

Sermon Notes

Series: How to Be A Peacemaker

Date: November 22nd, 2009

Title: “Step 2: Embrace Peacemaking as An Opportunity”

Text: 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1

We need to embrace peacemaking as an opportunity to...

1) GLORIFY GOD.

a) **I think that’s what Paul was doing in 1 Corinthians 10:31.**

- i) Now of course, those words came in the midst of a context.
- ii) And the issue Paul was dealing with was whether or not those at Corinth could eat meat that was sacrificed to idols.
 - (1) In chapter 8 Paul’s focus was on exhorting believers not to eat meat previously offered to idols in front of other believers who had a weak conscience.
 - (2) In chapter 10:23-26 Paul addressed whether Christians could eat meat of an unknown origin that was brought into the marketplace.
 - (3) And in chapter 10:27-30 Paul addressed whether Christians could eat that same meat in the company of an unbeliever.
- iii) Well, as you can imagine, the Corinthians were probably a little exhausted by these matters.
 - (1) They were probably tired of trying to figure out if and when they could eat meat.
- iv) But it was important that they considered these issues.
 - (1) Because their fellow believers’ consciences were at stake.
 - (2) And their witness with unbelievers was at stake.
- v) So ultimately these issues of eating or not eating meat **were** a matter of peacemaking.
 - (1) And instead of being discouraged or frustrated by these issues, the Corinthians needed to see them as an opportunity - an opportunity first and foremost to glorify God.

b) **Let me explain for a minute what I mean when I say “glorify God.”**

- i) It means to praise and honor and please God.
 - (1) It means to have God directing our thoughts and our words and our works.
- ii) And that’s a big switch from our old way of living isn’t it?
 - (1) You see, prior to God’s grace in our lives, we lived to glorify self...
- iii) But then God poured out His grace in our lives...
 - (1) He opened our eyes to the truth that Jesus came to live a perfect life and bear our sin and rise on our behalf.
 - (2) And now we as Christians get to experience God’s forgiveness and eternal life.
- iv) And that experience of God’s grace should change us.
 - (1) Because of it we should seek every opportunity to glorify God.

- c) **There are several ways we can glorify God when it comes to peacemaking.**
- i) First, we can glorify God in peacemaking by trusting Him.
 - (1) In particular, we need to trust in God's promises.
 - (a) We need to believe that God has not left us alone in our trials.
 - (b) We need to believe that God will give us the grace to have those difficult conversations.
 - (c) And we need to believe that because of Jesus, reconciliation with our brother or sister is not possible, but probable.
 - ii) Second, we can glorify God in peacemaking by obeying Him.
 - (1) And I find that many of us struggle at this point because we're overly focused on results.
 - (a) So for example...when we've been offended by a brother in Christ and Scripture is clear that we should go to him - we don't go because we think "If I address their sin, it will hurt them... or it will push them away... or they may not want to be my friend."
 - (2) But if we forsake God's word because we want a particular result, we're not glorifying God.
 - (a) Instead we're glorifying self or others...
 - (3) So please... focus more on glorifying God than getting results.
 - (a) Even if your brother refuses to respond to your peacemaking, you will at least know that you've been faithful to honor and glorify God!

2) **SERVE OTHERS.**

- a) **Immediately following his exhortation to glorify God, Paul said this in verse 32: "Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God"**
- i) Paul didn't want their decisions to be a stumbling block to anyone – whether Jew, or Greeks, or fellow believers...
 - ii) And that's why he goes in verse 33 and says "I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved."
 - (1) Now when he uses the word "please" in verse 33, he's not using it in the sense of being a people pleaser or trying to gain approval from men.
 - (2) Instead Paul's effort to please everyone is an effort to serve them. (cf. 9.19)
 - (3) And this is what Paul wanted the Corinthians to see as well.
 - (a) Again, they needed to see their decisions to eat or not eat as an opportunity.
 - (b) It was an opportunity not only to glorify God, but to serve others.
- b) **Well, we may not have to fret over decisions of what food to eat with each other, but we do face difficult decisions in our relationships.**
- i) Not only that but at times we face distance and pain and turmoil with each other.
 - (1) And as Christians we must embrace these opportunities to serve.
 - ii) And of course Jesus is our ultimate example in this. (cf. Romans 15:1-3)
 - (1) In fact, Jesus served us to the point of suffering for our sins and facing God's wrath and dying on a cross.
 - (2) And brothers and sisters, in light of Jesus' example, we should be able to serve each other – even when there's distance and pain and turmoil in our relationships.

- c) **One way we can embrace peacemaking as an opportunity to serve others is to remember that...**
- i) when someone sins against us, their sins are **always** greater against God.
 - (1) Consider King David... (cf. Psa 51:4)
 - ii) So regardless of how much someone's sin affects people on a horizontal level, it's even more grievous on a vertical level.
 - iii) And if we can remember that, we are more apt to serve that person.
 - (1) If we remember that their sin is ultimately evidence that their not in the right place spiritually, we should be able to get our focus off of ourselves and our pain.
 - (2) If we remember that their sin against God is even greater than their sin against us, we should be able to serve them.
 - (3) And in those instances we serve them by first reconciling them to God, and then reconciling them to us.

3) **GROW SPIRITUALLY.**

- a) **And I think this is what Paul was getting at in chapter 11 and verse 1.**
- i) Cf. 1 Corinthians 11:1
 - (1) Paul knew that when we follow Jesus, it makes us more like Him.
 - (2) So following Jesus always leads to spiritual growth.
 - (a) And that includes following Jesus in the midst of our relational problems.
 - (b) That too will lead to growth.
 - ii) For many of us, that's hard to accept.
 - (1) We're used to positive things bringing growth in our lives... things like teaching and encouragement and prayer.
 - (2) But Scripture is very clear that negative things can also bring growth in our lives... things like illness and suffering and persecution AND relationship problems.
- b) **Sometimes the process of peacemaking...**
- i) makes us more dependent on God.
 - ii) makes us aware of our indwelling sin.
 - iii) leads us to be more fruitful
- c) **Conclusion**
- i) And so...it's great when we choose to pursue peace.
 - (1) That's the first step in being a peacemaker.
 - ii) But we've got to take the second step.
 - (1) We've got to embrace peacemaking as an opportunity.
 - (2) Because that's what peacemaking is... it's not an accident or an inconvenience or some kind of torture.
 - (a) It's an opportunity.
 - (b) An opportunity to glorify God, server others, and grow spiritually.