C. Hill (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 468.

[11](#) . David Augsburger, *The Freedom of Forgiveness* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1970), 36. My contention with Augsburger is his assertion that Jesus forgives even those who would never ask for forgiveness. Augsburger fails to consider the biblical dynamic that while the offended person’s disposition and desire may be to forgive the offender, actual forgiveness only takes place when the one who offends, in response to the offer of forgiveness, actually repents (cf. Matt. 18:15–35; Luke 17:1–3; 24:46–47; Acts 2:38). Margaret Gramatky Alter seems to fall into the same lack of clarity as Augsburger when she stresses that Jesus’s “forgiveness is not contingent on an apology,” or that “Jesus includes Zacchaeus before he repents,” or again that “forgiveness precedes repentance” in Margaret Gramatky Alter, “The Unnatural Act of Forgiveness: Exploring Jesus’ Radical Method of Restoration,” *Christianity Today* 41, no. 7 (June 1997): 30. Both Augsburger and Gramatky Alter err by failing to distinguish what I call dispositional from transactional forgiveness.

[12](#) . Smedes, *Forgive and Forget*, xii (italics added).

[13](#) . Ibid., 10.

[14](#) . Sin has lost its heinousness. Most people think of sin as a peccadillo rather than recognizing it for what it is—an attempted overthrow and assassination of God, who alone is all wise, holy, good, and just.

[15](#) . Becky Pippert, *Hope Has Its Reasons*, rev. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 117.

[16](#) . Augustine, *Confessions*, book 10, 29, 31, 37.

[17](#) . Westminster Larger Catechism, Q.A. 194 in *Westminster Confession of Faith*, 148 (italics added to both quotations).

[18](#) . Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:426.

[19](#) . Sande, *The Peacemaker*, 209.

Chapter 8: Looking Out for the Interests of Others

[1](#) . Throughout this chapter I refer to this case. The reader should know that this case, though based on a real situation, is also a composite scenario of many cases that have involved coaching church members in negotiation.

[2](#) . Roger Fisher, William Ury, and Bruce Patton, *Getting to Yes*, 2nd ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1991). Fisher and Ury's work continues to receive popular acclaim. It comes out of the Harvard Negotiation Project, one of the leading organizations dealing with conflict resolution along the whole range of relationships, from domestic relationships to business relationships to international politics.

[3](#) . Ibid., 154.

[4](#) . Sande, *The Peacemaker*, 227–28.

[5](#) . The Westminster Larger Catechism, Q.A. 128 in *Westminster Confession of Faith*, 84–86. According to the Larger Catechism, “The sins of inferiors against their superiors are, all neglect of the duties required toward them (Matt. 15:4–6); envying at (Num. 11:28–29), contempt of (1 Sam. 8:7; Isa. 3:5), and rebellion against (2 Sam. 15:1–12), their persons (Exod. 21:15) and places (1 Sam. 10:27), in their lawful counsels (1 Sam. 2:25), commands and corrections (Deut. 21:18–21); cursing, mocking (Prov. 30:11, 17), and all such refractory and scandalous carriage, as proves a shame and dishonour to them and their government (Prov. 19:26).”

[6](#) . Tremper Longman III, *Daniel in the NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 52–53. Longman argues (along with Calvin) that the issue was not kosher food laws per se but their desire to give God the credit for their appearance and wisdom.

[7](#) . Ibid., 54.

[8](#) . See Poirier, *Words That Cut*.

Chapter 9: Pastor as Mediator

[1](#) . So it is with ten out of thirteen letters (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; Phil. 1:2; Col. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:2; Titus 1:4). In his letters to Timothy, Paul adds *mercy*.

And in his letter to Philemon, the words *grace* and *peace* are found in two adjoining phrases. Thus, we could say that “grace and peace” is Paul’s exclusive salutation.

[2](#) . S. E. Porter, “Peace, Reconciliation,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 695–99.

[3](#) . It seems that Paul’s knowledge of the quarreling in Corinth came by way of Chloe’s agents (1 Cor. 1:11). Scholarly conjecture posits that Chloe’s people are likely not from the Corinthian church but some other church, possibly from Ephesus. But they had relations with the Corinthian church.

Chapter 10: Mediation and Arbitration

[1](#) . Jethro K. Lieberman, *The Litigious Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1981).

[2](#) . Jerold Auerbach, *Justice without Law?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 9.

[3](#) . Chief Justice Warren Burger, “Annual Report on the State of the Judiciary,” *American Bar Association Journal* (March 1982): 68; quoted in Judith M. Keegan and Glenn G. Waddell, “Christian Conciliation: An Alternative to ‘Ordinary’ ADR,” *Cumberland Law Review* 29, no. 3 (1998–1999): 583.

[4](#) . Eugene Kennedy, “The Looming 80’s,” *New York Times Magazine*, December 2, 1979; quoted in Lieberman, *Litigious Society*, vii (italics added).

[5](#) . Lieberman, *Litigious Society*, 3. Lieberman provides examples of the increasingly litigious character of the courts in ancient Rome during the early first century.

[6](#) . Robert Taylor, “Toward a Biblical Theology of Litigation: A Law Professor Looks at 1 Cor. 6:1–11,” *Ex Auditu* 2 (1986): 105–6.

[7](#) . Sande, *The Peacemaker*, 31–37.

[8](#) . Ken Sande and Ted Kober, *Guiding People through Conflict* (Billings, MT: Peacemaker Ministries, 1998), 20.

[9](#) . On impartiality with respect to God’s character, see Deut. 10:17; 16:19; 2 Chron. 19:7; Job 34:19; Prov. 24:23–24; Matt. 22:16; Luke 20:21; Acts 10:34; Gal. 2:6; 6:7–8; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25; 1 Peter 1:17. On impartiality with respect to man, see Exod. 23:3; Deut. 1:17; Prov. 22:22; Mal. 2:9; James 3:17.

[10](#) . Sande, *The Peacemaker*; Sande and Kober, *Guiding People through Conflict*.

[11](#) . See Brian S. Rosner’s excellent study of this section in which he argues persuasively that Paul’s discussion in 1 Corinthians 6 is scripturally grounded in Moses’s own judicial concerns and wisdom in appointing just and equitable judges. Brian S. Rosner, *Paul, Scripture, and Ethics: A Study of 1 Corinthians 5–7* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 94–122.

Chapter 11: Church Discipline Principles

[1](#) . R. C. Sproul, *In Search of Dignity* (Ventura, CA: GL Publications, Regal Books, 1983), 182.

[2](#) . See chapter 7, “Granting True Forgiveness,” for earlier discussion on forgiveness.

[3](#) . See The Belgic Confession, “Article 29: The Marks of the True Church,” in *Ecumenical Creeds and Reformed Confessions* (Grand Rapids: CRC Publications, 1988), 108. The Heidelberg

Catechism, Lord's Day 31, Q. 83, considers discipline as one of the keys of the kingdom. The Canons of Dortrecht, article 17, along with the Word and sacraments, views discipline as a "means of grace." The Westminster Confession affirms the same and devotes an entire chapter to expounding the nature and character of church censures, *Westminster Confession of Faith*, chap. 30.

[4](#) . Stephen M. Johnson, "The Sinews of the Body of Christ: Calvin's Concept of Church Discipline," *Westminster Theological Journal* 59 (Fall 1997): 87.

[5](#) . Ibid., 88, citing William Monter, *Calvin's Geneva* (New York: Robert E. Krieger, 1975), 97.

[6](#) . Calvin, *Institutes*, 2:1229–30.

[7](#) . John Colin, ed., *John Calvin and Jacopo Sadoleto: A Reformation Debate* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976), 63.

[8](#) . Calvin, *Institutes*, 2:1229–30.

[9](#) . Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (1974; repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2001), 46–47. Citations are to the 2001 edition. Wilhelmus à Brakel (ca. 1700) makes a similar complaint: "Thirdly, the exercise of church discipline is almost entirely neglected. There is no longer a model of what the church ought to be. Men are therefore satisfied if many people come to church, and if many members are accepted. Such churches are then referred to as flourishing churches. In many, if not most localities, those who can recite the Lord's Prayer, the Twelve Articles of Faith, or have memorized a few questions are accepted as members. A sufficient knowledge of fundamental truths is no longer required, and they also do not require actual separation from the world and a life which to some degree conforms to the image of Christ. If their lives are not entirely ungodly, all is well." Wilhelmus à Brakel, Th.F., *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, trans. Bartel Elshout, 4 vols. (Ligonier, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1993), 2:72.

[10](#) . Lynn R. Buzzard and Thomas S. Brandon Jr., *Church Discipline and the Courts* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1987), 56–57.

[11](#) . In the case of Titus, Paul seems to suggest interest-based small group teaching. That is, teaching appropriate to older women, younger women, older men, and younger men. By wisely aiming the Word to particular people with particular interests, the sword of the Spirit becomes more like a surgeon's scalpel.

[12](#) . Westminster Confession of Faith, 30.1 in *Westminster Confession of Faith*, 94.

[13](#) . See Geoffrey W. Grogan, "Isaiah," in *Isaiah–Ezekiel*, vol. 6, of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 143.

[14](#) . Herman Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom*, trans. H. de Jongste (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1962), 360; Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 90, 94.

[15](#) . Westminster Confession of Faith, 30.2 in *Westminster Confession of Faith*, 94.

[16](#) . Westminster Confession of Faith, 30.3 in *Westminster Confession of Faith*, 94–95.

[17](#) . For example, see Galatians 5:9 with respect to the doctrine of the Judaizers; see 2 Tim. 2:17 with respect to the teaching of Hymenaeus and Philetus.

[18](#) . Colin, *John Calvin and Jacopo Sadoletto*, 63.

[19](#) . Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, trans. John W. Doberstein (New York: Harper & Row, 1954), 106.

Chapter 12: Church Discipline Practices

[1](#) . See chapter 11, “Church Discipline Principles,” under the section “A Brief Historical Sketch: The Modern Period.”

[2](#) . In the space of four verses, the verb *skandalizo* and noun form *skandalon* are used.

[3](#) . For anger and cursing, see Matthew 5:22; for lust, see Matthew 5:28–30; for breaking oaths or taking them with loopholes, see Matthew 5:33–37.

[4](#) . The verb form for “to shepherd” (*poimaino*) is used in the New Testament as a near synonym for “to rule” (see Rev. 2:27; 12:5; 19:15).

[5](#) . The word *brutally* is used only two other times in the Old Testament. The actual phrase “rule brutally” is found only two other times—in verses 43 and 46 of Leviticus 25. There it is a prohibition instructing the Israelites how not to treat their fellow Israelite bondmen. They are not to rule them brutally. Exodus 1:13–14 presents a similar idea when the Egyptians are depicted as brutally or with severity making the Israelites serve them. Clearly, Ezekiel’s use of this phrase shows how degenerate pastoring had become in his day when the rulers of Israel treated their own people as the Egyptians had in the land of slavery. See *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, based on the lexicon of William Gesenius, trans. Edward Robinson, ed. Francis Brown, S. R. Drivers, and C. A. Briggs (repr., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 827.

[6](#) . Kenneth E. Bailey, *Poet & Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables in Luke*, combined edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 148.

[7](#) . See George M. Schwab Sr., “The Proverbs and the Art of Persuasion,” *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 14, no. 1 (Fall 1995): 6–17.

[8](#) . George Schwab’s article (see note 7 above) did much to stimulate my thinking in this area.

[9](#) . One of the most insightful apologists today is J. Budziszewski and his work on our “moral and social design”—that God has made humans in a particular way. See J. Budziszewski, “The Third and Fourth Witnesses,” in *What We Can’t Not Know* (Dallas: Spence, 2003), 86–106.

[10](#) . “My son” is used twenty-three times in Proverbs. “Your father” is used three times. More frequently, the father stresses their relationship by teaching his son the effect his actions will have upon the father.

[11](#) . Second Timothy 3:16–17 teaches not only the kinds of use for which Scripture is profitable but also, by implication, the different kinds of persons to whom Scripture is directed. The ignorant need teaching, the recalcitrant need rebuking, the mistaken need correction, and the immature need training. Of course, any single person may need all of these at one time (cf. 1 Thess. 5:14).

12 . David knows that God desires the same for him, and he asks God to work this change in him in his great confession of sin in Psalm 51:6.

13 . C. S. Lewis, “The Weight of Glory,” in *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses, Revised and Expanded Edition*, ed. Walter Hooper (New York: Macmillan, 1980), 19.

14 . To compare how interchangeable these titles are, all referring to the same group of men, see Titus 1:5 (elders) along with verse 7 (overseer), and Acts 20:17 (elders) along with verse 28 (overseers and shepherds).

15 . S. Maxwell Coder, “Biographical Introduction,” in *Memoirs and Remains of R. M. McCheyne*, ed. A. A. Bonar (1947; repr., Chicago: Moody, 1978), xxii–xxiii.

Chapter 13: Toward Becoming a Peacemaking Church

1 . Oswald Chambers, “It Is the Lord!” *My Utmost for His Highest: An Updated Edition in Today’s Language*, ed. James Reimann (Grand Rapids: Discovery House Publishers, 1992), January 18, <http://www.rbc.org/utmost/index.php?month=01&day=18> (accessed March 8, 2006).

2 . Ibid., (italics added).

3 . John uses *paidia* (1 John 2:13, 18) and *tekna* (1 John 2:12, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21), both of which the NIV translates as “dear children.” He also uses *agapetoi* (1 John 3:2, 21; 4:1, 7, 11), which the NIV renders “dear friends.” John uses *brothers* only once as a form of address (1 John 3:13).

4 . Sande, *The Peacemaker*, 259–61.

5 . Question 155 of the Westminster Larger Catechism asks, “How is the Word made effectual to salvation?” The answer is, “The Spirit of God maketh the reading, *but especially the preaching of the Word*, an effectual means of enlightening, convincing, and humbling sinners; of driving them out of themselves, and drawing them unto Christ; of conforming them to his image, and subduing them to his will; of strengthening them against temptations and corruptions; of building them up in grace, and establishing their hearts in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation” (italics added). In *Westminster Confession of Faith*, 117–18.

6 . It is difficult to determine whether to take “the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace” as a subjective genitive or an objective genitive. In other words, is Paul describing a readiness that the gospel confers (subjective genitive) or a readiness that is conferred by the preacher (objective genitive)? Either way, what concerns us is that the gospel is here a gospel *of peace*.

7 . Note well the emphatic focus on Christ by way of the intensive personal pronoun *autos*. Elsewhere in Paul’s letters we find the same (see Eph. 4:10–11; 5:23, 27).

8 . There is dispute as to the precise situation Paul has in mind when he speaks of Christ who came and “preached peace.” Was it during his earthly sojourn? His death on the cross? During his postresurrection appearances? Or did Christ preach peace through the agencies of his apostles? I think it best to say that Paul is not so much seeking to tie down the *when* as to show that the entire work of Christ, mediated through the Spirit, is a work of peace preaching.

[9](#) . See J. Mark Beach's article, "The Real Presence of Christ in the Preaching of the Gospel: Luther and Calvin on the Nature of Preaching," *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 10 (1999): 77–134.

[10](#) . Peace themes are those truths that highlight the gospel of peace: atonement, justification, confession of sin, forgiveness, body life, and so on.

[11](#) . Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 897. See pages 891–99 for a discussion of 1 Corinthians 11:29 and subsequent verses.

[12](#) . Sande, *The Peacemaker*.

[13](#) . For materials suitable for training church leaders to lead their church toward becoming a peacemaking church, visit Peacemaker Ministries' website where a host of resources have been specifically designed with the local church in mind. Moreover, materials for the entire congregation are available—books, tracts, small group Bible studies, and resources for teaching children as well as a comprehensive course of training for those who desire to become reconcilers. See www.hispeace.org .

[14](#) . See their website, <http://www.ccef.org/home.htm> .

[15](#) . For more information see Peacemaker Ministries' Reconciler Training Program, <http://www.hispeace.org/html/tra.htm> .

[16](#) . For many more practical tools and helps to transform your church into a peacemaking church, including assessment tools, see www.hispeace.org .

[17](#) . Paige Patterson, "My Vision of the Twenty-First Century SBC," *Review and Expositor* 88, no. 1 (Winter 1991): 43–44; quoted in David W. Hall, *The Arrogance of the Modern: Historical Theology Held in Contempt* (Oak Ridge, TN: Covenant Foundation, 1997), 33 (italics added).

[18](#) . See the various covenants in Exodus 20–23; Deuteronomy; and Joshua 24. For more on this, see K. A. Kitchen, *The Bible in Its World: The Bible & Archaeology Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1977), 79–85.

[19](#) . Membership class lasts for twelve weeks. Each class lasts an hour and a half. Our curriculum revolves around the six vows that new members take to unite with the church. They cover our views of Scripture, God, salvation, Christ, church, sacraments, worship, small groups, peacemaking, and discipline.

[20](#) . See chapter 8, "Looking Out for the Interests of Others."

[21](#) . See Patrick Carnes, Ph.D., *Out of the Shadows*, 2nd ed. (Center City, MN: Hazelden, 1994). See also Edward T. Welch, *Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave—Finding Hope in the Power of the Gospel* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2001).

[22](#) . Among the other conditions imposed by the court were these: maintaining employment, no possession of firearms, no frequenting of bars; the necessity to get permission to travel out of his assigned district, etc. See a copy of Conditions of Probation and Parole.

[23](#) . Ken Sande, an elder in our church, composed this letter to the public.

[24](#) . G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1959), 145.

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