

**Happy the Peacemakers**  
**Matthew 5:9 with 5:21-26**  
By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 5-9-2010

## **Introduction**

We are looking today at the seventh beatitude – “blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God.” Why would He pick peacemaking above everything else as the evidence of our adoption into God’s family? In effect, what He is saying is that when people see you as a successful peacemaker they will think, “You must be a son of God.” Peacemaking is a remarkable evidence of God’s grace.

Even the world recognizes that something is different when you have peace and help to make peace. In the area of politics, I read a statistic that said from the year 1500 B.C. to 1880 AD (which is about a 3300 year span), more than 8000 supposedly permanent peace treaties had been broken. That’s not counting truces. This is 8000 fully worked out permanent peace treaties. That’s an average of 2½ broken peace treaties every year. So when the Gospel will one day cause the nations to beat their swords into plowshares (which the Bible clearly promises), it will be an unusual time in history. Only the Gospel of Jesus Christ could possibly accomplish that on a national level.

Of course, peace within families is also a remarkable thing. Given the depravity of humans, we shouldn’t be surprised by adultery, divorce, anger, discord, and bitterness. What is remarkable is when families literally *overflow* with peace. When that happens, others sit up and take notice because something is different. It is an evidence of sonship. They wish they had the peace that your family has.

But we live in a time of great inner stress for *individuals* as well. In fact, it is astonishing to see how widespread the use of psychotropic drugs has become. It’s almost a situation of “peace-by-medicine.” You lack peace? Then pop a pill. The use of these drugs to control anxiety, anger, depression, and other negative emotions has absolutely skyrocketed in the last few decades. I read a cartoon recently in which the wife calls the doctor saying, “Doctor, come quick! It’s my husband!”

“What’s the matter?” he calmly asks.

Well, he got up this morning and took his vitamin pill. Then he took his appetite suppressant, his anti-depressant, and his tranquilizer. He also took an antihistamine and some Benzedrine. Then he lit a cigarette, and

there was this explosion!” I think the cartoon was poking fun at the prevalence of drugs to fix everything.

How do we avoid explosions and implosions in our lives? How do we experience God’s peace so fully that we overflow with this peace, and become peacemakers ourselves? Christ’s exposition of this beatitude in verses 21-26 helps us to become peacemakers. But before we look at what peacemaking means, let’s sweep aside some counterfeits that are also implied in Christ’s words.

## **I. The How of Peacemaking - No True Happiness Without True Peacemaking Process**

### ***A. What Peacemaking Is Not – Counterfeits to true peacemaking***

#### **1. Not necessarily the absence of conflict (vv. 21-22)**

And I see four counterfeits highlighted in these verses. Some people define peace as the absence of all conflict and strife. There is a certain sense in which that seems logical. Peace seems like a synonym for no conflict. But which is the chicken and which is the egg?

The world hopes that absence of conflict will produce peace. That’s why the United Nations has so-called peacekeeping troops to keep the warring factions apart. And I’ve seen parents do the same thing – they try to separate kids and stop conflict so that there will be peace in the home. But for Jesus, peace is much more than absence of conflict. Biblical peace deals with the causes of war, and as a result it eventually removes conflict, but Biblical peace can exist in the midst of conflict. And even the beatitudes imply that. Before you can be a peacemaker you’ve got to go through the mourning that happens with confrontation of sin. And the stallion has to be made meek through taming. In fact, if you put absence of conflict before peace, it is guaranteed you will have neither. Let’s look at Christ’s exposition, beginning in verse 21.

Verse 21 says, “**You have heard that it was said to those of old, “You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.”** The Bible didn’t say that second part. It says that murderers shall surely be put to death. The Bible said that murderers aren’t just in *danger* of judgment – they were *required* to be both judged *and* put to death. It was the one crime where there was no exception to the death penalty. There was no leniency even when there was repentance. The Pharisees were less strict than the Bible in both verses 21 and 22. With regard to murder, they gave warnings. Their idea of toughness was to tell people to “Cut it out.

You might be in danger of judgment.” It sounds just like our soft courts today. They were seeking to be peacemakers by softening the requirements of God’s law, but still appearing to be tough. What happens when you seek peace by going soft? Murderers get bolder, don’t they?

And this is true whether the murder is national murder or individual murder. Deuteronomy 20 describes how to engage in war against a murdering city that has been hostile to you. According to Deuteronomy 20, what you do is to arm yourself to the teeth, go to this rogue state prepared to fight against it (that’s verse 10), and after you bring your weapons and are prepared to fight them, the text says, “**then proclaim an offer of peace to it.**” If they accepted the offer of peace their lives were spared and they were forced to pay damages. If they rejected peace, the males were killed. That’s how you deal with terrorists and rogue city-states. It will make honest citizens defect and choose sides rather quickly. But I find it interesting that Deuteronomy 20 calls this peacemaking. Ignoring these thugs does not produce peace. Passivity does not produce peace. On the other hand, Scripture warns us against meddling with countries that we have no business with. America has done the exact opposite on both of those points. We coddle those who deserve to be hammered, and we hammer those that we have no business warring against.

But the point here is that stepping down and being soft always encourages evil. Well, the same is true on an individual level. If you refuse to fight evil because you want peace, you are pursuing a counterfeit peace. Passivism just encourages evil men to get worse. Colt called one of their guns “The Peacemaker,” and that is an excellent use of language. Liberal gun control laws simply do not understand human nature. They are seeking to bring peace by insisting on non-resistance on the part of citizens. True peace making is not going soft like the Pharisees did in verse 21 – in *danger* of judgment. True peace making will execute murderers.

Look at verse 22 – “**But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire.**” This indicates first of all, that God Himself is in conflict with sinners. Is God committed to peace? Yes He is. But He doesn’t do so by ignoring sin. How will He bring peace to planet earth? Part of the process is grace. But another part of the process is judgment. It is casting sinners out of the world and into hell.

But notice also his reference to the church council. Christ is saying that this kind of conduct can eventually lead to church discipline. I was

talking with an elder from the PCUSA (a liberal denomination here in town) and I asked him how he could call himself an evangelical right-winger when he was unwilling to discipline abortionists and homosexuals in his congregation. His reply was that he didn't want to be divisive, didn't want conflict, and wanted to maintain the peace of the church. Well that is a counterfeit peace that has Christ's anathemas placed upon it. That is peace at any expense. That is peace without the truth. In fact, it is peace without love because Hebrews 12 tells us that where there is no discipline, there is no true love.

For those who want peace without being willing to fight for peace, I point to the cemetery. There is no conflict or strife in the cemetery, but we don't look to the cemetery for a model of God's peace. As God sees it, peace is far more than the absence of something. You can have the absence of something and be dead. Peace is not just stopping a war; peace is resolving the problems that caused the war in the first place. One of the ironies that we find in the Bible is that it was often the true peacemakers who were embroiled in the most conflict. Christ was the Prince of Peace, yet three times in John's Gospel we are told there was division because of Him (John 7:43; 9:16; 10:19). Likewise at His trial, Luke 23:5 tells us that His accusers complained, "**He stirs up the people.**" Christ said, "**He who is not for Me is against Me.**" The apostle Paul was called the ambassador of peace, yet men said of him, "**We have found this man a plague, a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world.**" Why would these great promoters of true peace be so frequently embroiled in controversy and conflict? In today's postmodern thinking, it just doesn't compute. But it *is* very logical.

Let me read you a couple of Scriptures that explain why Christ and Paul faced conflict when they sought to promote peace. Isaiah 32:17 says, "**The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever.**" God says that righteousness produces the kind of peace He is interested in. Now that means that those who hate righteousness are going to oppose these kinds of peacemakers. Christ sought to bring peace by dealing with sin, the enemy to peace. But since that was the kind of peace that He was interested in, they crucified Him.

James 3:17-18 says much the same as Isaiah 32. It says, "**But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable...**" *First pure, then peaceable.* That's why the order of the beatitudes has purity of heart before peacemaking. If you reverse the order you could get an ungodly peacemaking. God is not interested in the kind of peacemaking that boasts in

compromise and accommodation to sin. That is the peacemaking of the world. “**The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever.**” If you are interested in purity and righteousness, then the last beatitude indicates that it is inevitable that you will suffer persecution. It is guaranteed. 2Timothy 3:12 says, “**all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.**” The world does not always appreciate God’s methods of peacemaking. That is why David said, “**I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war**” (Psalm 120:7). So the first counterfeit to true peace is insisting that there cannot be any conflict or controversy. This is the way many churches function. They don’t want you to talk about anything except the core of the Gospel because they don’t want conflict.

## **2. Not glossing over an issue or simply declaring a temporary ceasefire (v. 24)**

Counterfeit 2 is related. Let me read verses 23-24:

**Matthew 5:23 Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,**

**Matthew 5:24 leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.**

Christ is advocating more than a truce. A truce just says that you don’t shoot for a while. You’re just giving each other breathing room. But peace comes when the truth is known, the issue is settled, and the parties commit to pursuing purity and righteousness. A truce evades issues, whereas Biblical peace conquers the problem. A truce stops some of the hostile exchanges, but peace builds bridges. Sometimes that means pain. Discipline (for example) is as an unpleasant task for the elders. But the results of true peace are worth it. Often a sermon has to hurt before it can heal. Often you have to get mad at me as pastor before you can realize the joy of righteousness and be happy with me. So the second counterfeit peace is simply glossing over issues or asking for a temporary ceasefire.

## **3. Not insisting that everyone agree with me (v. 25)**

The third counterfeit is to insist that peace can only be on my terms and if you agree with me on every point. And you can see that in verse 25. Some people are bulldogs who simply will not let go of an issue whether they are right or wrong. For them peace means that the others have to capitulate. But if all of us have blindspots, we ought to at least consider the remote possibility that we might be wrong. Being willing to admit to our faults even when we feel we are only 10% at fault is a great virtue of peacemakers.

#### 4. Not The Absence Of Anger (v. 22 in Majority Text)

But there is one last counterfeit to peace that I need to deal with, and that is the common assertion that all anger is inconsistent with peacemaking. If you have a NASB or an NIV look in the margins of your Bibles at verse 22. Your margins should say something to the effect of “some manuscripts insert here ‘without cause.’” The reality is that only three manuscripts out of 2,328 leave it out. It’s clearly part of the text.

So what Christ said was, “**whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.**” He left open the possibility that some anger is appropriate to the peacemaking process. In Ephesians 4 Paul is dealing with the “how to” of being peacemakers. The theme verse is verse 3: “**endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**” So the whole context deals with the Spirit’s peacemaking. Yet one of His commands in this peace chapter is given in verse 26. He commands us, “**Be angry, and do not sin, do not let the sun go down on your wrath.**” He is saying that even though anger is dangerous and it has to be handled properly, there are times where anger is essential to the peace making process. Christ, the Prince of Peace was angry on several occasions. Paul was very angry in the book of Galatians because he knew that the false brethren were destroying the church. If you don’t have anger over abortion, there is something wrong.

#### *B. What Peacemaking Is*

##### 1. Control your temper and recognize the danger of anger (v. 22a)

But I want to spend the remainder of the sermon looking at what true peacemaking is. Jesus speaks of at least nine factors that make for good peace making. First, he speaks of the need to control our tempers and warns of the danger of anger. Verse 22 says,

**But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in *danger* of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, “Raca!” shall be in *danger* of the council. But whoever says, “You fool!” shall be in *danger* of hell fire.**

Three times He speaks of danger, danger, danger. Uncontrolled emotions are dangerous and can cause great harm. That’s not to say that all anger is sinful. We’ve already seen that that is not the case. But we do need to learn how to control our tempers. Much discord and division has occurred because people say things in the heat of emotion. Peacemakers have learned to be mature in their emotions. If you have never worked at sanctifying your

emotions to the Lord, realize that they are not neutral. Emotions can be powerful servants of Christ or become dangerous tools of the devil.

## **2. Kill the problem (the “cause”) instead of the person (vs. 21,22)**

The second factor that Jesus highlights is that we must learn to kill the problem rather than the person. Too many times peacemakers come in to fix a problem, but they end up so frustrated with the lack of progress that they attack the person and want to ring his neck. The end result is worse than before the peacemaker even came in.

Jesus implies that there can be righteous anger when He adds the qualifying phrase, “without cause.” But even with righteous anger, the focus of godly anger should be the *cause* that verse 22 speaks of, not the person himself.

The reason this is important is because anger is always a destructive force. It was designed by God to motivate us to not be apathetic about evil. Anger can be a good and a holy tool. It is designed by God to destroy obstacles to righteousness. But Satan tries to get us to misuse it by either clamming up or blowing up. When we clam up, the destructive force of anger becomes internalized and ends up hurting and destroying our bodies and our souls. We can end up bitter, frustrated, and even have physical diseases. Anger is always a destructive force. So clamming up is not helpful.

But blowing up doesn't help either, because the anger is used to destroy people, and in these verses you can see the anger being used in verbal abuse – calling people empty-heads, fools, and other names. Where are the arrows going? Not into the problem. The arrows are going into the person himself. When couples start getting bitter with each other, I keep reminding them that they aren't each other's enemy – the world, the flesh, and the devil are your enemies, and you need to gang up together against a common enemy.

Anger when rightly used can sometimes be expressed. But there may be times that others don't even know you are angry. The anger is simply keeping you from being apathetic, and making you determined to keep praying and working on the problem until it is dealt with. So kill the problem, not the person.

## **3. Choose your words very carefully (v. 22)**

The third key ingredient to being a peacemaker is to choose your words very carefully. You can see that these first three points are very closely related. When we don't control our emotions, it is easy to let words

fly that we later regret. Christ doesn't laugh at words like "empty head," or "fool." He treats the barbs that we throw at each other very seriously. Those are words designed to wound. And those words can never be taken back. Words have the power to deeply wound, and once wounded, people tend to close up emotionally and to cut off communication. The more people clam up, the harder it is to be a peacemaker in their lives. Reconciliation becomes even harder.

Let me read a verse from Ephesians 4. This forbids destroying or tearing down another person with our words. After commanding us to have a sinless anger he says, "**Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but [only] what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.**" He gives four rules for all our speech, and indicates that our anger is automatically ungodly if we lack these four things. 1) The first rule is that our speech must be good rather than corrupt. This means that we must quit using the f word, or other crude language when talking with each other. 2) The second rule is that our speech must be necessary, or needed speech. Scripture says that in the multitude of words there is no lack of sin. When we are peacemaking in the context of anger, it is even more critical that we ask ourselves if what I am about to say is really that necessary. 3) The third rule is that our speech must be edifying or building up the person, rather than tearing them down. When people see that you care for them and are bringing correction out of love, you are much more likely to be received than if they perceive you as out to get them. 4) The last rule is that it must impart grace to the hearers. This means it is speech that is bathed in prayer, and dependent upon the Holy Spirit. Peacemaking is not an easy thing. And the kinds of words that Jesus records in verse 22 – "Raca!" and "Fool!", are not helpful in peacemaking.

#### **4. Don't wait for the other person to make the first move (v. 23)**

The fourth component of godly peacemaking is recorded in verses 23-24.

**Matthew 5:23 Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,**

**Matthew 5:24 leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.**

Don't wait for the other person to make the first move. Here was a situation where the person was in the temple with a sheep to make an offering, and the Holy Spirit convicts him that he had done something that had hurt his brother. The other brother hadn't even approached him yet. And



Jesus says that even though it will be inconvenient to leave the sheep that you were going to offer up as a sacrifice and come back later, do it.

Perhaps the Holy Spirit has convicted you that you might have offended someone with something you said. And as you argue with the Spirit, your thought might be “If he has a problem, he can tell me he has a problem. That’s what I would do. It’s up to him to come to me if I have offended him. He hasn’t approached me about it, so I’m not going to worry about it.” But Jesus says, “No. Even if that other person never approaches you, you are responsible to make the first move.”

And by the way, this principle is true whether you are in the wrong or whether the other person is in the wrong. Matthew 18 is a situation where the other person is in the wrong, and Jesus still says that you need to make the first move. Not everyone is mature enough to make this first move. They aren’t peacemakers yet. But you can model to them that this is the Christian way of peacemaking.

Other passages indicate that we ought to develop tough skin and not confront people about every possible issue. But this is focusing on repenting and resolving issues with others where we are in the wrong, no matter how insignificant those issues might be. Make sure that there isn’t anything that others could rightly hold against you.

##### **5. Value relationships over performance (vs. 23-24)**

The fifth characteristic of a genuine peacemaker is that he values relationships over performance. The verses I just read show that reconciling with a brother is more important than even worship. We can be so ministry and performance oriented that we miss the fact that our relationships are beginning to be hurt. But Jesus wants us to value relationships more than performance.

Now I should point out that just because you have tried to be a peacemaker and just because you have done what Christ calls for here doesn’t mean your brother will respond with joy. In fact, there may be times where you ask forgiveness and try to be reconciled, but the other person refuses. So Romans 12:18 says, “**If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.**” It won’t always be possible. You can’t control what values other people have. But if you are to be a peacemaker, make sure that you value relationships over performance.

**6. Be quick to resolve broken relationships – don't let them fester (v. 24)**

The sixth principle is that we need to be quick to resolve broken relationships. It's obvious that if Jesus was advocating walking out of a worship service to quickly get reconciled before coming back in, that He didn't want us to allow any time to pass where negative feelings could fester. We need to be quick.

**7. Seek to win the person ("be reconciled") rather than to win the argument (v. 24)**

The seventh principle can be seen in the words "be reconciled." Peacemaking is not about winning arguments; it's about winning people. And you can't win the person very effectively if you are doing everything in the book to win the argument (including arguing unfairly and meanly). Seek to win the person rather than simply to win the argument.

**8. Try to have a win-win situation. Avoid courts because they almost always tend to be win-lose situations where one party will be permanently alienated (vs. 25-26)**

The eighth principle that we see in these verses is that we should try to make it a win-win situation if possible, rather than a win-lose adversarial situation. Some people automatically think litigation when an offense occurs. Using the courts, whether civil courts or ecclesiastical courts, should be a last resort. But look at Christ's attitude toward courts:

**Matthew 5:25 Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison.**

**Matthew 5:26 Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.**

Courts almost always end up being a situation that is so costly in terms of time, energies, money, and emotions, that the rift is made permanent. And part of the reason is that courts can only deal with justice. They are focused on technical detail, procedures, evidence, etc.; there is no room for reading between the lines or taking circumstances into consideration. It ends up with one side winning and the other side losing in a big way (and not always in terms of justice). Jesus assumes a situation where you are in the wrong (or at least partly in the wrong), and He says that it will be much better (even financially) if you try to settle outside of court. Scott has a burden to eventually start a reconciliation service with mediation and arbitration. It's a much better peace-making process. And if we had time we could get into 1Corinthians and show how we shouldn't ever take a

Christian to a pagan court. But that's a different issue than what I am dealing with here. The point here is that if you are seeking a win-win situation, the use of courts should be rare.

He is saying that if you have done something to infuriate an unbeliever, swallow your pride and seek to make amends as soon as possible outside of court. Don't hold out in the hopes that you will win the case. Even if you do get a fair shake in court, it is highly unlikely that you will be able to be a peacemaker. There are some good non-peacemaker purposes for courts. It is much better for you, and much better for your testimony if you instantly acknowledge your wrong and agree to pay a fair settlement. And that is true today as well. I have seen people who were at fault not only pay for the damages that they owe, but also pay court costs and other expenses as the legal battles drag out. And Christ is saying that a true peacemaker is not going to have a fighting, non-yielding spirit when he is at fault. He will pay what he owes cheerfully and in the name of Christ. Obviously there are complications in our modern messed-up court system where you will get the bad end of the stick if you are partly guilty and plead to that part. You might need to get a lawyer to help get justice. That's a different situation.

### **9. Keep in mind the consequences of failing to be a peacemaker (vs. 25-26)**

The final issue that a peacemaker needs to always keep in mind is the consequences. What are the consequences of not peacemaking? Certainly peacemaking is tough, and sometimes painful, but the consequences of failing to do so may be even worse. And that is implied in verses 25-26. This is not pure pragmatism. This is simply realizing that God's way does eventually pay off.

## **II. The Payoff - Peacemaking Brings Joy (“Blessed”) and Gives Clear Evidence That We Are “Sons Of God”**

But I want to end with the dual pay-off of this beatitude. It says, “Blessed” are the peacemakers, so there is the happiness and the blessing of the Lord in our lives. And secondly, “they shall be called the sons of God,” which points to the testimony to God's grace that we exhibit.

Let's deal with the pay off of a good testimony. Notice that it doesn't say they shall *become* sons, but be *called* sons. They are already sons in beatitude 1, but here people *see* the marvelous change that we have as we become conformed to the image of our heavenly Father. One of the ways that people recognize that we are truly sons of God is when they begin to see a family resemblance. 1 Corinthians 14:33 says, “**God is not the author of**

**confusion but of peace.”** Romans 15:33 calls Him the **God of peace**. And if we are sons, then some of that peace will be inherited by us. Galatians says, **“The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace.”** All those who are born of God ought to eventually begin to see evidence of this fruit in their lives. These are attributes that distinguish us from the unregenerate. So there is the payoff of a good testimony.

But there is also the payoff of happiness and blessing from the Lord. Each of these beatitudes ushers us into the joy of seeing God’s power at work in our lives more and more. It ushers us into more and more of God’s blessing. Joseph could have been vindictive against his brothers who had sold him into slavery, but look at the joy and blessing that his peacemaking brought. When God asked Job to offer sacrifices for his three tormentors, to forgive them, and to pray for them, He was asking Job to be a peacemaker. And Job 42:10 says,

And the Lord restored Job’s losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.

Notice the “when.” There was a direct connection between his peacemaking and God’s blessing. And the chapter goes on to speak of other blessings that flowed from his peacemaking. The pay-off of blessing and testimony is worth the effort of implementing peacemaking. Be peacemakers. Amen.

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## Matthew 5:9 with 5:21-26

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 5-9-2010

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