

**The hurting church is not an occasional dilemma.** More and more often we find people who have been hurt deeply within the family of God, leaving them worn and exhausted. More and more often we find leaders in conflict within the body of believers, robbed of the joy Jesus promised in Him. When we find this hurt hanging on to our own bruised soul, it can make us want to leave the church and sometimes even want to “back burner” our God who seems to have allowed it all.

Sadly, we have come to accept that this is the way church is. There is an epidemic of fractured believers out there and we have come to accept this as the norm. We either stay away and let our hearts become cold or we put on our Sabbath best, call “forward march” and hope the problems will just go away. The hurt in individual hearts and churches gets buried ... until it gets bumped again.

I am continually amazed at the simplicity of God’s Word and the direct instructions He shares with us. The Father’s heart toward us, His children, is so open and loving as He instructs us in living in the day-to-day challenges of rubbing shoulders where the rubber meets the road.

**The steps God gives us are simple, though not necessarily easy.** They are steps that can help us move from being reactive in conflict to becoming proactive in guarding our hearts and our churches. And, as steps always do, they will take us to higher ground where we can live above disunity and confusion.

The framework these steps are built on is love. Love is also the handrail that helps move us along from one step to another. Without love, the steps move us from the fulfillment of right living that God calls us to, to self-righteous living, which is hollow and void of the power of the Holy Spirit. God says our trademark will be love. *“By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”* (John 13:35)

Attached you will find an outline to these special biblical steps. Please look them over carefully. Tonight we have a special business meeting scheduled. I am asking that as many people as possible attend this very important meeting where we will talk about these steps to biblical peacemaking and make a commitment to them as a church for the glory of God. The first step toward being a united church is choosing to be a peacemaking church that values reconciliation.

Pastor Tim Madding,  
*DMin*



## Commitment to Peacemaking and Reconciliation

*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God (Matt. 5:9).*

Our church is committed to building a “culture of peace” that reflects God’s peace and the power of the gospel of Christ in our lives. As we stand in the light of the cross, we realize that bitterness, unforgiveness and broken relationships are not appropriate for the people whom God has reconciled to himself through the sacrifice of his only Son (John 13:34-35; Eph. 4:29-32; Col. 3:12-14).

Therefore, we look to the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit for guidance on how we can respond to conflict in a way that will honor God, promote justice, reconcile relationships, and preserve our witness for Christ. As God gives us his wisdom and grace, we are committed to actively teaching and encouraging one another to live out the following principles of peacemaking and reconciliation:

### Personal Peacemaking

- Whenever we are faced with conflict, our primary goal will be to glorify God with our thoughts, words and actions (1 Cor. 10:31).
- We will try to get the “logs” out of our own eyes before focusing on what others may have done wrong (Matt. 7:3-5).
- We will seek to overlook minor offenses (Prov. 19:11).
- We will refrain from all gossip<sup>1</sup>, backbiting and slander (Prov. 26:20; Eph. 4:29-32; Rom. 1:29–32). If we have a problem with others, we will talk with them, not about them.
- We will make “charitable judgments” toward one another (the benefit of the doubt) by believing the best about each other until we have facts that prove otherwise (1 Cor. 13:7).
- If an offense is too serious to overlook, or if we think someone may have something against us, we will go promptly to seek reconciliation (Matt. 5:23-24; 18:15).
- When we offer a word of correction to others, we will do so graciously and gently, with the goal of serving and restoring them, rather than beating them down (Prov. 12:18; Eph. 4:29; Gal. 6:1).
- When someone tries to correct us, we will ask God to help us resist prideful defensiveness and to welcome correction with humility (Ps. 141:5; Prov. 15:32).
- When others repent, we will ask God to give us grace to forgive them as he has forgiven us (Eph. 4:32).
- When we have wronged or damaged another person, entity, or society we should make restitution if at all possible (Num. 5:5-8, Luke 19).
- When we discuss or negotiate substantive issues, we will look out for others’ interests as well as our own (Phil. 2:3-4).

---

<sup>1</sup> **Gossip** is the sharing of personal or private information about someone else. Note: This definition is not based on whether the information is factual or “good.”

### **Assisted Peacemaking**

- When two of us cannot resolve a conflict privately, we will seek the mediation of wise people in our church and listen humbly to their counsel (Matt. 18:16; Phil. 4:2-3). If our dispute is with a church leader, we will look to other leaders for assistance.
- When informal mediation does not resolve a dispute, we will seek formal assistance from our church elders who will consider the situation carefully and we will submit to their counsel and correction (Matt. 18:17-20).
- When we have a business or legal dispute with another Christian, we will make every reasonable effort to resolve the conflict within the body of Christ through biblical mediation or arbitration, rather than going to civil court (1 Cor. 6:1-8). If the other party attends another church, our leaders will offer to cooperate with the leaders of that church to resolve the matter.
- If a person coming to our church has an unresolved conflict with someone in his former church, we will assist him to make every reasonable effort to be reconciled to the other person (Matt. 5:23-24; Rom. 12:18).
- When a conflict involves matters of doctrine or church discipline, we will submit to the procedures set forth in our Church Manual.

Above all, we pray that our ministry of peacemaking will bring praise to our Lord Jesus Christ and lead others to know his infinite love and peace.