Holy Habits

Session 1: Making Peace in a World of Conflict

SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion
knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: Because of the forgiveness God has graciously shown to us, we should be eager to build a habit of conflict resolution and peacemaking.

Head Change: To know that God has graciously restored our relationship with him through Christ's work on the cross.

Heart Change: To feel compassion for those who have hurt us and a desire to make peace with them.

Life Change: To pursue conflict resolution with others in humility and wisdom.

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OPEN

Have you ever been locked out of your house or your car? What was that experience like?

Not being able to access something can lead to feelings of confusion, frustration, and even desperation. Getting locked out may even cause us to think or act irrationally, which could make the situation worse.

While our relational divisions may not be as tangible as being locked out of our home or car, they can erect walls and locks that prevent us from experiencing the unity God desires for us.

In this four-session series, pastor Dr. Derwin Gray, will teach us how our habits can shape us into the person God desires for us to be. The first habit he addresses is conflict resolution. In order to bring about the unity God longs for within his people, we have to be people of radical forgiveness.

VIEW

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Derwin Gray's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

What are "holy habits"?

How has God resolved conflict between humanity and himself?

What does the Bible say about how to handle conflict in our relationships?

Watch Session 1: *Making Peace in a World of Conflict* (14 minutes).

REVIEW

Derwin defined holy habits as “intentional, Jesus-centered rhythms and decisions empowered by the Spirit that showcase our allegiance to God, his church and his mission of reconciliation.” Holy habits consistently bring honor to God and help bring others to him. But cultivating these habits requires discipline and daily effort. **What are some examples of holy habits in Christians? How do holy habits differ from other habits in our lives?**

The first holy habit we will explore is the habit of peacemaking. It is one of the more difficult and most needed habits we can cultivate. But we can often confuse peacekeeping with peacemaking. Peacekeeping is where someone avoids conflict at all costs, keeping the problem out of sight and out of mind. Peacemaking is entering into a conflict, accepting responsibility for wrongs, seeking and giving forgiveness, and rebuilding broken relationships. **Are you more likely to avoid conflict or address it too aggressively? In what ways can peacekeeping allow conflict to continue or even deepen?**

Derwin mentioned the first step to conflict resolution is to enter into conflict with confidence and hope in the gospel message. Just as God made peace between himself and humanity, we should also initiate peace in our broken, even hopeless, relationships. **How should God’s pursuit of us in our rebelliousness change the way we treat those who have hurt us? Who in your life do you need to initiate peace with?**

In Matthew 18:15, Jesus tells us to go directly to the person we have an issue with instead of waiting for them to act. Procrastination and excuses will only lead us to tolerate a conflict rather than resolving it. **What makes it difficult to go to the person who has hurt us instead of going to others? What effect can gossiping about someone to others have in resolving conflict?**

When we approach a person who has hurt us, it can be tempting to make them feel the pain we are feeling. Our pain comes out in insults, arguments, or passive-aggressive behaviors. **What would it look like to tell someone how you have been hurt without trying to hurt them in return?**

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When we have hurt someone, it is easy to try to explain our actions, but we can often come across as dismissive or as trying to justify our bad behavior. **If you have hurt someone, what could you do to apologize without trying to explain yourself?**

Reconciliation is difficult, and we may fear that well-intentioned actions will devolve into more arguments. Derwin suggested praying with the person we are in conflict with to help ease our tension. **How could prayer with someone who has hurt you help change your attitude toward them? What impact could that prayer time have on the other person?**

The goal of a peacemaker is to create unity where conflict has separated us from one another. **What is the next step you need to take to create unity in your relationships?**

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BIBLE EXPLORATION

In the book of Colossians, the apostle Paul champions unity within the church and shares how Christians should interact with one another, especially in times of conflict. Take note of how our treatment of others should be rooted in how God has treated us.

Read Colossians 3:12–13.

Paul starts this passage by reminding the church of the foundation for forgiveness: that God chose us, calls us holy, and loves us. **According to verse 12, what characteristics should God's love create in us? Which of these qualities feel most difficult for you to practice when you are in conflict with others?**

Paul goes on to tell us to put on Christlike character as if it is a new piece of clothing. Instead of acting on our base desires to repay harm with harm, we are to be like Jesus, who sacrificed himself for us while we were his enemies. His character is to be as visible on us as a new coat. **How has Jesus treated your conflict with him, despite your sins against him? What does it look like to emulate his character to others when they sin against you?**

We live in a culture where relationships can be quickly written off. But Paul tells us that we are to "bear with one another" and practice "patience" with anyone who has a complaint against us. Paul is encouraging us to show endurance in our relationships with one another. **What does commitment look like amid conflict in relationships? How might endurance through conflict reveal God's goodness to our dismissive culture?**

We are commanded to forgive as Christ has forgiven us. The Greek word for "forgive" in this passage, *charizomai*, comes from Greek word for "grace," *charis*, and means to release someone from everything they owe us. Forgiveness is a no-strings-attached and unconditional release of a person's faults and relational debt. **What temptation is there to hold people's faults over their head, despite having forgiven them for their past wrongs? In what ways is Christlike forgiveness different from the way you normally think about forgiveness?**

Is there anyone God may be calling you to forgive? What might be the next step for you to seek peace with that

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person?

LAST WORD

Conflict poses a threat to our unity as God's people, but it can also be a gateway to displaying God's all-surpassing love to one another. God has assigned us all to the task of being peacemakers by immersing ourselves in the truths of God's love and forgiveness for us and by thoughtfully sharing that love with each other when grievances arise.

Don't wait for people who have hurt you to come to you; pursue peace through forgiveness as Christ has already done for us.

DEEPER WALK

Read: Matthew 5:43–48 and notice how loving those who have hurt us reflects God's compassion for all people.

Pray: For the Lord to give you the same kindness, mercy, humility, gentleness, and patience toward others as he has shown to you.

Initiate: Take the first step toward seeking peace with someone you are in conflict with. Invite them to coffee and apologize for your part in the conflict.

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