The Peacemaker’s Pledge

A Commitment to Biblical Conflict Resolution
As people reconciled to God by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we believe that we are called to respond to conflict in a way that is remarkably different from the way the world deals with conflict. The way we respond to conflict reflects the heart of God. We commit ourselves to Responding to Conflict Biblically according to the following principles.

The Four Promises of Forgiveness

Go and Be Reconciled
Instead of accepting premature compromise or allowing relationships to wither, we will actively pursue genuine peace and reconciliation—for giving others as God, for Christ’s sake, has forgiven us, and seeking just and mutually beneficial solutions to our differences (Matt. 5:23-24; 6:12; 7:12; Eph. 4:1-3, 32; Phil. 2:3-4).

Building a Culture of Peace in Your Church

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The PAUSE Principle of Negotiating

Peacemaking Principles

The Seven A’s of Confession
Matt. 7:3-5; 1 John 1:8-9; Prov. 28:13
ADDRESS everyone involved
AVOID looking down on others
ACCEPT responsibility for your role
ACKNOWLEDGE the hurt
ALTER your behavior
ASK for forgiveness

Building a Culture of Peace in Your Church
Acts 2:42-47; Phil. 1:27; 1 Pet. 5:2-3; Deut. 1:9-18
Passion for the gospel
Pastoral leadership
Peacemaking theology
Practical assistance

Responding to Conflict Biblically
Our mission is to equip and assist Christians and their churches to respond to conflict biblically. Throughout the world, we provide educational resources, seminars, and training to help churches, seminaries, and para-church ministries to transform the way their people deal with conflict and build a culture of peace. We also train and certify facilitators to provide conflict coaching, mediation, and arbitration services to help resolve family conflicts, business disputes, church divisions, and lawsuits in a way that restores relationships and brings glory to God.


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Unmet Desires and the Slippery Slope of Conflict

Harmful conflict is usually triggered by unmet desires. "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it" (James 4:1-2). Even good desires can evolve into controlling demands or idols that lead us to judge others and then avoid or punish them until we get what we want (see Luke 10:38-42). This progression often starts with minor differences, but before we know it we're sliding down a slippery slope of conflict that can drop off in two directions.

Peacemaking Responses

Peacemakers are people who breathe grace. Inspired by the gospel, they draw continually on the goodness and power of Jesus Christ, and then breathe out his love, mercy, forgiveness, and wisdom to dissipate anger, improve understanding, promote justice, and model repentance and reconciliation.

Personal Peacemaking

There are three biblical ways to resolve conflicts personally and privately, just between you and the other party.

Overlook an offense—Many disputes are so insignificant that they should be resolved by quietly overlooking an offense. "A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is his glory to overlook an offense" (Proverbs 19:11). Overlooking an offense is a form of forgiveness, and involves a deliberate decision not to talk about it, dwell on it, or let it grow into pent-up bitterness or anger.

Reconciliation—if an offense is too serious to overlook or has damaged our relationship, we need to resolve personal or relational issues through confession, loving correction, and forgiveness. "If your brother has something against you…go and be reconciled" (Matthew 5:23-24). "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently" (Galatians 6:1). "Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Colossians 3:13).

Negotiation—even if we successfully resolve relational issues, we may still need to work through material issues related to money, property, or other rights. This should be done through a cooperative bargaining process in which you and the other person seek to reach a compromise that satisfies the legitimate needs of each side. "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Philippians 2:4).

Assisted Peacemaking

When a dispute cannot be resolved personally, God calls us to seek assistance from other believers.

Mediation—if two people cannot reach an agreement in private, they should ask one or more objective outside people to meet with them to help them communicate more effectively and explore possible solutions. "If he will not listen (to you), take one or two others along" (Matthew 18:16). The mediators may ask questions and give advice, but the parties retain the responsibility of making the final decision on how to resolve their differences.

Arbitration—When you and an opponent cannot come to a voluntary agreement on a material issue, you may appoint one or more arbitrators to listen to your arguments and render a binding decision to settle the issue. "If you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church!" (1 Corinthians 6:4).

Accountability—if a person who professes to be a Christian wanders from the Lord by refusing to be reconciled and do what is right, Jesus commands church leaders to lovingly intervene to hold him or her accountable to Scripture and to promote repentance, justice, and forgiveness. "If one of you has sinned against another, go and tell him his fault between you and him only" (Matthew 18:15). If the offender refuses to listen, or if the offense cannot be resolved, "tell it to the church" (Matthew 18:17).

The Gospel—the Key to Peace

The key to changing the way we deal with conflict is the gospel, the good news that God made peace with us and between us by sending his Son to die for our sins and give us new life through his resurrection (Colossians 1:19-20; Ephesians 2:14-16). When we believe in Jesus, we receive forgiveness and are united with Christ and one another (Acts 10:43; Philippians 2:1-2). God then begins to transform us into the likeness of his Son, enabling us to break free from sinful escaping and attacking habits and mature into peacemakers who reflect the glory of God's reconciling love in the midst of conflict (2 Corinthians 3:17-18; Colossians 3:12-15).

Escape Responses

People tend to use escape responses when they are more interested in avoiding unpleasant people or situations than in resolving differences.

Debacle—One way to escape from a conflict is to pretend that a problem does not exist. Another way is to refuse to do what should be done to resolve a conflict properly. These responses bring only temporary relief and usually make matters worse (see 1 Sam. 2:22-23).

Flight—Another way to escape from a conflict is to run away. This may take the form of pulling away from a relationship, quitting a job, filing for divorce, or changing churches. Flight may be legitimate in extreme circumstances (see 1 Samuel 19:9-10), but in most cases it only postpones a proper solution to a problem.

Suicide—When people lose all hope of resolving a conflict, they may seek to escape from the situation (or make a desperate cry for help) by attempting to take their own lives (see 1 Samuel 31:14). Suicide is never a right way to deal with conflict.

Attack Responses

People tend to use attack responses when they are more interested in controlling others and getting their way than in preserving a relationship.

Assault—Some people try to overcome an opponent by using various forms of force or intimidation, such as verbal attacks (including gossip and slander), physical violence, or efforts to damage a person financially or professionally (see Acts 6:8-15). Such conduct always makes conflict worse.

Litigation—Although some conflicts may legitimately be taken before a civil judge (see Acts 24:1-26:32; Romans 13:1-5), lawsuits usually damage relationships, diminish our Christian witness, and often fail to achieve complete justice. This is why Christians are commanded to make every effort to settle their differences within the church rather than in the civil courts (see 1 Corinthians 6:1-8; Matthew 5:25-26).

Murder—in extreme cases, people may be so desperate to win a dispute that they will try to kill those who oppose them (see Acts 7:54-58). While most people would not actually kill someone, we still stand guilty of murder in God's eyes when we harbor anger or contempt in our hearts toward others (see John 3:15; Matthew 5:21-22).