

Day 41

Getting Your Hands Dirty

Matthew 5:9 (HCSB) *The peacemakers are blessed, for they will be called sons of God.*

There is an Old Irish Poem that goes something like this: ***“To live above with saints we love, oh that would be glory. To live below with saints we know, oh that is a different story.”*** Getting along with others and working towards peace should be the goal of every person that calls themselves a follower of Christ. Working for, and accomplishing peace are entirely two different things. Jesus knows our natural tendencies. He knows our selfishness and our pride; that is why He gives us a clear path to follow in the Sermon on the Mount, so that we can be the peacemakers that reflect our Father’s nature.

Maturity as sons of God is reflected in our willingness to engage the difficult and produce godliness, grace and peace. **As members of the household of faith, peace is our calling because a body cannot be divided and still be called a body.** It might be body parts, but it is not complete and whole and, therefore, it cannot function or even stay alive. ***“And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful.”***

(Colossians 3:15 NLT) When we allow the peace that comes from Jesus to rule our hearts, it produces a unity or oneness that enables us to function the way God desires for us to function. We cannot tear one another apart and expect to be able to accomplish God’s purposes. **Before we want to tell the world to be at peace, we need to be at peace with our brothers and sisters in Christ.** That takes hard work, because it requires a maturity that is willing to be the least or even last. Not words that we hear a lot. We are all about getting things our way and winning at all cost. But God’s wisdom teaches us how to reap a harvest we truly want and not a harvest of regret.

What kind of characteristics help us to work towards peace? James writes: ***“For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind. But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and the fruit of good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere. 18 And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of righteousness.”*** **(James 3:16-18 NLT)** Mature people love peace. They are gentle and willing to yield; meaning, their focus is not on insisting to have things their way. They are willing to let others take priority. Mercy and goodness will bring peace, not picking sides or preferring one over another, but simply being real. **There is no hidden agenda in mature peacemakers; their only agenda is to bring people together through the grace and mercy of Jesus.** Peacemakers reap a harvest of righteousness because they sow seeds of peace. If you keep harvesting turmoil, anger, animosity, and the like, then maybe check the seeds you are sowing.

Mature sons of God have a peace agenda. They are solely focused on uniting hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, especially within the Body of Christ. They not only search for peace, but they know, for us to be effective in the world, peace between Christ followers must be maintained. Maintenance implies work. **Peacemakers get their hands dirty, but do not allow their hearts to get polluted.** ***“For the Scriptures say, ‘If you want to enjoy life and see many happy days, keep your tongue from speaking evil and your lips from telling lies. 11 Turn away from evil and do good. Search for peace, and work to maintain it. 12 The eyes of the Lord watch over those who do right, and his ears are open to their prayers. But the Lord turns his face against those who do evil.’”*** **(1 Peter 3:10-12 NLT)**

This is demonstrated so clearly in Paul’s encouragement to two of his co-workers, but not only to them, but also to “Syzygus,” that Paul calls his teammate, to work out their differences, that will produce

peace: *"Dear brother Christians, I love you and long to see you, for you are my joy and my reward for my work. My beloved friends, stay true to the Lord. 2 And now I want to plead with those two dear women, Euodias and Syntyche. Please, please, with the Lord's help, quarrel no more—be friends again. 3 And I ask you, my true teammate, to help these women, for they worked side by side with me in telling the Good News to others; and they worked with Clement, too, and the rest of my fellow workers whose names are written in the Book of Life."* (Philippians 4:1–3 TLB)

Nobody wins when God's people fight! When we work against one another we are not operating in the love of God. The world cannot be reached because we are mad at our fellow believers, and our focus is not on reaching the world, but on taking shots at one another emotionally. Paul pleads, you can hear his plea through his writing as he almost begs these two women to work things out. Euodias and Syntyche, at one point, were incredible valuable assets to Paul and the Kingdom, but now they have allowed some kind of conflict to hinder, not only their progress, but also the work to which they were called. How many times have we seen churches fail when people begin to fight, drawing lines in the sand and choosing sides. It becomes an "Us against them; they are wrong we are right. They are ungodly; we are Godly!" Paul then calls on someone who is mature to step into this conflict to, prayerfully, produce a healthy result.

"Always be full of joy in the Lord; I say it again, rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4 TLB) Many times when we read these verses we don't read them within the context that they were written. Paul does not change the subject in Verse 4 where he speaks of always rejoicing. Paul knows that God's kingdom is one of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, so he encourages all of them not to lose their joy as they are dealing with this conflict. He further admonishes them to be unselfish and considerate in everything. *"Let everyone see that you are unselfish and considerate in all you do. Remember that the Lord is coming soon."* (Philippians 4:5 LB) These two qualities are always in the arsenal of a peacemaker. So many conflicts would be resolved so much easier, if we are willing to consider others instead of just ourselves. Paul also reminds them that we will all be accountable by telling them the Lord is coming soon. **How differently would you treat people if you knew that the Lord will come tonight?** Hopefully, as a mature peacemaker, there is no difference in how you treat people now!

Mature people understand a principle that helps them overcome adversity in any and all relationships. Are you ready for it? **They do not look to people to fulfill their needs, they look to their Father. When we expect people to meet our needs, there is great potential of it leading to disappointment. That disappointment leads to resentment of others and it brings conflict.** We don't know what the specific conflict was that these two women had with one another because Paul does not give us the detail. We only know that it was bad enough for him to write about it, and important enough for us that it would be preserved so we can learn from it. Paul writes and says, *"Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything; tell God your needs, and don't forget to thank him for his answers."* (Philippians 4:6 TLB) Again, understand the context. Don't look for people to meet a need they might not be capable of or even willing to meet. Stop worrying about others fulfilling the needs in your life, and pray and ask God and thank Him that He supplies all your needs, including your fulfillment in life. What happens when you do that? *"If you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will keep your thoughts and your hearts quiet and at rest as you trust in Christ Jesus."* (Philippians 4:7 TLB)

What an incredible promise! Every time you think about this conflict with your brother or sister and your mind tends to drift towards what they have done to you, God's peace will wash over you. When His peace washes over you, your loud boisterous thoughts about the inequity or the wrong that was

done to you, will be calmed and you will find your heart at rest, all because you are trusting Christ Jesus to meet your needs. **Mature people do not allow negative thoughts about others to determine how they treat them.** They make no room for bitterness; they do the work of getting along and are willing to yield to others. **Mature people understand that there is no room for bitterness because it is a self-imposed prison that causes many people to be polluted. It hinders God's work, it taints our testimony and it pollutes our hearts.** The writer of Hebrews admonishes us: *"Mark out a straight path for your feet so that those who are weak and lame will not fall but become strong. 14 Work at living in peace with everyone, and work at living a holy life, for those who are not holy will not see the Lord. 15 Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many."* (Hebrews 12:13-15 NLT)

Mature peacemakers are willing to get their hands dirty by making peace where there is conflict. They keep their joy and they look to God to fulfill their needs. They are not worried or consumed by the failures of others; they practice consideration in all they do, and they demonstrate unselfish hearts. **Their hearts are at rest in the holiness of God and, therefore, there is no room for any root of bitterness to grow.**

They are free to work towards peace, because they are filled and fulfilled through Christ alone.

Reflection and Prayer:

- What is the greatest hindrance in your life to building healthy, thriving relationships with others in the Body of Christ?
- Would a church leader be able to call on you to help sort out a strained relationship? Do people see you as a peacemaker or troublemaker? If the latter, what needs to change in your life so you can reach maturity?
- How can we build a truly united community? Are you willing to help build a thriving community in the way that Paul describes it in the following passage? *"Get along among yourselves, each of you doing your part. Our counsel is that you warn the freeloaders to get a move on. Gently encourage the stragglers, and reach out for the exhausted, pulling them to their feet. Be patient with each person, attentive to individual needs. And be careful that when you get on each other's nerves you don't snap at each other. Look for the best in each other, and always do your best to bring it out."* (1 Thessalonians 5:13-15 MSG)
- What promise do we have when we live in harmony, agreement and peace with one another? *"Now, brothers and sisters, I say good-bye. Live in harmony. Do what I have asked you to do. Agree with each other, and live in peace. Then the God of love and peace will be with you."* (2 Corinthians 13:11 NCV)
- Where in your life are you expecting others to meet a need that you should trust the Lord for? Have you prayed and asked the Lord to meet this need? Take a moment and do it now.