

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 (Matt. 5:9; Luke 6:27-36; Gal. 5:19-26). We also believe that conflict provides opportunities to glorify God, serve other people, and grow to be like Christ (Rom. 8:28-29; 1 Cor. 10:31-11:1; James 1:2-4). Therefore, in response to God's love and in reliance on his grace, we commit ourselves to responding 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 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 (Ps. 37:1-6; Mark 11:25; John 14:15; Rom. 12:17-21; 1 Cor. 10:31; Phil. 4:2-9; Col. 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 (Prov. 28:13; Matt. 7:3-5; Luke 19:8; Col. 3:5-14; 1 John 1:8-9).

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 will bring praise to our Lord and lead others to know His infinite love (Matt. 25:14-21; John 13:34-35; Rom. 12:18; 1 Peter 2:19; 4:19).

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 (Prov. 19:11; Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 6:1-8; Gal. 6:1-2; Eph. 4:29; 2 Tim. 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 (Matt. 5:23-24; 6:12; 7:12; Eph. 4:1-3, 32; Phil. 2:3-4).

GETTING TO THE HEART

(James 4:1-2; Matt. 15:18; Psalms 37:4)

At the heart of most conflicts are desires — either good or bad — that have become controlling demands. We can break free from conflict by renouncing those demands and asking God to help us find all of our security, joy and fulfillment in Jesus Christ alone.

THE SEVEN A'S OF CONFESSION

Matt. 7:3-5; 1 John 1:8-9; Prov. 28:13

ADDRESS everyone involved
AVOID if, but, and maybe
ADMIT specifically
ACKNOWLEDGE the hurt
ACCEPT the consequences
ALTER your behavior
ASK for forgiveness

THE FOUR PROMISES OF FORGIVENESS

Matt. 6:12; 1 Cor. 13:5; Eph. 4:32

I will not dwell on this incident.
I will not bring this incident up and use it against you.
I will not talk to others about this incident.
I will not allow this incident to stand between us or hinder our personal relationship.

THE PAUSE PRINCIPLE OF NEGOTIATING

Phil. 2:3-4; Matt. 7:12

Prepare
Affirm relationships
Understand interests
Search for creative solutions
Evaluate options objectively and reasonably



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The mission of Peacemaker Ministries is to equip and assist Christians and their churches to respond to conflict biblically. We provide conflict coaching, mediation, and arbitration services to help resolve lawsuits, family conflicts, business disputes, and church divisions. Our training services include seminars, the national Reconciler Training and Certification Programs, and custom training for denominations, seminaries, and parachurch ministries.

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PEACEMAKING PRINCIPLES

Responding to Conflict Biblically



PEACEMAKER
MINISTRIES

1 THE SLIPPERY SLOPE OF CONFLICT

Conflict can make life very awkward. It often catches us off guard and leads us to say or do things we later regret. When someone offends us, we can react without thinking. Soon it's as if we're sliding down a slippery slope, with things going from bad to worse. As the illustration shows, this slippery slope can drop off in two directions. (Follow the arrows.)

2 ESCAPE RESPONSES

People tend to use escape responses when they are more interested in avoiding or getting away from a conflict than in resolving it.

DENIAL— 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. 2:22-25).

FLIGHT— Another way to escape from a conflict is to run away. This may take the form of ending a friendship, quitting a job, filing for divorce, or changing churches. Flight may be legitimate in extreme circumstances (see 1 Sam. 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 the situation (or make a desperate cry for help) by attempting to take their own lives (see 1 Sam. 31:4). Suicide is never a right way to deal with conflict.

5 PEACEMAKING RESPONSES

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 to his glory to overlook an offense" (Prov. 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" (Matt. 5:23-24). "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently" (Gal. 6:1; see Matt. 18:15). "Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Col. 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 settlement 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" (Phil. 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" (Matt. 18:16). The mediators may ask questions and give advice, but they have no authority to force you to accept a particular solution.

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 Cor. 6:4).

ACCOUNTABILITY— If a person who professes to be a Christian refuses to be reconciled and do what is right, Jesus commands his or her church leaders to formally intervene to hold him or her accountable to Scripture and to promote repentance, justice, and forgiveness. "If he refuses to listen to [others], tell it to the church" (Matt. 18:17).

4 THE GOSPEL—THE KEY TO PEACE

A true peacemaker is guided, motivated, and empowered by the gospel, the good news that God has forgiven all our sins and made peace with us through the death and resurrection of his Son (Col. 1:19-20). Through Christ he has also enabled us to break the habit of escaping from conflict or attacking others, and he has empowered us to become peacemakers who can promote genuine justice and reconciliation (Col. 3:12-14).

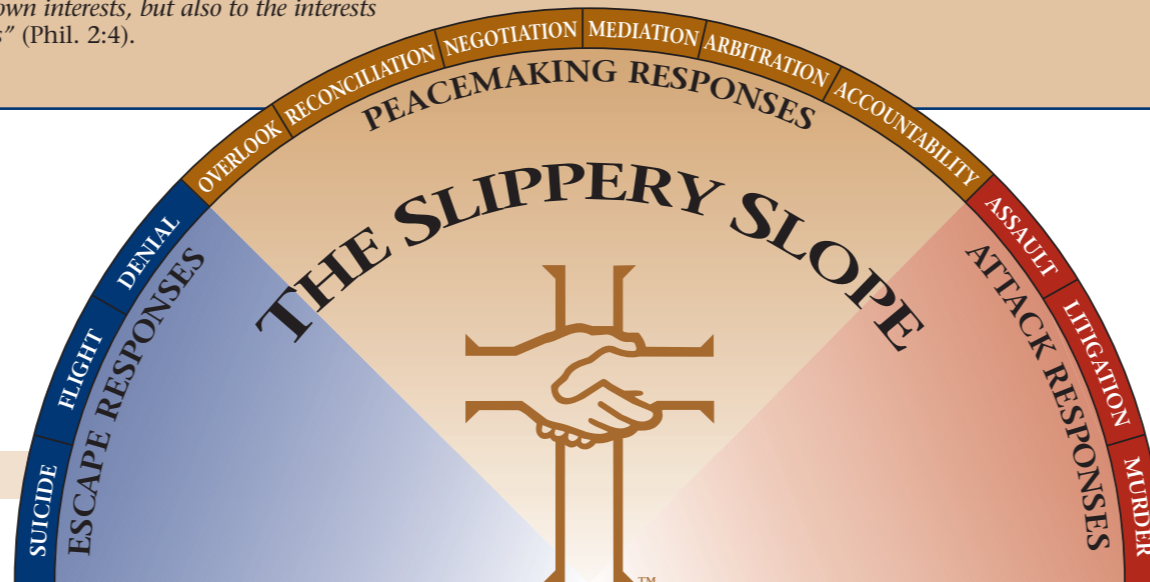
3 ATTACK RESPONSES

People tend to use attack responses when they are more interested in winning a conflict 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; Rom. 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 the civil courts (1 Cor. 6:1-8; Matt. 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 should never forget that we stand guilty of murder in God's eyes when we harbor anger or contempt in our hearts toward others (see 1 John 3:15; Matt. 5:21-22).



Adapted from *The Peacemaker* by Ken Sande.