

Peacemaking Policy

The Elder Board approved this policy on February 24, 2000

The Peacemaker's Pledge—from Peacemaker Ministry, www.hispeace.org

A Commitment to Biblical Conflict Resolution

As people are 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. We also believe that conflict provides opportunities to glorify God, serve other people, and grow to be like Christ. Therefore, in response to God's love and in reliance on His grace, we commit ourselves to respond to conflict according to the following principles:

- Glorify God—Instead of focusing on our own desires or dwelling on what others may do, we will seek to please and honor God—by depending on His wisdom, power, and love; by faithfully obeying His commands; and by seeking to maintain a loving, merciful, and forgiving attitude.
- Get the log out of your own eye—Instead of attacking others or dwelling on their wrongs, we will take responsibility for our own contribution to conflicts—confessing our sins, asking God to help us change any attitudes and habits that lead to conflict, and seeking to repair any harm we have caused.
- Go and show your brother his fault—Instead of pretending that conflict doesn't exist or talking about others behind their backs, we will choose to overlook minor offenses, or we will talk directly and graciously with those whose offenses seem too serious to overlook. When a conflict with another Christian cannot be resolved in private, we will ask others in the body of Christ to help us settle the matter in a biblical manner.
- Go and be reconciled—Instead of accepting premature compromise or allowing relationships to wither, we will actively pursue genuine peace and reconciliation—forgiving others as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us, and seeking just and mutually beneficial solutions to our differences.

By God's grace, we will apply these principles as a matter of stewardship, realizing that conflict is an opportunity, not an accident. We will remember that success, in God's eyes, is not a matter of specific results but of faithful, dependent obedience. And we will pray that our service as peacemakers brings praise to our Lord and leads others to know His infinite love.

These principles are so simple that they can be used to resolve the most basic conflicts of daily life. But they are so powerful that they have been used to mediate and arbitrate bitter divorce and child custody actions, embezzlement situations, church divisions, multi-million dollar business disputes, malpractice lawsuits, and terrible sexual abuse cases. These principles are briefly discussed below. For a more detailed explanation, please see *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*, by Ken Sande (Baker Books, 2nd ed. 1997).

See Conflict as an Opportunity

Conflict is not necessarily bad or destructive. Even when conflict is caused by sin and causes a great deal of stress, God can use it for good (see Rom. 8:28-29). As the Apostle Paul wrote in I Corinthians 10:31-11:1, conflict actually provides three significant opportunities. By God's grace, you can use conflict to:

- Glorify God (by trusting, obeying, and imitating Him).
- Serve other people (by helping to bear their burdens or by confronting them in love).
- Grow to be like Christ (by confessing sin and turning from attitudes that promote conflict).

These concepts are totally overlooked in most conflicts because people naturally focus on escaping from the situation or overcoming their opponent. Therefore, it is wise to periodically step back from a conflict and ask yourself whether you are doing all that you can to take advantage of these special opportunities.

Glorify God

When the Apostle Paul urged the Corinthians to live “to the glory of God,” he was not talking about one hour on Sunday morning. He wanted them to show God honor and bring him praise in day-to-day life, especially by the way that they resolved personal conflicts (see I Cor. 10:31).

As mentioned above, you can glorify God in the midst of conflict by trusting him, obeying him, and imitating him (see Prov. 3:4-6; John 14:15; Eph. 5:1). One of the best ways to keep these concerns uppermost in your mind is to regularly ask yourself this focusing question: “How can I please and honor the Lord in this situation?”

Get the log out of your own eye

One of the most challenging principles of peacemaking is set forth in Matthew 7:5, where Jesus says, “You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.”

There are generally two kinds of “logs” you need to look for when dealing with conflict. First, you need to ask whether you have had a critical, negative, or overly sensitive attitude that has led to unnecessary conflict. One of the best ways to do this is to spend some time meditating on Philippians 4:2-9, which describes the kind of attitude Christians should have even when they are involved in a conflict.

The second kind of log you must deal with is actual sinful words and actions. Because you are often blind to your own sins, you may need an honest friend or advisor who will help you to take an objective look at yourself and face up to your contribution to a conflict.

When you identify ways that you have wronged another person, it is important to admit your wrongs honestly and thoroughly. One way to do this is to use:

Seven A's of Confession

1. Address everyone involved (Prov. 28:13; I John 1:8-9).
2. Avoid if, but, and maybe (don't make excuses; Luke 15:11-24).
3. Admit specifically (both attitudes and actions).

4. Apologize (express sorrow for the way you affected someone).
5. Accept the consequences (Luke 19:1-9).
6. Alter your behavior (commit to changing harmful habits; Eph. 4:22-32).
7. Ask for forgiveness.

The most important aspect of getting the log out of your own eye is to go beyond the confession of wrong behavior and face up to the root cause of that behavior. The Bible teaches that conflict comes from the desires that battle in your heart (James 4:1-3; Matt. 15:18-19). Some of these desires are obviously sinful, such as wanting to conceal the truth, bend others to your will, or have revenge. In many situations, however, conflict is fueled by good desires that you have elevated to sinful demands, such as a craving to be understood, loved, respected, or vindicated.

Any time you become excessively preoccupied with something, even a good thing, and seek to find happiness, security or fulfillment in it rather than in God, you are guilty of idolatry. Idolatry inevitably leads to conflict with God (“You shall have no other gods before me.”) It also causes conflict with other people. As James writes, when we want something but don’t get it, we kill and covet, quarrel and fight (James 4:1-4).

There are three basic steps you can take to overcome the idolatry that fuels conflict. First, you should ask God to help you see where you have been guilty of wrong worship, that is, where you are focusing your love, attention, and energy on something other than God. Second, you should specifically identify and renounce each of the desires contributing to the conflict. Third, you should deliberately pursue right worship, that is, to fix your heart and mind on God and to seek joy, fulfillment, and satisfaction in Him alone.

As God guides and empowers these efforts, you can find freedom from the idols that fuel conflict and be motivated to make choices that will please and honor Christ. This change in heart will usually speed a resolution to a present problem, and at the same time improve your ability to avoid similar conflicts in the future.

Go and show your brother his fault

Another key principle of peacemaking involves an effort to help others understand how they have contributed to a conflict. Before you rush off to confront someone, however, remember that it is appropriate to overlook minor offenses (Prov. 19:11). As a general rule, an offense should be overlooked if you can answer “no” to all of the following questions:

- Is the offense seriously dishonoring God?
- Has it permanently damaged a relationship?
- Is it seriously hurting other people?
- Is it seriously hurting the offender himself?
- If you answer “yes” to any of these questions, an offense is too serious to overlook, in which case God commands you to go and talk with the offender privately and lovingly about the situation (Matt. 18:15). As you do so, remember to:
- Pray for humility and wisdom.

- Plan your words carefully (think of how you would want to be confronted).
- Anticipate likely reactions and plan appropriate responses (rehearsals can be very helpful).
- Choose the right time and place (talk in person whenever possible).
- Assume the best about the other person until you have facts to prove otherwise (Prov. 11:27).
- Listen carefully (Prov. 18:13).
- Speak only to build others up (Eph. 4:29).
- Ask for feedback from the other person.
- Recognize your limits (only God can change people; see Rom. 12:18; II Tim. 2:24-26).

If an initial confrontation does not resolve a conflict, do not give up. Review what was said and done, and look for ways to make a better approach during a follow up conversation. It may also be wise to ask a spiritually mature friend for advice on how to approach the other person more effectively. Then try again with even stronger prayer support.

If repeated, careful attempts at a private discussion are not fruitful, and if the matter is still too serious to overlook, you should ask one or two other people to meet with you and your opponent and help you to resolve your differences through mediation, arbitration, or church discipline (see Matt. 18:16-20; I Cor. 6:1-8).

Go and be reconciled

One of the most unique features of biblical peacemaking is the pursuit of genuine forgiveness and reconciliation. Even though Christians have experienced the greatest forgiveness in the world, we often fail to show that forgiveness to others. To cover up our disobedience we often use the shallow statement, “I forgive her—I just don’t want to have anything to do with her again.” Just think, however, how you would feel if God said to you, “I forgive you; I just don’t want to have anything to do with you again?”

Praise God that He never says this! Instead, He forgives you totally and opens the way for genuine reconciliation. He calls you to forgive others in exactly the same way: “Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you” (Col. 3:12-14; I Cor. 13:5; Psalm 103:12; Isa. 43:25). One way to imitate God’s forgiveness is to make four specific promises when you forgive someone:

Four Promises of Forgiveness

1. I will not think about this incident.
2. I will not bring this incident up and use it against you.
3. I will not talk to others about this incident.
4. I will not allow this incident to stand between us or hinder our personal relationship.

Remember that forgiveness is a spiritual process that you cannot fully accomplish on your own. Therefore, as you seek to forgive others, continually ask God for grace to enable you to imitate his wonderful forgiveness toward you.

Negotiate in a Biblical Manner

Even when you manage to resolve personal offenses through confession and forgiveness, you may still need to deal with substantive issues, which may involve money, property, or the exercise of certain rights. These issues should not be swept under the carpet or automatically passed to a higher authority. Instead, they should be negotiated in a biblically faithful manner.

As a general rule, you should try to negotiate substantive issues in a cooperative manner rather than a competitive manner. In other words, instead of aggressively pursuing your own interests and letting others look out for themselves, you should deliberately look for solutions that are beneficial to everyone involved.

As the Apostle Paul put it, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Phil. 2:3-4; Matt. 22:39; I Cor. 13:5; Matt. 7:12).

A biblical approach to negotiation may be summarized in five basic steps, which we refer to as the PAUSE Principle:

Pause Principle

- **Prepare** (pray, get the facts, seek godly counsel, develop options).
- **Affirm relationships** (show genuine concern and respect for others).
- **Understand interests** (identify others’ concerns, desires, needs, limitations, or fears).
- **Search for creative solutions** (prayerful brainstorming).
- **Evaluate options objectively and reasonably** (evaluate, don’t argue).

If you have never used this approach to negotiation before, it will take time and practice (and sometimes advice from others) to become proficient at it. But it is well worth the effort, because learning the PAUSE principle will help you not only to resolve your present dispute but also to negotiate more effectively in all areas of your life.

Be Prepared for Unreasonable People

Whenever you are responding to conflict, you need to realize that other people may harden their hearts and refuse to be reconciled to you. There are two ways you can prepare for this possibility.

First, remember that God does not measure success in terms of results but in terms of faithful obedience. He knows that you cannot force other people to act in a certain way. Therefore He will not hold you responsible for their actions or for the ultimate outcome of a conflict.

All God expects of you is to obey His revealed will as faithfully as possible (Rom. 12:18). If you do that, no matter how the conflict turns out, you can walk away with a clear conscience before God, knowing that His appraisal is, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

Second, resolve that you will not give up on finding a biblical solution. If a dispute is not easily resolved, you may be tempted to say, “Well, I tried all the biblical principles I know, and they just didn’t work. It looks like I’ll have to handle this another way (meaning, ‘the world’s way’).”

A Christian should never close the Bible. When you try to resolve a conflict but do not see the results you desire, you should seek God even more earnestly through prayer, the study of His Word, and the counsel of His church. As you do so, it is essential to keep your focus on Christ and all that He has already done for you (Col. 3:1-4). It is also helpful to follow five principles for overcoming evil, which are described in Romans 12:14-21:

Control your tongue (“Bless those who curse you;” see also Eph. 4:29).

Seek godly advisors (identify with others and do not become isolated).

Keep doing what is right (I Pet. 2:12, 15; 3:15b-16).

Recognize your limits (instead of retaliating, stay within proper biblical channels).

Use the ultimate weapon: deliberate, focused love (John 3:16; Luke 6:27-31).

At the very least, these steps will protect you from being consumed by the acid of your own bitterness and resentment if others continue to oppose you. And in some cases, God may eventually use such actions to bring another person to repentance (I Sam. 24:1-22).

Even if other people persist in doing wrong, you can continue to trust that God is in control and will deal with them in his time (Psalms 10 and 37). This kind of patience in the face of suffering is commended by God (see I Pet. 2:19) and ultimately results in our good and His glory.

Get Help from Above

None of us can make complete and lasting peace with others in our own strength. We must have help from God. But before we can receive that help, we need to be at peace with God Himself.

Peace with God does not come automatically, because all of us have sinned and alienated ourselves from Him (Isa. 59:1–2). Instead of living the perfect lives needed to enjoy fellowship with Him, each of us has a record stained with sin (Matt. 5:48; Rom. 3:23). As a result, we deserve to be eternally separated from God (Rom. 6:23a). That is the bad news.

The good news is that “God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Believing in Jesus means more than being baptized, going to church, or trying to be a good person. None of these activities can erase the sins you have already committed and will continue to commit throughout your life. Believing in Jesus means, first of all, admitting that you are a sinner and acknowledging that there is no way you can earn God’s approval by your own works (Rom. 3:20; Eph. 2:8–9).

Second, it means believing that Jesus paid the full penalty for your sins when He died on the cross (Isa. 53:1–12; I Peter 2:24–25). In other words, believing in Jesus means trusting that He exchanged records with you at Calvary—that is, He took your sinful record on Himself and paid for it in full, giving you His perfect record.

When you believe in Jesus and receive His perfect record of righteousness, you can really have true peace with God. As you receive this peace, God will give you an increasing ability to make peace with others by following the peacemaking principles He gives us in Scripture, many of which are described above (Phil. 4:7; Matt. 5:9).

If you have never confessed your sin to God and believed in Jesus Christ as your Savior, Lord, and King, you can do so right now by sincerely praying this prayer:

“Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner, and I realize that my good deeds could never make up for my wrongs. I need your forgiveness. I believe that you died for my sins, and I want to turn away from them. I trust you now to be my Savior, and I will follow you as my Lord and King, in the fellowship of your church.”

If you have prayed this prayer, it is essential that you find fellowship with other Christians in a church where the Bible is faithfully taught and applied. This fellowship will help you to learn more about God, grow in your faith, and obey what He commands, even when you are involved in a difficult conflict.

Get Help from the Church

As God helps you to practice His peacemaking principles, you will be able to resolve most of the normal conflicts of daily life on your own. Sometimes, however, you will encounter situations that you do not know how to handle. In such situations, it is appropriate to turn to a spiritually mature person within the church who can give you advice on how you might be able to apply these principles more effectively.

In most cases, such “coaching” will enable you to go back to the other person in the conflict and work out your differences in private. If the person from whom you seek advice does not have much experience in conflict resolution, it may be helpful to give him or her a copy of *Guiding People through Conflict*, which provides practical, nuts-and-bolts guidance on how to help other people resolve conflict.

When individual advice does not enable you to resolve a dispute, you should ask one or two mutually respected friends to meet with you and your opponent to help you settle your difference through mediation or arbitration (Matt. 18:16-17; I Cor. 6:1-8).

Adapted from *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*. Copyright © 1997 by Ken Sande.

Check out their web site at www.hispeace.org.

Peacemaker's Process

Biblical Peacemaking in Action

“... be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”—1 Peter 5:5.

“If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed.”—Matthew 18:15-17.

It is actually reported that there is immorality among you . . . I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”—I Corinthians 5:1,5.

Key People

- Point Person –Facilitates direction, and oversees peacemaking process.
- Initiator—Seeks church for help resolving conflict in a relationship.
- Responder—Person in conflict with the initiator who will be asked to seek reconciliation.
- Mediator—Trained third party intervener who facilitates reconciliation.
- Elder—Ordained spiritual shepherd of the church.

Key Terms

- Biblical Peacemaking—Active commitment to preserve the unity of believers, for the sake of advancing the gospel, through the ministry of reconciliation.
- Conciliation—Third party mediates conflict between two seeking resolution, after one-on-one confronting fails.
- Mediation—Process designed to reconcile conflict between initiator, responder, through a neutral mediator.
- Legal Conflict – Conflict between two where physical assets or property are disputed.
- Biblical/Moral Conflict—Conflict caused by sinful offense (actual or perceived) between the two parties.
- Employee Conflict—There is unresolved conflict between two employees.
- Church Discipline—Process of spiritual reconciliation through the biblical practice of separating a believer from church fellowship for a period of time that ends with a repentant response in the one disciplined. This discipline would occur after being confronted in willful sin by the church and then refusing to turn or repent from the action or accepting any consequences.

Stage 1—One-on-One Resolution

How to “go to your brother or sister.”—Matthew 18.

1. Point person is contacted for conflict counseling between two parties.
2. Interview is scheduled by the point person with the initiator (one seeking counsel).
3. Interview includes a conflict evaluation and the initiator is educated on biblical peacemaking.
4. Initiator seeks to apply biblical peacemaking principles by contacting the responder in hopes of reconciliation.
5. Initiator and responder meet and attempt to reconcile their relationship.

6. Initiator gives a follow-up progress report to point person every 30 days.
7. Initiator reports to the point person that the conflict has been resolved.
8. Reconciliation Achieved.

Stage 2—Pre-Intervention

“He/she doesn’t listen”—one-on-one failed—Matthew 18.

1. Point person educates initiator on mediation process after one-on-one attempt fails, and asks them to sign an interview agreement indicating they submit to the intervention process.
2. Initiator then fills out conflict assessment forms that document and detail the conflict.
3. Point person invites responder to participate in mediation by scheduling an interview.
4. Responder meets with the point person, signs the interview agreement, and fills out the conflict assessment forms.
5. Point person evaluates the conflict assessment forms from both the initiator and responder.
6. Point person determines the type of conflict and classifies conflict as one of the following: Legal, Biblical/Moral, Employee.

Stage 2—Intervention Process

“Take one or two with you”—Matthew 18.

1. Point person chooses and assigns trained mediator.
2. Point person briefs the mediator on the conflict by reviewing the conflict assessment forms.
3. Point person contacts initiator and responder, and schedules mediation with the mediator.
4. Mediator facilitates mediation beginning with introduction and laying of ground rules.
5. Mediation ends with a settlement the parties initiate and accept. Every 30 days a progress report is given by the mediator to the point person throughout the process.
6. Reconciliation—The mediator reviews terms of the settlement with the point person including actions both the initiator and responder agree to execute following any “agreed to” conditions.

Stage 3—Pre-Church Discipline

“He/she refuses to listen to them”—Matthew 18.

1. Point person educates initiator and responder during interview process, before mediation, on the definition and application of biblical church discipline.
2. Initiator and responder sign intervention agreement which includes submission to our policy on applicable church discipline.
3. If sinful action by the initiator or responder is not owned as sinful or destructive to their relationship with the other party and with the LORD, the reconciliation process is stalled.

4. Process then focuses on resolving the offense by asking the offender to seek ownership a second time using principles of biblical confession, determining appropriate consequences, and seeking the other party for forgiveness.
5. Second attempt at sin ownership is made and fails. Church discipline is re-stated and the process to discipline the offender is exercised.

Stage 4—Church Discipline Exercised

“That his/her spirit saved” I Corinthians 5.

1. Mediator asks the offender to submit to discipline process and recommends that the point person schedule time for the offender to appear before the Elders.
2. Point person briefs the Elders on the situation and seeks counsel from the Elders as to how to proceed.
3. Elders then schedule time to meet with mediator and the offender. The point person contacts both to schedule the meeting.
4. Third attempt at sin ownership, by the Elders, fails. Applicable church discipline is re-stated, consequences are defined, and the period of separation from the church explained and determined. The goal of visible repentance is quantified with desired actions.
5. Elders ask the offender to submit to the conditions for discipline and the offender is encouraged to come to worship during this season of discipline.
6. An Elder follows up according to established terms with the one being disciplined.

Sample Church Discipline & Restoration Letter

Dear _____:

A person _____ following the steps outlined in Mathew 18:15-17, has brought before the Elders the events and circumstances regarding your decisions and behavior, _____ . The Bible’s clear teaching reveals that this constitutes sin.

You have expressed remorse, embarrassment, and frustration regarding past abuses. While this acknowledgment of sin is the beginning of repentance, our conversations with you reveal that you have never truly owned - as exclusively yours - the full burden of your sin against God. Accordingly, we do not recognize true, behavior-altering repentance in you.

Your action discourages restoration and reconciliation. The Bible’s clear teaching is that _____ is a violation of God’s will and is sin. In the process and fact of _____, you are making a volitional decision to sin.

In 1 Peter 5:5 and in Mathew 18:17, respectively, the Bible directs members of the church to be subject to its Elders, and it holds the Elders responsible to discipline him who refuses to listen to the church. Galatians 6:1 directs us to attempt to restore one who is caught in a trespass in a spirit of gentleness, recognizing that all of us are capable of the same or other sin.

It is in this spirit of gentleness and restoration toward you that, after hours of meetings with you, careful consideration of biblical precepts, and extensive prayer and deliberation by the Elders, we present the following outline of discipline for you. The time period for these

requirements will be _____ years, at the end of which you may reapply for membership, to be determined by the Elders, based upon your decisions and behavior during the _____ years. We encourage you to continue to attend NBC to receive fellowship and God's Word.

Discipline:

You will be removed from membership of the church.

You will not participate in the observance of communion.

You will not assume any leadership position within the church.

You will abstain from _____

You will be a productive participant in a _____ program at the church.

You will be accountable to another member of the church, most likely _____.

Exhibit repentance through temperate and gracious treatment of _____, toward the goal of restoration of a Christ-glorifying relationship.

We will inform several members, your close contacts at the Church, of this action to discipline. You will be invited to attend this meeting.

God tells us that there are severe consequences for continuing in sin. He assures us that our prayers are hindered when we fail to _____. However, He assures us that he who confesses and forsakes transgressions will find compassion. His children in Christ are forever forgiven and welcome in His arms.

Although you must be held accountable for your action, the Elders value you as a brother in Christ and as a fellow struggler. We truly hope that you will remain with us as you are strengthened and restored in your journey in Christ.

Sincerely yours,

Chairman of the Board of Elders

Christian Conciliation Agreements

For Christians

The parties to this agreement are Christians and believe that the Bible commands them to make every effort to live at peace and to resolve disputes with each other in private or within the Christian church (Matthew 18:15-20; I Corinthians 6:1-8). Therefore, the parties agree that any claim or dispute arising from or related to this agreement shall be settled by biblically-based mediation and, if necessary, legally binding arbitration in accordance with the Rules of Procedure for Christian Conciliation of the Institute for Christian Conciliation, a division of Peacemaker[®] Ministries (complete text of the Rules is available at www.HisPeace.org). Judgment upon an arbitration decision may be entered in any court otherwise having jurisdiction. The parties understand that these methods shall be the sole remedy for any controversy or claim arising out of this agreement and expressly waive their right to file a lawsuit in any civil court against one another for such disputes, except to enforce an arbitration decision.

More concise language (non-Christian version for outreach events)

“Any claim or dispute arising from or related to this agreement shall be settled by mediation and, if necessary, legally binding arbitration in accordance with the Rules of Procedure for Christian Conciliation of the Institute for Christian Conciliation, a division of Peacemaker Ministries (complete text of the Rules is available at www.HisPeace.org). Judgment upon an arbitration decision may be entered in any court otherwise having jurisdiction. The parties understand that these methods shall be the sole remedy for any controversy or claim arising out of this agreement and expressly waive their right to file a lawsuit in any civil court against one another for such disputes, except to enforce an arbitration decision.”