



Walk the Talk: Make Peace

April 19, 2015

During His “Sermon on the Mount,” Jesus demonstrates the fulfillment of the law and the righteousness of God’s kingdom by contrasting 6 Old Testament laws with

His own teachings. These teachings help us understand what it means to be perfect, to fulfill the law, and to live a righteous life that exceeds the scribes and Pharisees—a life of allegiance to God as citizens of His kingdom. Most Christians can talk the talk, but as disciples we have to learn to walk the talk.

The Sermon on the Mount is FAR more difficult to keep than the 10 Commandments! The 10 C’s merely dealt with **BEHAVIOR + RULES**: “**DO/DON’T DO** these things” (make an idol, murder, steal, commit adultery); but the Sermon on the Mount addresses the **ATTITUDE + RELATIONSHIPS**. Rules and laws are far easier to deal with than people. While the Pharisees weren’t actually physically murdering people, Jesus said the hatred many held in their hearts for others was equivalent to murder. The 10 C’s didn’t ring them up for that; but Jesus did because He said hatred spawned murder.

The term, “**RIGHTEOUS ANGER**,” means anger isn’t always wrong. Jesus was angry on occasion. Anger can correct injustices. But being angry with the right person/situation at the right time, in the right way for the right purpose. That’s not easy. It’s seldom how we operate. Most of us operate from personal, selfish anger. When we trace wrongdoing back to its roots in the human heart, the overwhelming # of times it involves some form of anger.

Impersonal: How do you feel about ISIS? How do you feel about the President of the U.S.? The Supreme Court? The Governor of Oklahoma? The Mayor of Tulsa? We don’t know too many of these people but we have strong feelings.

Personal: How do you feel about your boss (or employees) or peers in the workplace? How do you feel about your own brother or sister? Your parents? Your children? Your spouse? Your ex-spouse.

While some will respond to a certain incident, we all carry around with us a certain supply of anger. Some embrace and nurture it. Anger can become an addiction. But it’s toxic and deadly.

Matt 5:21-26 “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that

anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.

"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift. "Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

Ways to promote peace (2 things to avoid – 2 things to do)

1.) **Avoid name calling** The Bible can be difficult to understand because it can sometimes seem inconsistent. On the one hand, don't call people names. Yet, Jesus was angry at times. He overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and he called the Pharisees names. ("snakes, brood of vipers, whitewashed tombs"). Not the way to win friends and influence people.

Acts 23:2-3 At this the high priest Ananias ordered those standing near Paul to strike him on the mouth. Then Paul said to him, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! You sit there to judge me according to the law, yet you yourself violate the law by commanding that I be struck!" (I think, all things considered, this would be an example of righteous anger.)

J.K. Rowling (Harry Potter author) described how if girls want to devastate another girl they drop the "F" bomb on her – they call her "FAT." She wrote: *Is 'fat' really the worst thing a human being can be? Is 'fat' worse than 'vindictive', 'jealous', 'shallow', 'vain', 'boring' or 'cruel'? Not to me...I went to the British Book Awards one evening and afterwards I bumped into a woman I hadn't seen for nearly three years. The first thing she said to me? 'You've lost a lot of weight since the last time I saw you!' 'Well, the last time you saw me I'd just had a baby.' What I felt like saying was, 'I've produced my 3rd child and my 6th novel since I last saw you. Aren't either of those things more important, more interesting, than my size?' But no – my waist looked smaller! Forget the kid and the book: finally, something to celebrate! I've got two daughters who will have to make their way in this skinny-obsessed world, and it worries me, because I don't want them to be empty-headed, self-obsessed, emaciated clones; I'd rather they were independent, interesting, idealistic, kind, opinionated, original, funny – a thousand things, before 'thin'.*

There are 2 words I'd point out about this text:

#1.) **"RACA,"** is meaningless to us of course. This is the only place in the bible where this term is used. That it's not translated from its original Aramaic

language is interesting. In that day, to call someone “Raca” was the ultimate insult. It insinuated a person was empty-headed and stupid. Jesus warned that using this word was like murdering them, and as such, would deserve the severest punishment of the law.

#2.) “**FOOL.**” Another “not nice” word. The Greek word is “moron.” The Old Testament fool was more than just being dumb or stupid, it had a spiritual power tainted by evil that was incredibly negative. “The Fool has said in his heart that there is no God” (Ps. 14:1). The LAST thing you’d want to be called in that culture = FOOL. In the Book of Proverbs, “Fool, Fools, Foolish” appears 70x. Chapters 10, 17 and 26 are chapters dedicated to describing fools. Proverbs paints a miserable and wretched picture. **Fools hate wisdom, are complacent, bring grief to their parents, lack common sense, pursue schemes, revel in folly, are full of pride, practice deception, refuse to make amends, scorn advice, and exalt themselves.**

2.) Avoid Contempt.

Anger’s twin brother = **contempt**. If you want to be righteous, as Jesus stressed, the first step = to recognize and eliminate anger/contempt for your heart.

Contempt is an extension of anger. Anger says: “I want to **hurt** you.” Contempt says: “I **don’t care** whether you are hurt or not. You’re really not worth consideration one way or another.” This kills the power to belong, which is one of our greatest needs. Contempt closes the door to that.

We can have certain advantages, like education, money or beauty, which can turn us into snobs. You see it in school where the kids who are at disadvantage are bullied, ridiculed or ignored.

In the book, Why Marriages Succeed or Fail, John Gottman speaks of the “Magic Ratio” in marriage (5 compliments to 1 criticism is the soil of a healthy marriage). He also speaks of the “4 Horsemen of the Apocalypse” in marriage. He claims the killer horseman in marriage is contempt. This is where the heart dies.

3.) Seek Reconciliation.

I find that while there are issues we have at church and school with one another, and sometimes with neighbors, that there are 2 other places of great anger, resentment and hatred: business matters and family.

Reconciliation – the bringing back of 2 separated people is important. We see this in the story of Jacob and Esau. After his dastardly behavior (though Esau was a “Raca” – empty-headed person), Jacob wanted to bury the hatchet with his brother, but really didn’t want to have anything more to do with him (see how Genesis 33 concludes – each going their own, separate ways. It appears Esau was more willing to truly be reconciled than Jacob.) Sometimes though, reconciliation

is impossible. When someone who has offended is dead, you can't be reconciled. Lee Strobel, in his book *"The Case for Grace,"* learned on his mother's deathbed what he'd felt his whole life – that his conception was a mistake in the eyes of his father. He had a 3 older siblings – then was a considerable gap – then he was born. He asked his mom if his dad was "angry" that he was born, but she said he was more "frustrated." Her solution to solve the problem was to have ANOTHER child, so Lee has a younger sister. The result was his dad didn't participate in any of Lee's childhood activities (Little League, Scouts, school). He said he could never recall a single word of affection his dad ever shared with Lee his entire life. Lee said that might have been a catalyst towards his atheism, as there's a long list of famous men who had bad relationships with their dads who became atheists. He described how he went to his dad's wake, and asked for a private moment with his father in his casket. After a long period of silence, he whispered the words he wished he'd said so many times years before: "I'm sorry, dad." Sorry for the ways he'd rebelled, lied, and disrespected his father through the years. He was sorry for the bitterness and hatred that had poisoned his own heart. For the first time, he admitted his own culpability in their relationship. And then he told his father: "I forgive you." It was too late for the relationship, but in many ways it was liberating for him. A little later at the wake, a friend of his father met Lee. The guy then proceeded to tell Lee some stunning news: "Your dad was so proud of you – he never stopped talking about you. It was always, *"Lee did this"* or *"Lee did that....but I suppose you knew all of that."* Lee was astonished. He wondered what might have been different in his life while growing up or even as an adult that he could've heard those words himself from his dad.

Divorce is another situation which is very hard to respond to.

Reconciliation & forgiveness are 2 different matters. Reconciliation is bringing 2 enemies together and restoring the relationship. Sometimes, that is impossible. When one person won't admit error it's impossible to be forgiven. Even if **we can't reconcile, we can still offer/find forgiveness** = the spirit of release – where one doesn't harbor feelings of hatred.

Failure to reconcile/forgive results in a person gets hammered with a "prison term" (emotional incarceration).

It's a personal matter – but I also know that people who are estranged seek teammates to be on their side ("Hatfields' and McCoys")

4.) **Be on a Team.** There are certain things which can be done to bless/help others so they can be reconciled. Steve Adams' dad wasn't in his life, either. He ended up with 8 drug and weapon felonies. After his release from McAlester after his 2nd stint in prison in McAlester in January of 2007, he found us at Asbury. He

didn't want to live like he had any more. But life is very hard for an ex-con. The odds are GREATLY stacked against them. But he's gotten stronger and grown each year. A number of people have helped him here with that turn around since then. He's spoken to our Seniors Bible Study Class for a # of years now. The first year he didn't know what to say. Each year he's grown. One year, some senior girls raised enough money to send Steve on a mission trip to Mexico. His experience in Disciple Bible Study was transforming. A wide number of people at Asbury have helped him, including employment and Mentorship. He's gotten married and now has a 7 month old son. While others have helped, it's been Steve's decisions to make a life change. About a month ago he appeared before the State Pardon and Parole Board and presented his case. He got a standing ovation. A couple of weeks ago he got a letter from Governor of Oklahoma - Steve's been pardoned. This Sunday morning he'll be sharing his story with the Rooted Community.

This is our Ministry – the Ministry of Reconciliation:

2 Cor 5:17-20 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.