

Peacemaking

Responding to Conflict Biblically

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Session 3 *Trust in the Lord and Do Good*

“The LORD’s unfailing love surrounds the man who trusts in him” (Psalm 32:10).



Introduction

Allow 10 Minutes

Opening Prayer

Thank God for each member present. Ask for His wisdom and insight as we study peacemaking.

Group Member Devotional Reading prior to this session:

Psalm 32
Psalm 62
Proverbs 3

Sharing Questions

What do you fear most about conflict?

Personal response.



Self-Awareness

Allow 20-25 Minutes

The more you trust God, the easier it is to do his will. This is especially true when you are involved in conflict. If you believe God is watching over you with perfect love and unlimited power, you will be able to serve him faithfully as a peacemaker, even in the most difficult circumstances.

Read Chapter 3 from *The Peacemaker* for further preparation for this session.

God has continued to provide us with examples of the kind of trust that honors him. One of the most profound examples in recent years was given by Jim and Elisabeth Elliot. In 1956, Jim and four other missionaries were murdered when they tried to carry the gospel to the Aucas, an isolated tribe in South America. Elisabeth was deeply grieved by the loss of her husband, and she had to wrestle through many unanswered questions. As this excerpt from her subsequent book reveals, she continued to trust in the sovereignty of God:

To the world at large this was a sad waste of five young lives. But God has his plan and purpose in all things. . . . The prayers of the widows themselves are for the Aucas. We look forward to the day when these savages will join us in Christian praise. Plans were promptly formulated for continuing the work of the martyrs (Elliott, pp. 252-254).

The widows carried on the work their husbands had begun. Three years after the killings, God answered their prayers and began to open Auca hearts to the gospel. Even some of the men who had killed the five missionaries eventually came to Christ. Although

Elisabeth praised God for the conversions he brought about, she acknowledged they were not the sole measure of God's purpose in her husband's death. In 1981, she added an epilogue to her book which included these words:

The Auca story . . . has pointed to one thing: God is God. If He is God, he is worthy of my worship, and my service. I will find rest nowhere but in his will, and that will is infinitely, immeasurably, unspeakably beyond my largest notions of what he is up to. God is the God of human history, and he is at work continuously, mysteriously, accomplishing his eternal purposes in us, through us, for us, and in spite of us. . . . Cause and effect are in God's hands. Is it not the part of faith simply to let them rest there? God is God. I dethrone him in my heart if I demand that he act in ways that satisfy my idea of justice. . . . The one who laid the earth's foundations and settled its dimensions knows where the lines are drawn. He gives all the light we need for trust and obedience (Elliott, pp. 268-269, 273).

What was it that allowed these missionaries to keep going in spite of these challenges?

Although we can be sure God is always working for our good and the good of others, even through trials and suffering, we will not always know exactly what that good is. In many cases his ultimate purposes will not be evident for a long time and in some situations his ways and objectives are simply too profound for us to comprehend, at least until we see God face-to-face (see Romans 11:33-36). Trusting God means that in spite of our questions, doubts, and fears, we draw on his grace and continue to believe that God is loving, that he is in control, and that he is always working for good. Such trust helps us to continue doing what is good and right, even in difficult circumstances.

The Bible is filled with examples of people who experienced all kinds of misgivings and yet continued to trust in God. For example, when Job suffered incredible hardship, he voiced many doubts and apprehensions. Even so, he eventually understood that God's plan could not be thwarted. (See Job 42:2-3.)

Describe a trust issue in your life that has reminded you of Job.

Among other things, they had the humility to recognize the limits of their own understanding and the wisdom to bow before God's eternal purposes. Through prayer, study, and experience, they learned to trust completely in the sovereignty of God.

Personal response.

Spiritual Awareness Lead-In

The Apostle Paul had the same habit of trusting God regardless of his circumstances. In Philippi, he and Silas were falsely accused, severely flogged, and thrown into prison. Incredibly, instead of wallowing in doubt or despair, they spent the night “praying and singing hymns to God” (Acts 16:25).

How did God respond in this conflict?



Spiritual-Awareness

One reason Jesus and Paul trusted God so completely was that they knew he was in complete control of everything that happened in their lives. This perfect control is often referred to as “the sovereignty of God.” The Bible provides many examples of people who trusted God even in the midst of terrible hardship and suffering.

Matthew 26:42; Luke 23:46; 1 Peter 2:23

Jesus was faced with the horror of the cross.

What was Jesus’ primary focus in these verses?

2 Timothy 1:12

The Apostle Paul responded to his imprisonment, suffering, and impending execution in a manner that showed trust in God.

Describe this trust in your own words.

Isaiah 46:9-10

God is sovereign. To be sovereign means to be supreme, unlimited, and totally independent of any other influence.

By bringing about an earthquake, the conversion of the jailer and his family, and an apology from the city officials. See Acts 16:16-40.

Allow 20-25 Minutes

Trust in God
“May your will be done” (Matthew 26:42).

“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit” (Luke 23:46).

“He entrusted himself to him who judges justly” (1 Peter 2:23).

He knew why he was suffering (for the cause of Christ). He was not ashamed of his difficulties. He was convinced that God was able to guard what he had “entrusted to him for that day.”

<p>How do these verses describe God's sovereignty?</p>	<p>We are reminded that God was there in the past and He is without compare. He spans the total time frame—"I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. . . . My purpose will stand" (v 10).</p>
<p><i>Psalm 135:6-7; Colossians 1:16-17</i> God's sovereignty extends over both creation and preservation.</p> <p>In light of Colossians 1:17, how does God prevent creation from becoming chaotic?</p>	<p>"In him all things hold together."</p>
<p><i>Proverbs 21:1; Daniel 2:20, 4:35</i> God rules over all governments.</p> <p>What in Daniel 4:35 shows His unlimited powers in heaven and on earth?</p>	<p>"No one can hold back his hand or say to him: 'What have you done?'"</p>
<p><i>Jeremiah 18:6; Ephesians 1:11-12; James 4:13-15</i> He alone controls individual lives and destinies. James 4:13-15 describes different aspects of one's life—determination, time, business, and economy.</p> <p>What important statement should always be a part of life decisions and choices?</p>	<p>"If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that" (James 4:15).</p>
<p><i>Ezekiel 33:11; James 1:13-14</i> God takes no pleasure in what is hurtful, and he is never the author of sin. Yet for his eternal purposes, he sometimes allows suffering and permits unjust acts by men and women—he decides not to restrain even though he has the power to do so. Jesus' death on the cross is an example of his restraint in order to accomplish his plan of redemption.</p> <p>What in James 1:13 shows us that Jesus is not the author of sin?</p> <p>God exercises ultimate control and works things out for his good purposes. At the right time, God will administer justice and right all wrongs. See Proverbs 16:4-5.</p>	<p>"For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone."</p>

Matthew 12:36

The fact that God has ultimate control does not release us from responsibility for our actions.

Describe the accountability in this verse.

"[We] will have to give an account on the day of judgment for every careless word [we] have spoken."

Psalms 62:11-12

The foundation for our trust in God is found in these verses.

What are they?

His strength and love.

If all we knew was that God is in control, we could have reason to fear. Indeed, if He used His power arbitrarily, sometimes for good and sometimes for evil, we would be in great danger; but this is not the case. God is good—His power is always wielded with perfect love.

Trust Is a Decision

Your view of God will have a profound effect on how much you trust him. If you do not believe He is both sovereign and good, trust will be an elusive thing for a god who is loving but not in control is simply "a heavenly Santa Claus . . . who means well, but cannot always insulate his children from trouble and grief" (Packer, p. 145). Such a god offers little security or hope in the face of affliction and fails to inspire either trust or obedience.

On the other hand, if you believe God is sovereign and good, you will be able to trust and obey him even in the midst of difficult circumstances. See Proverbs 3:5-6.



Application

Allow 20 Minutes

When you are involved in a conflict, you must decide whether or not you will trust God. Trusting God does not mean believing that he will do all that you want, but rather that he will do everything he knows is good. If you do not trust God, you will inevitably place your trust in yourself or someone else, which ultimately leads to grief. On the other hand, if you believe God is sovereign and that he will never let anything into your life unless it can be used for good, you will see conflicts not as accidents but as opportunities. This kind of trust glorifies God and inspires the faithfulness needed for effective peacemaking.

If you are presently involved in a conflict, these questions will help you to apply the principles presented in this session.

- ❶ Have you been looking at this dispute as something that happened by chance, as something done to you by someone else, or as something God allowed in your life for a specific purpose? Describe.
- ❷ What questions, doubts, or fears do you have because of this dispute? Describe.
- ❸ Read Psalms 37 and 73. What do these psalms warn you not to do? What do they instruct you to do? List the comforting promises they provide.
- ❹ How would your feelings, attitude, and behavior change if you started seeing this conflict as an opportunity from a perfectly loving and all-powerful God? Describe.
- ❺ What good might God bring about if you respond to this conflict in a biblical manner? Describe.
- ❻ Go on record with the Lord by writing a prayer based on the principles taught in this session.

As time permits, ask for volunteers to share one or more of the questions. Also include the prayer.

Additional Scripture References

<i>Exodus 4:10-12</i>	<i>Isaiah 43:2-3</i>	<i>Romans 8:28-29</i>
<i>Job 1:6-12</i>	<i>Matthew 10:29-31</i>	<i>Romans 9:15-16</i>
<i>Job 42:11</i>	<i>John 1:3</i>	<i>Romans 15:32</i>
<i>Psalms 71:20-22</i>	<i>John 6:39</i>	<i>2 Corinthians 1:9</i>
<i>Proverbs 16:9</i>	<i>John 9:1-5</i>	<i>James 1:2-4</i>
<i>Proverbs 16:33</i>	<i>John 11:1-4</i>	<i>Revelation 4:11</i>
<i>Proverbs 19:21</i>	<i>Acts 2:23</i>	

Closing Prayer

Pray for any specific needs group members may express concerning conflict issues. Pray for encouragement and wisdom for the group.