

Eastwood Baptist (25/2/'18) **PEACEMAKING (4): Go and Be Reconciled**

Introduction Last week we looked at Jesus' teaching on offence and reconciliation in Matthew 18:15-17. The first two steps, you might recall, were for the offended party to go to the offender seeking reconciliation and, if this failed, to go again with two or three others. I gave some brief attention to the question of what helps these steps to work, but I want to return to that question this morning. What I have to say has been prompted by the fourth and final section of Ken Sande's book, but both what he has written and what I have to say this morning rest primarily on Scripture.

Commitment to Reconciliation We are much more likely to achieve reconciliation with a fellow Christian who has offended us if reconciliation is important to us, rather than little more than going through the motions of what we understand to be required of us. And reconciliation is more likely to be important to us if we realise how important it is to Jesus, and to God the Father. **Read Matthew 5:23-24.** Reconciliation matters so much to God that he wants us to postpone coming to him in worship until we've reconciled with our brother or sister in Christ. If this is so important to our God, it ought to be equally important to us. It ought to be a high priority, and it ought to be thoroughgoing. Ken Sande suggests that it ought to take place in thought, and in word, and in deed. We ought to think positively about our estranged brother or sister, and pray for God's enabling in this. We ought to speak kindly and positively to the estranged brother or sister, or to one with whom we are in the process of seeking reconciliation. And we ought to act lovingly. Sande quotes C.S. Lewis as saying that we can act lovingly when we don't yet feel love, and that the feeling often comes after the action. Sande goes on to say that he originally thought Lewis was being naïve, then tells the story of when he experienced the truth of what Lewis said. Sande and his wife had quarrelled, and soon after the quarrel she asked him to go to the supermarket in order to "pick up a few small items". He did so grudgingly and was pushing his cart down the aisle when he noticed some very nice coffee which his wife loved. He said to himself, "If Corlette hadn't been so unkind to me today, I would have bought that coffee for her as a surprise." He wrestled with conflicting feelings for a few moments before picking up the can, telling himself it was just to check the price. As soon as his fingers touched the can, his feelings began to change, and soon his resentment melted away, to be replaced by the desire to see her face light up when he gave her this gift. Sande concludes, "Needless to say, we were completely reconciled shortly after I returned home."

Forgiveness Implicit in Sande's story is his willingness to forgive his wife, and he rightly sees forgiveness as an essential element in reconciliation. Forgiveness is emphasised in many places in Scripture, but this morning I am just going to look at one - **read Colossians 3:12-14**. At the heart of this passage is Paul's exhortation to forgive whatever grievances we have against one another, forgiving as the Lord forgave us. It is often hard to forgive, but we must be ready to do so, since our acceptance by God rests on the forgiveness we have received through Jesus Christ. Ken Sande initially found it difficult to forgive his wife, but eventually it wasn't so very hard. Many of the occasions when we need to forgive are just like this, but sometimes it is harder, yet it is still what we must be ready to do.

Cooperative Negotiation Negotiation wasn't necessary for Ken Sande and his wife but often it is, especially if there is complication in the fracturing of a relationship, such as there being some guilt on both sides. In such cases, Sande emphasises that the negotiation must be cooperative rather than competitive in character, in the spirit of **Philippians 2:3-4 - read**. Christians are called not just to negotiate, but to negotiate with a concern for the other's interests as well as our own. Sande offers the acronym PAUSE to help us be cooperative in our negotiation (in its barest form in our leaflet, but expanded on pp.227-245 of his book). The 'P' stands for "Prepare", and Sande sees this as involving such activities as praying, obtaining relevant facts, trying to discern the real cause of the disagreement, studying the Bible to identify biblical principles, and developing options for how to resolve the issue. The 'A' stands for "Affirm Relationships", which involves such things as using affirming words, being consistently courteous, seeking to understand the other, and addressing any sin graciously. The 'U' stands for "Understand Interests" and is essentially about understanding what is important to the other person. The 'S' stands for "Search for Creative Solutions" and involves seriously looking for a solution which is satisfying to both parties. Finally the 'E' - it stands for "Evaluate Options Objectively and Reasonably", which is the final step of seeking agreement on what to do, and involves seeking to satisfy the other as much as oneself, often with the help of biblical principles and a wise adviser, or advisers.

Overcoming Evil with Good Competitive negotiation focuses on getting as much as possible of what I need or want, with little if any concern for the needs or wants of the other. It sometimes descends into a willingness to do evil in order to achieve one's goals. But this is not the Christian way. Rather, we should be determined to do good, and to overcome evil with good. This is where Paul ends up in **Romans 12:21 - read**. This sums up the passage read out earlier (Romans 12:9-21). The passage itself majors on love - **read vv. 9-10,14,17-18,20b**. Jesus taught his disciples to love

even their enemies. So how much more should we be willing to love our brothers and sisters in Christ, even when they have wronged us. Imagine the difference it can make if two Christians who have fallen out with one another seek reconciliation with love and a readiness to forgive, and with a determination to do only what is good. If we say we are followers of Jesus Christ, surely we should do no less.

Conclusion: the Peacemaker's Pledge I can think of no better place to conclude this sermon, and this series of sermons, than with "the Peacemaker's Pledge", which you will find in the leaflet which was first made available three weeks ago. This pledge gives you the opportunity to make a commitment to God to be a peacemaker, to respond to conflict in line with the four biblical principles presented in this sermon series. I urge everyone, including myself in this, to read through the whole pledge thoughtfully. Ask yourself if you are prepared to make this pledge before God, or, if you are more comfortable with this, if you are prepared to modify the pledge in line with your own convictions.