

Peacemaking

Responding to Conflict Biblically

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Preface

Peacemaker® Ministries and Turning Point Ministries have joined together to produce this small group curriculum—*Peacemaking: Responding to Conflict Biblically*. This small group bible study is based on *The Peacemaker* (revised and updated) by Ken Sande.

The approach used in *Peacemaking* to resolving conflict may be summarized in four basic principles:

- Glorify God.* Instead of focusing on our own desires or dwelling on what others may do, we will rejoice in the Lord and bring him praise by depending on his forgiveness, wisdom, power, and love as we seek to faithfully obey his commands and maintain a loving, merciful, and forgiving attitude (Psalm 37:1-6; Mark 11:25; John 14:15; Romans 12:17-21; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Philippians 4:2-9; Colossians 3:1-4; James 3:17-18; 4:1-3; 1 Peter 2:12).
- Get the log out of your eye.* Instead of blaming others for a conflict or resisting correction, we will trust in God's mercy and take responsibility for our own contribution to conflicts—confessing our sins to those we have wronged, asking God to help us change any attitudes and habits that lead to conflict, and seeking to repair any harm we have caused (Proverbs 28:13; Matthew 7:3-5; Luke 19:8; Colossians 3:5-14; 1 John 1:8-9).
- Gently restore.* Instead of pretending that conflict doesn't exist or talking about others behind their backs, we will overlook minor offenses or we will talk personally and graciously with those whose offenses seem too serious to overlook, seeking to restore them rather than condemn them. When a conflict with a Christian brother or sister cannot be resolved in private, we will ask others in the body of Christ to help us settle the matter in a biblical manner (Proverbs 19:11; Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 6:1-8; Galatians 6:1-2; Ephesians 4:29; 2 Timothy 2:24-26; James 5:9).
- 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 (Matthew 5:23-24; 6:12; 7:12; Ephesians 4:1-3, 32; Philippians 2:3-4).

This course shows how these principles may be applied in the home, workplace, church, and neighborhood. Among other things it explains:

- How to use conflict as an opportunity to please and honor God.
- Why Christians should resolve disputes in church and not in court.
- Why you can trust God to help you even in the most difficult conflicts.
- When it is appropriate simply to overlook an offense.
- When it is appropriate to confront others regarding sinful behavior.

As you learn to deal with these issues in a biblical way, you can develop an entirely new approach to resolving conflict. Instead of reacting to disputes in a confused, defensive, or angry manner, you can learn to manage conflict confidently and constructively. This material describes the principles required for effective conflict management. This study is designed for small group interaction and can be used in home groups, support groups, cell groups, and Sunday school. The material is also applicable for personal study. May the Lord bless, challenge, and encourage you in this study.

Getting Started

Group Size

We suggest that each *Peacemaking* group have two group leaders (facilitators) and a maximum of 12 participants. Having more than 12 may prevent some from being a part of much-needed discussion.

Preparation Time

The facilitator's material is written in an almost word-for-word dialogue. However, it is hoped that as you come to know and understand the concepts presented, you will be able to "personalize" each session to better fit your own style. Highlight the points you want to emphasize and make notes for yourself. Also, for further study for each session, we recommend the book entitled *The Peacemaker* by Ken Sande.

Your group is unique—so adapt questions to their needs and situations. Be sensitive to each person who is in your group.

Keep in mind that the answers provided for the discussion questions are there only as a tool to assist you and may not be the only "right" answers to the questions being asked.

Become thoroughly familiar with the four elements of each session:

- Introduction
- Self-Awareness
- Spiritual Awareness
- Application

You will find more detail about these on the following page.

The facilitators should meet prior to each session to pray and make final plans. They should also meet briefly after each session to discuss what happened during the meeting and go over any follow-up that may be needed.

Peacemaking Group Member Guides

Before Session 1, the *Peacemaking* group member guides should be distributed to each group member. Facilitators should be thoroughly familiar with the material before the first meeting.

During the *Orientation*, you will encourage group members to complete the appropriate assignments prior to each group meeting. Through the readings and other exercises in the group member guide, group members can come to each session better prepared for meaningful discussion.

Correlation Between Facilitator's Guide and Group Member Guide

Facilitator's Guide — This guide is designed to lead the group through the four-phase small group format. The facilitator's responsibility is to start the discussion, give it direction, and thereafter simply keep the discussion personal and on track.

The text is presented in the left column. The right column contains tips and pointers for leading the group along with answers to questions. The facilitator will prayerfully present select questions because there are usually more questions than time permits.

Although the text is presented in the Group Member's Guide, it may not in some cases be word for word as in the Facilitator's Guide. For example, the Introductions are different in the two guides. The Facilitator's Guide is directed toward opening prayer

and go-around question; whereas, the Group Member's Guide focuses on devotions for the week which is a part of preparation for the upcoming session.

Group Member's Guide — This guide is designed to be done as homework preparing the participant for meaningful ministry during the small group session. Although the general text is the same as Self-Awareness, Spiritual Awareness, and Application in the Facilitator's Guide, concentration should be on the group process during the actual group experience.

It is good for the participant to bring the Group Member's Guide to the group session; however, the participant should be more attentive to the group process rather than trying to find text or written answers in the Group Member's Guide. Each group member should bring a Bible for meaningful study and application of God's Word for daily living.

In a Nutshell — The Facilitator's Guide is designed to lead the group process through *Peacemaking*. The Group Member's Guide will prepare the participant for the group meeting.

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Suggested Group Format

The group format for each session consists of four elements: Introduction, Self-Awareness, Spiritual Awareness, and Application. There is a reason for each phase. The facilitators should always plan each session with this format in mind.

Part I Introduction (10 minutes)

Begin with prayer. The facilitator may pray or may ask one of the group members to lead in prayer. After the prayer, a sharing question helps put the group at ease and makes the members more comfortable in being a part of the discussion. The lead facilitator should respond to the sharing question first, followed by the co-facilitator. This helps the group members to feel safer in participating in the exercise. After the facilitators have shared, the group members will share one after another around the circle. Always remind group members they are not expected to share if they do not wish to do so. The rule is that everyone works within his or her comfort level and is welcome to pass.

This is not the time for detailed conversation, so ask the members of the group to keep their comments brief. If a person is obviously in pain during the exercise, the facilitator should interrupt the sharing and pray for the person in pain. After prayer, the exercise may resume.

Part II Self-Awareness (20-25 minutes)

After the sharing question, the facilitator will lead the group into the Self-Awareness phase. Self-Awareness is a time to discuss the practical issues involved in *Peacemaking*. It is important to stay on the subject matter. This is a time to focus on needs and healing, not to have a "martyr" or "pity party."

It is suggested in Self-Awareness that the facilitators ask the group members to share as they wish rather than going around the circle as in the Introduction phase. This is because people are at various comfort levels, and they should not feel pressured to self-disclose if they are uncomfortable. As the group continues to meet, members will feel more and more comfortable in being a part of the discussion.

Remember, prayer is always in order. If a group member is hurting during this phase, stop and pray. One of the facilitators may lead in prayer or ask another group member to pray. This says to the group members that each one is important and that you care about each individual.

Part III Spiritual Awareness (20-25 minutes)

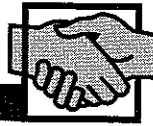
After the Self-Awareness phase, the facilitator will lead the group into the Bible study time. Having briefly explained the topic, the facilitator should assign Scriptures listed in the Facilitator's Guide to group members. When each Scripture is called by the facilitator, the group member should read the verse(s). After the verses are read, give time for discussion.

Part IV Application (20 minutes)

This part is actually a continuation of Part III. Ask for volunteers to share their reflections on the question. The facilitators should emphasize the importance of the group members' applying biblical principles to their lives. Help begins with right thinking. The Bible says, "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2). Obedience to the Word should follow with right behavior. Right feelings will follow right thinking and right behavior.

Orientation

Introduction



Allow 10 Minutes

Opening Prayer

Thank God for each person who has taken the step of choosing to join the *Peacemaking* group. Pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance on all that takes place in your group.

Sharing Question

Welcome to the *Peacemaking* group. I would like to begin this first session by having each of us in the group introduce him/herself and tell why you were drawn to this group. I will start by telling you that my name is _____.

The purpose of this exercise is to help group members move toward being more comfortable in sharing with the group. Ask each one to introduce him/herself, beginning with yourself and your co-facilitator.

Self-Awareness



Allow 20-25 Minutes

Peacemakers are people who breathe grace. They draw continually on the goodness and power of Jesus Christ, and then they bring his love, mercy, forgiveness, strength, and wisdom to the conflicts of daily life. God delights to breathe his grace through peacemakers and use them to dissipate anger, improve understanding, promote justice, and encourage repentance and reconciliation.

We are glad for each of you who has joined this group. By way of introduction, I want to spend a few minutes talking about the purpose of this group and what our procedures will be each week.

The *Peacemaking* group is a small group (usually fewer than 12 people) who want to better understand issues of conflict in a biblical way which can be an entirely new approach to resolving conflict. Instead of reacting to disputes in a confused, defensive, or angry manner, we can learn to **respond to conflict** confidently and constructively.

In this group we will look at the principles required for effective conflict management and provide numerous illustrations of how they have been used to resolve actual disputes and lawsuits. (The stories told in the *Peacemaking* material are based on real situations, but the names of the people and distinguishing facts have been changed to protect the privacy of those involved.)

Here are the elements of a typical meeting:

Read pages 9-16 and 259-261 from *The Peacemaker* for further preparation for this session.

Meeting Format

Introduction: First we will pray together. Prayer is always appropriate during our meetings, especially as we begin our time together. After we begin with prayer, we will then spend a few minutes talking and getting to know each other better. We hope this will grow to be a group of caring and supportive friends, but in any of our conversations here, you should never feel pressured to talk. We only want you to speak when you feel comfortable speaking.

Self-Awareness: Next in our meeting comes something we call our "Self-Awareness" time. This part of our meeting is designed to help us take a look at our life and better understand the pitfalls and delusion we often face. During Self-Awareness (about 20 minutes), we will discuss some of the practical issues involved in understanding and dealing with conflict resolution.

Spiritual-Awareness: After our Self-Awareness time, we are going to open our Bibles and dig deep into the promises of God's Word. We are going to study about how God wants to work in our lives and in the lives of those we care about.

Application: After our Bible study, we will take some time to work on applying what we have learned. God's Word has a lot to say to us where we are right now, and we are going to learn how to apply that truth to the decisions and actions of our daily lives.

During all of these parts of our meeting, we will have opportunities to minister to each other. God has given each of us the resource of other caring Christians. All through his Word, he reminds us of the valuable ministry we can have to one another, and we are going to see that kind of ministry to each other begin to happen through this group.

What do you think of when you hear the word *conflict*?

How would you define *conflict*?

Examples:

- Anger
- Broken relationships
- Wrong for Christians

Conflict is a difference in opinion or purpose that frustrates someone's goals or desires.

Spiritual Awareness Lead-In

When someone opposes or mistreats me, my instinctive reaction is to devote all my energies to defending and justifying myself and doing everything I can to get my way. This self-absorbed attitude usually leads to further problems. When I follow my feelings, I am likely to make impulsive decisions that often offend my opponent and make matters worse. Others respond to conflict by trying to escape from it through denial or flight.

What is the best way to counteract our natural tendency?

By focusing on Christ.

"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things" (Colossians 3:1-2).

Spiritual-Awareness



Allow 20-25 Minutes

Over the next few weeks we will look at biblical principles that work. The essential elements of peacemaking revealed in God's Word have been identified, arranged, explained, and illustrated. A systematic theology for conflict resolution that can easily be applied in everyday life will be given. This approach to resolving conflict may be summarized in four basic principles.

As you discuss the four principles, ask for volunteers to look up the scripture and read when it is time.

1 Corinthians 10:31

Glorify God — Biblical peacemaking is motivated and directed by a desire to please and honor God. His interests, reputation, and commands should take precedence over all other considerations.

from The Peacemaker's Pledge

Glorify God — Instead of focusing on our own desires or dwelling on what others may do, we will rejoice in the Lord and bring him praise by depending on his forgiveness, wisdom, power, and love as we seek to faithfully obey his commands and maintain a loving, merciful, and forgiving attitude (Psalm 37:1-6; Mark 11:25; John 14:15; Romans 12:17-21; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Philippians 4:2-9; Colossians 3:1-4; James 3:17-18; 4:1-3; 1 Peter 2:12).

Describe a situation where you had an opportunity to glorify God in the midst of conflict.

Personal response.

"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).