

The Peacemaking Marriage

By Doug Marshall, Bridge Builders Christian Mediation (www.ChristianMediate.com)

Have you ever been in conflict with your spouse? "Are you kidding?" Have you ever had to forgive them? "You mean put up with them?" Have you ever had to admit wrong? "I hate it when that happens." Have you ever had to negotiate with your spouse? "What's a negotiation?" These activities are basic to sustaining any relationship and are also a few of the primary steps to "Peacemaking." The principles of peacemaking and biblical conflict resolution have been around a long time. Ken Sande's pioneering book, "The Peacemaker," has done much to awaken the church to the basic principles of peacemaking found in the Bible. It is not called "the gospel of peace" for nothing.

Unfortunately, churches, Christian non-profits, Christian businesses and Christians in general still often resolve conflict the old fashioned way: peace-breaking and peace faking. And this is especially true in our marriages.

With peace-breaking I go on the offense. I attack. I attempt to change my spouse with my words and actions. To be sure, I feel fully justified. And of course, my spouse is really is to blame and needs to change. I just have to help them see that. But they seldom see it the same way. So they either attack back or shut down. Which makes me even more angry. So I push harder.

With peace-faking I go on the defense. I run. I may walk away, I may just get quiet. I may walk to another room in the house, I may walk out of the house. But more often than not, I pretend that everything is okay. I also go to great extremes to avoid conflict all together. I comply, I capitulate, I cater. I become careful not to "rock the boat." Peace-faking is also known as "Peace-keeping" which is not the same as "Peace-making." In this case, my spouse may never know there even a problem.

Neither strategy leads to peace. Furthermore, peace-breakers usually marry peace-fakers and vice-versa. It's that old "opposites attract" thing. The problem is, conflict never gets resolved and

both parties continue to escalate peace-breaking and peace-faking until things become unlivable.

God has called us to do relationships differently. He wants us to pursue "true peace." In a peace-making marriage the peace-breaker learns to listen more and become more gentle with their conflict avoiding spouse. The peace-faker learns to be more forthright with their issues and stay engaged the resolution process with their argumentative spouse. If all else fails a couple can seek help from a Christian mediator or conflict coach who can help facilitate a discussion when a couple can't get beyond attacking and avoidance.

But the key in all this is Christ. To go against our normal peace breaking/faking habits, we need help. Christian peacemaking involves learning how to bring Christ and His grace into our conflicts so that we are able to go against our very nature. It is indeed a miracle. It is also the greatest evidence that the gospel of Jesus Christ is real. I can say, it has changed the way I do relationships. It has also changed the way I love, cherish, and resolve conflict with my wife. The good news of Jesus Christ empowers us to do relationships differently. When a couple learns this they can become a true "Peacemaking Marriage."

For more information look into the books, *The Peacemaker*, and *Peacemaking for Families*. by Ken Sande. You can also check out Bridge Builders Christian Mediation which provides peacemaking training and mediation services to Christians and churches for virtually any kind of conflict. See our website at www.christianmediate.com.

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