

Eastwood Baptist (4/2/'18) **PEACEMAKING (1): Glorify God**

Introduction Why are we going to spend a month on the topic of “peacemaking”? One way to answer this question is to recall that the Consultants who came to our church last year recommended something like this, and that a church meeting endorsed this recommendation. Or we might go back behind this and say that the topic is timely for our church. But there is an even better reason, a biblical reason. Jesus pronounced a blessing on the peacemakers – **read Matthew 5:9**. This alone should be enough reason for us to want to be peacemakers. But there is more: peace is one of the most prominent themes of the Bible as a whole. In several places in the New Testament God is called “the God of peace”. Widely throughout the Bible, but particularly in the Old Testament, peace is viewed as a great blessing from God – consider the words of blessing which God gave to Moses to be used by the priests – **read Numbers 6:22-26**. In both Testaments God commands his people to pursue peace, and the word “peace” is used in greeting.

The Four G’s of Peacemaking Ken Sande’s book has been the major resource, apart from the Bible, for this sermon series, and the four titles come from the four major divisions of that book, which are Sande’s four fundamental principles of peacemaking. These principles and the four questions which go with them are as follows: *Glorify God*: How can I please and honour God in this situation? *Get the log out of your own eye*: How can I show Jesus’ work in me by taking responsibility for my contribution to this conflict? *Gently restore*: How can I lovingly serve others by helping them take responsibility for their contribution to this conflict? *Go and be reconciled*: How can I demonstrate the forgiveness of God and encourage a reasonable solution to this conflict? This week we will consider the first principle: *Glorify God*.

The Principle Declared (1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1) The clearest biblical declaration of this principle is to be found in **1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1 – read**. This works quite well as a statement of a general principle, but it has greater power if we consider the circumstances within which Paul stated the principle. The Christians in Corinth disagreed about the extent to which they could interact with their pagan neighbours. Some opposed eating with pagans, chiefly because they might find themselves eating food which had been offered to an idol, very likely without realising it. Others argued that idols were nothing, so it didn’t matter whether food had been offered to them or not. Paul approaches the issue differently from either group. He agrees that idols are not real gods, but says that sacrifices offered to them are in fact offered to demons. And he emphasises the effects of a Christian’s actions on others. He tells the strict Christians not to condemn their fellow Christians who have different convictions, and he tells the less strict to consider the welfare of their stricter fellow Christians, whose consciences may be offended. And he tells both groups to consider the effects of their choices on those who have not yet come to faith in Jesus. Which brings us to v.31. Paul says that their actions in this matter are to be governed by the principle of doing everything for the glory of God. And he then moves immediately to the possible effects of their actions on others, clearly implying that this is closely connected with

glorifying God. They are to refrain from behaviour which might cause other Christians to stumble. Positively, they are to seek the good of others, confirming fellow Christians in the way of salvation and influencing non-Christians toward salvation. He concludes by pointing to his own example – this is the way Paul himself behaves. And he points beyond himself to the one whose example he seeks to follow, to the example of Jesus Christ. Jesus constantly sought to glorify God the Father, and to do good to everyone.

The Principle Applied in Peacemaking I believe that Ken Sande is right in applying this principle to peacemaking. As he points out, Jesus himself gave great importance to peace and unity among his followers. We see this in Jesus' prayer for his followers in John 17, particularly in **John 17:20-23 – read**. This is a prayer for all Jesus' disciples in all times and places, so it includes us. Jesus wants us to be united in faith, to reflect the unity of Jesus with God the Father, and so to show Jesus to the world as the One sent by the Father. This reinforces what Jesus has already been recorded as saying in **John 13:34-35 – read**. Jesus wants his disciples to love one another. He wants us, as his disciples in this place at this time, to love one another. Not with a merely human love, but with a love like that of Jesus himself, who lived a human life for our sake and died on the Cross for our sake. When we love like this, Jesus says, we show to all people that we are his followers. And when we fail to love like this, it is logical to infer, we fail to show people that we are disciples of Jesus. So let us seek to be people who put love into action toward one another, particularly when it is hard to do.

A Story of Love in Action Sande tells the story (pp.49-50) of how, when he was a law student, he invited a fellow student to attend his church with him, a fellow student who was struggling in her spiritual life and disillusioned with her church. He was surprised and dismayed when at the beginning of the service his pastor asked one of the elders to come forward, because he immediately remembered that the pastor and this elder had engaged in a heated public discussion the Sunday before. He was afraid that the pastor was about to rebuke the elder publicly, and worried about the effect this might have on his fellow student's already struggling faith. But what the pastor actually did was that he put his arm around the elder and told the church that they had met later the previous Sunday and successfully resolved their differences. Nonetheless they both now wanted to apologise to the church for disrupting the unity of the fellowship, and to ask for forgiveness for their poor example. And the elder then spoke in a similar way. The fellow student was so impressed that she kept coming back to the church, and within a month she committed her life to Christ and made the church her spiritual home. This is what happened because of two Christian leaders who loved God and loved one another enough to seek reconciliation. These two men glorified God, and displayed genuine Christian love, thus helping a young woman who was struggling in her search for faith to come to commitment to Christ. Do you want to glorify God? Do you want to help other people to see Christ for the first time, or to see more clearly what following Christ involves? Then be a peacemaker.