

# Portrait of a Peacemaker

War & Peace Part 1  
James 3:17-18 6-7-2015

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Summary: Natural, human wisdom takes our natural, childish responses and dresses them up like wisdom. But it is still driven by selfish pride. Wisdom from God is first of all pure (because the moment we disobey God, we are not operating in wisdom), and then peaceable, which is the main point of the passage. The rest of the descriptions (gentle, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial, and sincere) are tools in the peacemaker's toolbox. If we sow a little bit of peace, we will reap a great deal of righteousness. Instead of a fight or flight response to conflict, we should have a peacemaking response by overlooking, or using the Matthew 18 process, or pulling in a third party. Peace is tremendously important to God.

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**James 3:13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. 14 But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. 15 Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. 16 For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. 17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. 18 Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.**

## Introduction

God will call us His children, if and only if... How would you expect that sentence to finish? Would you ever think to finish it this way: God will call us His children if and only if we are ... peacemakers? That's what Jesus taught.

**Matthew 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they (and implied – they alone) will be called sons of God.**

The people back then expected the Messiah to arrive as a military leader who would raise an army and defeat Rome, but Jesus comes along and instead of raising an army of warriors, He raised an army of peacemakers.

## The Impossibility of Peace

And you would think that would make Christianity hugely popular in this world – given the high premium everyone seems to place on peace. There is no end to the peace treaties, peace agreements, peace marches, peace talks, peacekeeping forces, peace protests, - to hear them talk, you would think this world is all about peace. But when you look at the results of their peace efforts, it's pretty underwhelming. If a Miss America contestant says her goal is world peace, everyone chuckles at how naïve she is. In December of 1891, the International Peace Bureau was formed to establish world peace. In 1910 they won the Nobel Peace prize. Four years later came World War I - 30 million casualties.<sup>1</sup> They called that war "the war to end all wars." But just in case it didn't, they created another peace-keeping organization. Obviously the Peace Bureau wasn't cutting it, so they organized the League of Nations to maintain world peace. After that Japan attacked China, Italy attacked Ethiopia, Spain had a civil war, the USSR attacked Finland, and the world erupted in the most devastating war in human history – World War II. Just two decades after the war to end all wars came a war that dwarfed World War I – sixty million dead. Meanwhile the League of Nations fell apart because the members were fighting each other. So then they formed the United Nations. Here's their motto: "To have succeeding generations free from the scourge of war." That was in 1945, and not only did they fail to give us succeeding generations without war, they haven't managed to give us one single day in which the world has been free from the scourge of war. If you visit Washington DC, you'll see a lot of peace monuments. The reason they have so many is because they build one after each war.

And even if they could somehow eliminate war, that wouldn't be peace. More people have been murdered in the U.S. than died in all the wars we have ever fought combined. If a hostile nation doesn't come over here and kill us, we'll just kill each other. If there is one thing we as humans cannot do is get along with one another.

Mankind longs for peace, they have no idea how to bring about, so what do they do? Very simple – they lower the bar of the definition of peace. They get the combatants to agree to a slight, temporary reduction in hostilities slightly, and that is considered peace. There are people who have been awarded peace prizes for their work in the Mideast. Think about that. The fact that they got peace prizes for working their magic in the Mideast should tell us one thing – this world's standards for peace are very, very low. And yet even with that definition – still they are utterly incapable of achieving it.

## The Cause of Hostility: Selfish Pride

But in today's passage James is going to show us exactly how. We have been studying verse by verse through the book of James, and we have arrived at what I would call the heart and soul of the book. He was writing to churches that were embroiled in conflict. If James were a police officer, these people would be in jail for disturbing the peace. There were fights and quarrels and disputes - slandering one

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<sup>1</sup> Dead or injured.

another, speaking against one another, judging one another, and in this landmark paragraph at the end of chapter 3, James puts his finger on the cause of it all.

And the cause is not what most people expect. Most people think the cause of hostility is whatever provoked that hostility. They say, “That person made me mad.” But that’s a myth. Anger doesn’t come from the outside; it comes from the inside. That annoying or hurtful or painful thing was just the catalyst that activated something that was already there in the heart.

If you hold a match over a jar with water in it, and then you hold that same match over a jar with propane in it - the second one explodes and the first one doesn’t. Why? Because the match isn’t what causes the explosion. It just activates what’s in the jar. Some people are a jar of water, and other people are jar of propane. James was writing to some churches that had a lot of jars of propane. There were all kinds of explosions and fires in the church.

What was the propane that was causing all these fires? The answer is in verse 16.

**James 3:16 where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.**

The culprit was the hostility that came from selfishness and pride. That is the propane. If a person doesn’t have selfishness and pride in his heart, you can create all kinds of sparks around him, and he’s not going to explode. There is not going to be a fight; there is not going to be a quarrel. But you create those same sparks around someone full of selfishness and pride, and kaboom! You’ll get hostility.

One of the most important questions you can ask when you study a book of the Bible is this: Why was this book written? And when I ask that question about James, I think the answer is pretty straightforward. When James looked across the landscape of the churches he was writing to, he saw a whole lot of proud, selfish people who were suffering. And whenever proud, selfish people run into the sparks of suffering, the result is always the same. They start to mistreat each other.

## **Earthly**

And the world looks at that pride and selfishness and thinks it’s wisdom. In verse 15 James says that wisdom is **earthly**, which means it is natural. It comes so naturally to us that most people consider it common sense. It is the natural way of handling conflict. It doesn’t require any training or education – every one of us had this kind of wisdom mastered when we were two years old. Educated people come up with clever and complicated ways of describing it, to make it look sophisticated. But it is really just the natural expression of selfishness and pride that we were all born with.

This is the wisdom we used to deal with our problems when we are two years old. Then, when we grow up, we take that same human wisdom and study it, attach some really big words to it, organize it into a system, put it in the textbook, and call it science. And the next thing you know it’s being preached from the pulpit and taught in Christian counseling sessions. Elder boards use it to try to deal with problems in the church. And people in the church use it to try to resolve conflicts.

When I was a kid, if someone hurt my feelings I’d take my ball and go home. That was childish. But now if someone hurts me, my therapist helps me separate myself from toxic individuals and establish boundaries to safeguard fundamental consciousness of my self-worth. The same reaction I had as a kid is now dressed up as wisdom.

When I was a toddler, if someone hit me I hit him back. That was childish. But now as a sophisticated adult, if someone does something hurtful, I need to impose remediating consequences so as to enable the person to apprehend the gravity of his actions. And that is considered wisdom.

Beware of common sense when it comes to moral issues, because the sense that is common to man is depraved. It is infected with the disease of selfish pride. And in the first paragraph of chapter 4, James is going to show us that that selfish pride generates desires, and when those desires go unfulfilled, the result is fights and quarrels and hostility. But before we get to that, James is going to show us a beautiful alternative. He is going to paint a powerful, breathtaking portrait of true wisdom.

If you want peace in the church, it is not going to come from policies or programs or processes. It is not going to come from eliminating hardship and difficulties. It is certainly not going to come from reacting to things with human wisdom. But it is attainable. Achieving peace in the church is simply a matter of more and more people in the church growing in the kind of wisdom that James describes in verse 17.

## Wisdom Behaving Beautifully

### The Origin of Humble Wisdom

“But how could wisdom have that much power, to solve all our conflicts and bring peace in the church?”

It has that much power because of where it comes from. Remember last week we saw that the power behind human wisdom comes from hell? The power behind true wisdom also comes from its source, which is God himself. Look what James calls it in verse 17 – **the wisdom that comes from heaven**. It comes from God, and it carries with it the power of God. And here is what it looks like:

### The Nature of Humble Wisdom

**17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.**

James takes true wisdom and holds it up in the light like a diamond, and he turns it to show us eight different facets. Let’s look at them one at a time.

## Pure

### The Primacy of Purity

**17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure**

We tend to use the word **purity** mostly in the context of sexual purity. But it doesn’t have any sexual connotation here. It is simply talking about that which is undefiled in God’s sight – free from sin.

And James uses that phrase **first of all** to draw our attention to the fact purity cannot be moved to any other place in the list – it has to be first. Why? Because the second you violate moral purity, wisdom is out the window. The moment you compromise any command in God’s Word, you are operating 100% in the realm of foolishness and folly. If you are violating any command of God or any principal in God’s Word, there is nothing wise about what you are doing. That’s why righteousness and peace always go together in Scripture.

**Hebrews 12:14 Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy, without which no one will see God.**

## Peace Loving

**17 the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure, then peace loving**

### Definition: When Enemies Become Friends

That is the crux of the passage, so let’s make sure we understand the definition of peace. The world thinks peace is the same thing as a cease-fire. They think you can have all kinds of hostility and animosity in your heart toward someone, but as long as you are amiable and friendly toward each other on the

outside, you are at peace. But God's standard is a lot higher. True peace is much more than just the lack of conflict. There is a lack of conflict in a cemetery, but graveyards are not the standard for peace. Peace isn't the absence of something – it is the presence of something.

There is no peace until relationships are reconciled. And the Greek word for reconciliation means to exchange enmity for friendship and love. Peace happens when enemies become true friends.

And if someone has true wisdom, that will be his priority. It is clear from the context that the main topic James is talking about here is peace. That is the one item from this list that James refers to in his summary statement in verse 18.<sup>2</sup> And yet, even though that's the main topic he has in mind, it is number two in his list. Why? Because there can be no true peace without purity.<sup>3</sup>

## **Holiness (Peace with God) → Peace with Men**

Why is that? It's because if I don't have purity, then I don't have peace with God. And if I don't have peace with God, I can never have true peace with men. It is not a coincidence or a fluke that Cain just happened to murder his brother immediately after having a conflict with God. As soon as he was alienated from God he found himself at odds with his godly brother. That is what causes breaches of peace. So when two people are hostile toward each other in the church, the only way you can reconcile them to each other is if you reconcile both of them to God. Whoever is in sin must be brought back into fellowship with God, which requires repentance.<sup>4</sup>

**Isaiah 32:17 The fruit of righteousness will be peace**

## **Do You Clean Up Your Messes?**

So if unity and peace are that important to God, shouldn't they be supremely important to us? But very often we are reckless and careless with peace. When someone with prideful wisdom sees an error, they just think, "I have to correct that. That statement is wrong, and my job is to expose the wrongness of it." And as long as they do that, just about any approach is justified in their mind - even if they leave a trail of hurt people and crushed spirits in their wake. They don't think about peace. But if you have the wisdom from heaven, you will still deal with sin and error, but you will do it in a way that builds and strengthens the church rather than tearing it down.

What would you do if, when you were parking your car this morning, you weren't paying attention and you clipped the car next to you – put a big dent in it? You would find out whose car it is and offer to get it fixed, right? What if you came in right after the church was cleaned, and spilled something all over the floor? You would clean it up, right? What if you go out in the wind and it blows your hair all crazy? You try to put it back in some kind of order. Children aren't so great at this, and some adults act like children - just making a mess and walking away. But for a normal, responsible adult this is a major part of life for us – we go around messing things up, then fixing them. Mess something up, then fix it.

Think of what church life would be like if everyone had that same approach when it came to peace in the church. Every time they do something that damages it, or disrupts it, or disturbs it, they do everything they can to restore the situation back to peace and harmony. That is guarding the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. But all too often we behave like peace vandals. We vandalize the peace, then just walk away. Somebody hurts me, so I say some hard words to them or about them or whatever, then I

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<sup>2</sup> He talks about peacemakers who sow in peace, and then goes on to explain to them why they don't have peace in their relationships. And in the previous section he just got done talking about disturbances of peace that come in our speech - cursing one another and so on.

<sup>3</sup> This is the same order we see these concepts in the Beatitudes. First, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God," and then Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called sons of God."

<sup>4</sup> And that is why real peacemaking very often leads to persecution against the peacemaker. When Moses tried to be a peacemaker with a couple of his countrymen in Exodus 2, they turned on him and said, "Who made you ruler and judge over us?" These two enemies suddenly became allies to attack anyone trying to bring them to peace. The sinful heart loves its hostility and anger and does not want to let go of it.

just walk away and leave a big relational mess. Such a childish way to live and yet for many people in the church that is standard operating procedure.

## Considerate (Gentle)

So, what does true wisdom from heaven look like? First, it is pure, and then peaceable. That is James' main point, and the rest of the list helps fill out our understanding of what a peaceable person looks like. Number 3 in the list is **considerate**. Your Bible might say **gentle**, which is probably the best translation of this word. It is defined as *gentle, kind, yielding, tolerant*. When this word is used to refer to those in power, it points to justice and treating people fairly. No uneven scales or double standards. No favoritism. No discrimination.

When it is used in relationship to your peers, it just means gentleness. It is the opposite of harshness, fighting, or quarrelsomeness.<sup>5</sup> Picture someone in your mind who is like that – someone who remains soft even when people are hard towards him. That is a mark of true wisdom.

**Proverbs 19:11 A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense.**

## Lincoln and Stanton

And it is amazing the effect that has on people. Abraham Lincoln had a very outspoken enemy by the name of Edwin Stanton. He hated Lincoln. He called him a low, cunning clown, and nicknamed him the original gorilla. Lincoln responded with gentleness. And later on, when it came time to choose a secretary of war for the United States government, Lincoln chose Stanton. Somebody asked, "Why?" He replied, "Because he's the best man."

One biographer said this: "The night when the assassin's bullet tore out Lincoln's life, in the little room to which the President's body was taken, there stood that same Stanton, looking down into the silent face of Lincoln in all its ruggedness, and speaking through his tears, these words: 'There lies the greatest ruler of men the world has ever seen.'" What happened there? What happened was Lincoln pulled a Romans 12:21 on Stanton. He overcame evil with good. When Stanton cursed him, instead of responding in kind, Lincoln responded with blessing.<sup>6</sup> Wisdom from heaven is gentle.

## Submissive

Next in the list is **submissive**. Your Bible might say **compliant** or **open to reason** or **reasonable** or **accommodating**. All of those are good translations of this word. In relation to superiors, true wisdom is obedient and compliant. If you have earthly wisdom, then when someone in authority sets a policy or a rule your first impulse will be to think, "Do I agree with this?" Your first reflex is to pass judgment on the wisdom of the policy and then make a decision about whether or not you will comply or complain. And a lot of your supposed submissiveness is actually grudging or with a bad attitude – which isn't really submission. And people like that always have excuses – "I don't submit to that authority because he has this flaw, and I don't submit to them because they have this flaw." And they cannot seem to find anybody who measures up to the standard so they just aren't under any authority. That is a man who does not trust God. He trusts himself, and that's not someone you want to follow.

But the wisdom that comes from God has a character that is compliant and obedient and submissive – trusting God to lead through that person in authority. And so if you have true wisdom, your first impulse is to simply comply with both the letter and the spirit of the law.

So in relationship to superiors true wisdom is compliant and submissive. In relationship to peers it comes out as being reasonable and open to persuasion. That is not to say that you become so wishy-washy

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<sup>5</sup> See 1 Pe.2:18, 1 Tim.3:3, Tit.3:2.

<sup>6</sup> For a very helpful discussion of this principle see Jay Adams *How to Overcome Evil* pp.52-70.

that you change your view every time someone gives you an argument. You are strong in your beliefs, but you also remain teachable and so you listen to reason.

There are some people who have a reflex of debate. As soon as you express a view different from theirs, before you are even done speaking they are formulating a rebuttal. They don't take any of your words to heart - they just want to win the debate. And on the rare occasion that they are persuaded, it will be because of their own study, or some respected authority – not your influence. Because if someone as lowly as you who persuaded them, that would put a dent in their pride.

That is what earthly wisdom is like, but wisdom from God is the opposite. Wisdom from God will listen, and it doesn't matter if the argument is coming from a brand-new believer or a little child – if it is a sound argument, he will give it a fair hearing and take it to heart.

I think of Nabal and David in 1 Samuel 25. David had made up his mind to kill Nabal. Nabal's wife, Abigail, tried to talk sense into Nabal – but he wouldn't listen. Why? Because he had earthly wisdom. Then Abigail went to David and tried to talk sense into him. David was enraged and had already made the decision to kill Nabal, but he listened to this woman. She made a case for how this thing that David was about to do was the wrong decision. In those days, women were not in a position to offer advice to men who were in power. And yet even though she was a woman, and was the wife of his enemy, David listened. And he took her words to heart. And he realized she was right, and he wasn't too proud to allow himself to be persuaded by her right there in front of all his men.

Again, Abraham Lincoln was a good example of that. He was a very strong man – definitely not wishy-washy or double minded, and yet he listened to dissenting views - even when those views weren't expressed in the kindest way. There was one time when he made a decision about the war and sent that decision in writing to Stanton. And when Stanton read the order, he tore it up and called Lincoln an old<sup>7</sup> fool. So they reported that to Lincoln.

“Stanton called me an old fool?”

Then he was quiet for a few moments and then said, “Well, if Stanton said I'm an old fool, then I must be one, for he is nearly always right.” Lincoln ended up listening to Stanton's arguments, and changed the order.

Proverbs says that as iron sharpens iron so one man sharpens another. But there are some people, when you go to sharpen them, it's like iron trying to sharpen stainless steel. Nothing happens to the steel - the iron just gets all scratched up. Human wisdom actually takes pride in being stainless steel. They are proud of being stronger than everyone around them and unaffected by others' opinions. And they are too foolish to realize that as a result of that, they are as dull as a butter knife.

Think of someone you know who is strong, they know what they believe, they aren't wishy-washy, and yet, they are still open to reason. They listen. And when you have a good argument, they can be persuaded - even if you don't do a good job in your presentation of that argument. Whoever you are thinking of - learn from that person's example.

## Full of Mercy

Next in the list is **full of mercy**. I won't go into a lot of detail in this one because we talked about this already back in 2:12-13. But I will say this - In Matthew 23:23, Jesus called mercy one of **the weightier matters of the law** - more important than tithing. Whenever Jesus wanted to describe a really godly person, He would usually describe someone who was merciful. In Luke 10 when Jesus told a parable about loving your neighbor as yourself, it was a parable about someone who showed mercy (Luke 10:37). And on two different occasions in Matthew Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for not understanding Hosea 6:6 which says **I desire mercy, not sacrifice** (Mt.9:13, 12:7).

Just to refresh your memory on the definition, mercy is that quality that deals with people based on what they need rather than what they deserve – and doing so out of compassion. Mercy is compassion in action. The clearest picture of what mercy looks like is what the Good Samaritan did (Luke 10:37). Mercy

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<sup>7</sup> Actually, he used an expletive rather than the word “old.”

is taking action to help those who are in trouble - even if they are in trouble with you. Remember the guy in Matthew 18 who refused to forgive his fellow servant's debt even his master forgave his huge debt? At the end, when he is punished for that, you expect the master to say it was because he refused to forgive. But instead he says he was turned over to be tortured because he refused to have mercy (Mt.18:33-34). Even more important than forgiveness was mercy.

Such an important virtue, and James says that if you have true wisdom, you will be **full of mercy**. Think of someone you know who is like that – full of mercy. Learn from that person's example.

## Good Fruit

And James adds this - not only full of mercy, but also full of **good fruit**. Jesus talked often about good trees bearing good fruit.<sup>8</sup> It is a word picture that speaks of a person whose heart loves the Lord, and that love for God drives his behavior. That is what true wisdom does. It continually behaves in ways driven by a heart that loves God.

## Impartial

Next, **impartial**. Again, we talked about this at length in chapter 2 in the section on favoritism. Earthly wisdom adjusts its standards based on how much you like the person or some other invalid criterion. Certain people are assessed by one set of criteria, and others are assessed by different standard. It has a really strict standard for enemies, and a much more relaxed standard for friends. Or it might have a more relaxed standard for rich people or attractive people or powerful people. And it might have a stricter standard for poor people or ugly people or whatever ethnic background they don't like. True wisdom treats everyone according to the same standards.

## Sincere

And then finally, true wisdom is **sincere**. Remember, earthly wisdom is driven by selfish pride. And selfish people very often have a hidden agenda when they are talking to you. They are saying what they are saying, not because it is what's in their heart, but in order to manipulate you in some way. Their words are calculated to get you like them, or to give them something they want.

## Flattery

And a lot of times the way they will do that is through flattery. Flattery is when you say positive things about someone in an effort to manipulate that person. It is like the converse of gossip. Someone said gossip is when you say something behind their back that you wouldn't say to their face.<sup>9</sup> Flattery is when you say something to their face that you wouldn't say behind their back. Human wisdom tries to influence people through manipulation. Godly wisdom influences people through inspiration.

If you open up the toolbox of a peacemaker and take a look at the tools that he uses to ply his trade, this is what you'll see: purity, gentleness, submissiveness, reasonableness, mercy, impartiality, and sincerity. Those are the characteristics.

## Peacemaking

So what is the bottom line of all this? James gives us the bottom line in verse 18.

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<sup>8</sup> Given what he said if you versus earlier about the fact that a grapevine can't bear figs and so on, it seems like James must have had Matthew 7 in mind. **Matthew 7:16 By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17 Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.**

<sup>9</sup> This is one form of gossip. There are other forms as well.



## **18 Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.**

Every time you make some effort in the direction of peacemaking, it is like planting a seed. And the most basic principle of farming is that when you plant seeds, you harvest a whole lot more than what you plant. Jesus talked about a harvest being 30, 60, or 100 times what was planted. So the idea is you plant a little bit of peace, and you come away with truckloads of righteousness. Isn't that what we want? All these efforts that we are doing here at church – sermons and small groups and Bible studies and personal discipleship – isn't it all to bring about greater righteousness? Isn't that what you want in your family? Don't you want that in your own life and in your relationships - greater righteousness? James is showing us how we can get truckloads of righteousness. Just plant seeds of peacemaking.

Everything we are trying to accomplish in the church will be so much more successful if we maintain peace. As soon as you have strife in a relationship, the church regresses. But when you step in to a hostile relationship and bring it around to a genuine, warm friendship in the church, you are irrigating a field that will generate huge quantities of righteousness.

## **How to Sow in Peace**

So how do you sow in peace? The best literature I know of on that topic is the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 18, and Romans 12. And if you want a resource that will show you how to apply all those principles in specific situations, an outstanding book on that subject is *The Peacemaker* by Ken Sande. There is also a brochure that summarizes the main points in that book that is an outstanding resource – I use it all the time. If you go to [peacemaker.net](http://peacemaker.net) and click on Peacemaking Principles Pamphlet, you can download it.

But in the last few minutes we have left, let me give you a really quick summary of what Scripture says: When you see conflict in a relationship – either yours or other people's, there are three different ways you can respond. The first two come from natural, earthly wisdom – fight or flight. The fight response goes on the attack.

### **Fight**

Someone hurts you and you respond with some form of revenge.

- Cold shoulder at church
- Gossip
- Slander
- Putting the spotlight on their sins and failures
- Being glad when they suffer
- Litigation (which is forbidden in 1 Corinthians 6)
- And in the most extreme cases, physical assault or even murder.

Some people respond to conflict that way.

### **Flight**

Others respond by just running away. They quit their job. Or leave their church. Or file for divorce. Or give up on a friendship. Or in the most extreme case, commit suicide.

## **Peacemaking**

Both of those come from earthly, unspiritual, demonic “wisdom.” And they result in chaos, tumult, disorder, anger, fighting, and every evil practice. But true wisdom responds to conflict with peacemaking. That is the response of God's wisdom. And here are the basic points from Scripture on how to do that:

## Overlook

First, if you can overlook the offense, overlook it.

**Proverbs 19:11 A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense.**

You don't have to make a federal case out of every offense. If I suspect that they are probably repentant about that character flaw, there is no reason for me to bring it up. When you overlook an offense that means you put it out of your mind, you don't think about it, and it has no impact on how you feel about the person.

## Matthew 18 Process

But in some cases, it would be unloving to overlook the offense. If the person is not repentant, then that sin will cause that person's spiritual harm. And if you love them and care about them, you don't want them to suffer spiritual harm, so you need to do the hard thing and confront them on that sin. Galatians 6:1 says to do it gently, and with humility, but you need to go to them one-on-one and show that person his fault from Scripture. And the goal is to get him to repent. As soon as he repents, you forgive, and it's over. You don't think about it anymore, you don't talk about it, and it doesn't have any impact on how you feel about the person.

If they don't repent, then you bring one or two witnesses and if they still don't repent, bring it before the church, and if they won't listen even to the church, then they are put out of the church. That is the process Jesus spelled out in Matthew 18. If you deviate from that process, or if you skip a step, you will destroy the peace instead of making peace.

## Third Party

And then in some cases, there may be a need for a third party. Two godly women in the church of Philippi couldn't get along, and Paul called a third party to step in and help those women resolve their dispute. If two of you have a dispute over something – maybe a business deal or something else where you both believe the other one is in the wrong, you can bring that to us and we will be happy to provide mediation or arbitration. That is one of the duties of a church in 1 Corinthians 6.

## Conclusion: God's Delight in Peace

You don't have to read far in Scripture to understand that God places a very high premium on peace.

**Psalms 133:1 How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! 2 It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard...**

“Thinking about oil running into some guy's beard doesn't help me, Darrell.”

Let me give you a little background. It is a reference to one of the greatest moments in Israelite history – the ordination of Aaron when God first instituted the ministry of the priesthood in Leviticus 8. The people of Israel have just been freed from Egypt and they are being established as the people of God.

**Leviticus 8:10 Then Moses took the anointing oil and anointed the tabernacle and everything in it, and so consecrated them. 11 He sprinkled some of the oil on the altar seven times...**

There is something you need to know about this oil. Moses did not just grab a gallon of olive oil from King Soopers on the way to the ceremony. There was a prescribed recipe for making the anointing oil in Exodus 30. It was a special mixture of cinnamon, myrrh, cane, olive oil, and cassia – with particular prescribed proportions. No doubt it was an especially delightful smelling mix. But it is not something you would want to get for your wife on Mother's Day – unless you felt like being executed or banished.

**Exodus 30:32 ... do not make any oil with the same formula. It is sacred, and you are to consider it sacred. 33 Whoever makes perfume like it ... must be cut off from his people.**

It was very sacred and holy and whatever it touched was to be regarded as holy. So it was not often the people got to get a whiff of this wonderful smelling oil. And the significance of all that was, once the high priest was anointed with the holy oil, that was the moment when God would come and dwell among His people.

**Exodus 29:44-45 I will ... consecrate Aaron and his sons to serve me as priests. 45 Then I will dwell among the Israelites and be their God.**

But here is the amazing thing – on this one particular day, God told Moses to dump it all over Aaron – not just a little dab on his forehead – but literally pouring it all over him so that it ran down his face and all over his priestly garments. That was a really strong statement about the pleasure of God in His people, and the abundance of the presence of God among them on that day. Let's see if Psalm 133 makes sense to us now.

**Psalm 133:1 Behold how good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! 2 It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down upon the collar of his robes.**

When there is peace and friendship and unity and love among God's people – **Behold, how good and pleasant** that is! The word **good** refers to beauty or excellence. The word **pleasant** means enjoyable, pleasing, or pleasurable. And that is not all. Psalm 133 has three verses, and in verse 3 he gives another illustration of what unity and peace among the brother is like.

**Psalm 133:3 It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.**

Hermon was a high mountain that supplied the surrounding area with moisture – just like Colorado is supplied with water from the runoff from the mountains. When there's not enough runoff, everything is brown. When there's good runoff, everything is green. The effect moisture has on a dry landscape, and the transformation from dead, barren, wilderness to flourishing, thriving profusion of life is the picture the psalmist wants to put in your mind here. When we are at odds with each other God looks down and sees a desert. When there is peace, God looks down and sees a thriving paradise.

Peace among the brothers is good, it is beautiful, it is delightful, it is pleasant and pleasing to God. It is holy, it is fragrant, it is sacred – like the holy oil flooding over Aaron in the first national corporate worship. It is like the refreshing, life-giving moisture of Hermon being poured out all over the dwelling of God's holy people.

**Romans 12:14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. 17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19 Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. 20 On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.**

**Benediction: 2 Corinthians 13:11-14 Finally, brothers ... Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you. 12 Greet one another**

**with a holy kiss...14 May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.**

### **Application Questions (James 1:25)**

1. Of the responses of natural wisdom in conflict (fight or flight), which one do you tend toward the most?
2. In the peacemaker's toolbox, which one are you most in need of in your character (gentle, submissive, reasonable, merciful, impartial, sincere)?
3. Have someone in the group read Romans 12:14-21 out loud slowly. Has anyone ever "pulled a Romans 12:21" on you (repaid your evil with good, or your cursing with blessing)? Describe the effect it had on you. Is there some situation in your life where God wants you to do this right now?