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THE BEREANS

ACTS 17:11

"they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so."

Decision making

As the Prince of Peace
Jesus came into the world to bring peace
through reconciliation with God
and between people.

James 3

"17 But the **wisdom from above** is first pure, then **peaceable**, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.

Wisdom from above is a peace
this world cannot give or take away
and would not universally accept

Matthew 10:34-36

"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth.
I did not come to bring peace but a sword."

without peacemakers spreading the Gospel.

Romans 12 - The church's mission = Gospel of PEACE

The root

The means

The fruit

vs.1a 1. Grace of God deeply sensed	vs.14-21 6. Grace and Peace sacrificially given
vs.1ab-2 2. Cross of Christ willingly carried	vs.9-13 5. Love for the brethren openly shown
vs.3-5 3. Body of Christ rightly discerned	vs.6-8 4. Gifts of the Spirit properly used

Romans 12

"14 **Bless those who persecute you**; bless and curse not. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. 16 **Be of the same mind** toward one another; **do not be haughty in mind**, but associate with the lowly. **Do not be wise in your own estimation**. 17 **Never pay back evil for evil** to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men.

18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, **be at peace with all men**.

19 **Never take your own revenge**, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. 20 "But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head." 21 **Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.**"

We are people who long for peace, union, and certainty

but we live in a fallen world that **seeks it on OUR terms only.**

"Those who think they know it all are really disgusting -"

to those of us who do."

Some people **AVOID** all conflict at any cost.



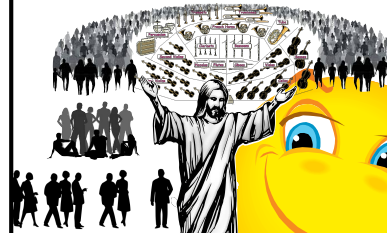
They fear:

- chaos and confusion.
- rejection or hurting others.
- not knowing how to respond to conflict in a wise, constructive way.

The result:

- certainty over minor issues.
- disrespect for the Body of Christ

Peacemakers do not fear diversity because they are not:



are "Body of Christ" builders.



surprised by conflict



shaken by conflict



the source of conflict

They see unity with diversity as a visual aid to and the essence of the Gospel.

The Gospel of PEACE



Peacemakers respect **CONTEXT**.

Some divisions are **NATURAL**

culture, taste, opportunity, etc.

Some divisions are **NECESSARY**

dividing the sheep from the goats.

Matthew 10:34-36

"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword."

1 Corinthians 11

"19 For there must also be factions among you, in order that those who are approved may have become evident among you."

Many divisions are **NONSENSE** making minor issues **MAJOR** issues.

1 Corinthians 1

"10... 12 Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, 'I am of Paul,' and 'I of Apollos,' and 'I of Cephas,' and 'I of Christ.'" 13 Has Christ been divided?"

Peace is **NOT** a virtue if it demands that everything be certain even if its wrong.

1 Corinthians 13:12

"For now we see in a **mirror** dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but **then I shall know fully** just as I also have been fully known."

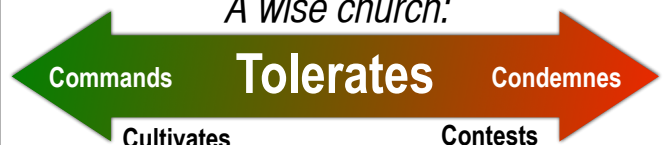
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Diversity can bring chaos & combat when it should be a doorway to clarity & cooperation.



Wisdom is a fixed principle of love applied in flexible contexts! Prov. 26:4-5

A wise church:



An unhealthy church is:



Why it is important for Christian congregations to respect and welcome the whole Body of Christ?

- Making disciples of Christ is incomplete without it.
- Humble, openminded, community is the fruit of it.
- Separating MAJOR from minor doctrine needs it.
- The glory of God deserves and demands it.
- Reaching the world is hindered without it.
- Breadth and depth of spirituality shows it.
- Seeing some things dimly demands it.



Peacemaking is a powerful testimony to God's Gospel of Grace.

1. **Teaching the Full Gospel** - adopted, anointed, alien, ambassadors. (Word & Way of the Cross)
2. **Relating to one another** - functioning as diverse, body parts that love and work together.
3. **Responding to the world** - life's ups & downs.
4. **Nurturing** the weak & immature with patience.
5. The way we relate to the outside world is a **show / tell** ministry of our faith, hope, and love.

Obstacles to peacemaking

1. **Idolatry** - looking for life in all the wrong places.

James 4

"¹ What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that **wage war in your members**? ² You **lust** and do not have; so you **commit murder**. You are **envious** and cannot obtain; so you **fight and quarrel**. . . ."

Conflict must first be resolved **IN US** and then it can be resolved **THROUGH US**.

We MIGHT identify our "functional" messiah by noting:

1. what do we worship, make sacrifices for, & invest in?
2. what triggers our anger or anxiety?
3. what makes us feel alive?

Obstacles to peacemaking

2. **Context** - unrealistic expectations of fallen people living under the Mosaic Law of God.

Proverbs 26:4

"Do not answer a fool according to his foolishness, Or you will also be like him."

Proverbs 26:5

"Answer a fool as his foolishness *deserves*, So that he will not be wise in his own eyes."

3. **Anger & Anxiety** - expecting and penalizing others for not supporting (or being) **OUR MESSIAH** (life-giver).

1 Corinthians 12

"¹⁴ **For the body is not one member, but many.** ¹⁵ If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ **But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.**"

"Body parts" have unique priorities & perspectives that can create conflict & challenge unity.



Each gift may tend to see itself as the center of the Body of Christ.

Peacemaking respects CONTEXT.

Old Covenant

God's Spirit is WITH us!



We seek a word or sign from without.

New Covenant

God's Spirit is IN us!



We seek wisdom from within our renewed mind.

Peacemaking respects **BAPTISM**.

If we don't take it seriously we will not and cannot live out the Body of Christ.

See yourself "in Christ" as a new creature sharing the calling and inheritance of Christ.

Talk to yourself as an adopted, anointed, alien in, and ambassador to this world.

Peacemaking **LISTENS, LEARNS, & LOVES**.

How a church manages diversity will tell you a lot about its authenticity and spiritual health.

A Peacemaker's operations manual

- Understand the values of both sides.
- Clarify common areas of agreement
- Focus on issues not personalities.
- Develop personal relationships.
- Address problems as a team.
- Offer choices and options.
- Listen more than lecture.
- Avoid labeling people.



Assume it starts with us and God, not with us & them or it.

Closing thoughts

1. Take your baptism seriously. Don't confuse a necessary culture war with the world and an unnecessary civil war within the church.
2. View differences as opportunities to grow in wisdom and witness to the world.
3. Grow antenna not horns. Listen, question, seek trusted leader's advice, work for consensus, and act in good faith.
4. Remember that we are both "needed" & "needy".
5. Major on majors, minor on minors. Lighten up.

When we keep the main thing the main thing, the rest works out well.

Conflict is an opportunity for Christians to respond as peacemakers spreading the Gospel of peace.



1 Cor. 13:4-7

Love is patient, kind, not jealous, does not brag, is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly, does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, rejoices with the truth, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Conduct a personal audit. Grade yourself on your response to each of these issues as they come up this month.

a response to:

trials, insults, success of others, success of self, power and authority, freedom, competition, challenging confrontation, injustice, failure of others, gossip and slander, loss, doubts, discouragement, delayed expectations

Wise Decision Making

Seek WISDOM through the N.C. (Spirit) not the O.C. (law)

See ourselves from a Spiritual MINDSET:
Kingdom - adopted, anointed, (life)
World - alien, ambassador, (light)

Submit to the BODY OF CHRIST's diversity - put your best foot forward without losing your balance or kicking your neighbor.

Soothe conflicts as a disciple of the Prince of peace
Peacemakers are ambassadors of the Gospel of peace.

APTOTEACH
A bishop then must be ... apt to teach 1 Timothy 3:2

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