

## Becoming a Peacemaker in the Local Church

### Introduction:

1. The words “disciple” and “discipline” come from the same root word, which has to do with education or learning.
2. The church should be a place where learning is taking place so that believers can, in turn, become mature, Christ-like disciples. The local church should be a place where learning and living the Bible is natural and normal.
3. There should be an environment in the church that encourages learning and encourages demonstrating Christ-like maturity in our walk with the Lord.
4. Division, contention, discord, and unresolved conflict are extremely detrimental in creating an atmosphere of learning and spiritual growth.
  - **Illustration:** If a school classroom is full of fighting, bickering, chaos, and confusion, it creates a poor environment of learning. The same is true in a church.
5. This is why the Bible teaches that if there is a person or group of people that are threatening the unity of the church or the doctrinal soundness of the church, the members and leaders of that local body have a responsibility to deal with that individual and seek to restore peace to the local body.
6. Our God is not a God of chaos, but a God of order and structure, and He expects His church to function this way. 1 Corinthians 14:33, 40
7. The Bible teaches that when a member of the church errs in doctrine or conduct that the other members should hold him accountable and seek to restore him.
8. If that person refuses to listen and is determined to continue on the path of sin or discord, then the other members may have to separate themselves, and the leadership may have to ask him to remove himself from the local body. Romans 16:17-18; 1 Corinthians 5:1-7, 13; Galatians 5:9-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15
  - Keep in mind, this is after a lengthy process of attempted restoration.
9. Why is God so emphatic about this?

### First, because the church is to maintain a testimony of unity and purity

1. Christ’s purpose for the church is to sanctify it and present it to Himself without spot or wrinkle (Ephesians 5:26-27). Everything in the church should aim towards this goal.
  - The church is to be a light in a sin-darkened world. Philippians 2:15
  - Our life and our love should demonstrate to the world that we belong to Christ. John 13:35
2. If a church member is involved in serious misconduct or is creating contention and turmoil, this brings defilement to the church and its testimony. This is exactly what happened in the church at Corinth. 1 Corinthians 5:1
  - Paul strongly reprimanded this man for this gross sin.
  - Nothing was being done about it by the local body, so Paul also expressed his displeasure to the church for allowing such misconduct to continue. 5:2

3. Paul uses the illustration of leaven which, in the Bible, is a picture of sin. He says, *“Remove the leaven.”* 5:6-7
  - When it comes to matters such as these, the welfare of the church is at stake. Clearly, Paul taught that the leaven was to be cleaned out. The other members had to hold him accountable. They couldn’t just sweep it under the rug.
4. Do you love your local church? Then you are to be proactive in seeking to protect it and protect its testimony in the community.
5. What a shame when the church loses its testimony and unbelievers mock the church and say things like:
  - “He’s a deacon or teacher up there at that church, but they do nothing about him despite the well-known fact that he gets drunk and runs around with women.”
  - “Did you hear about that church? They can’t get along with each other and they are having all kinds of fighting and turmoil.”

### **Second, because God is concerned with restoring the one who is in sin**

1. The Bible is not advocating an approach of you going up to another brother or sister and saying, “You’re in sin – you’re out of here!”
2. If members are involved in detrimental conduct and they are hurting themselves, others, or the church body, they should be approached out of love and concern. The goal is the restoration of the offender. Galatians 6:1
  - **Illustration:** If you see one of my sons in a place they shouldn’t be, or doing something sinful or harmful, I would hope you would come to me or do something, not just turn your head and say, “It’s none of my business.”
  - **Illustration:** If a fellow believer is involved in sexual sin, and you know about it, you have to do something. They are heading off a cliff and you have to try to help them.
  - **Illustration:** If a believer is obviously out of sorts with the church leadership or other believers, and they are spreading their grievances and gossip to others, this is just like somebody lighting a match and throwing it down in the church. You have to do something. You can’t just sit idly by and do nothing.
    - Do you know how you know if somebody is simply bitter and up to no good versus somebody who is truly trying to help the local church? Ask yourself a few questions:
    - Have they made every attempt to go to the person they are upset with? Are they sharing information with you because you are a part of the solution, or because they desire to gossip about somebody else? Do they truly seem to desire restoration and peace?
3. Our God is a God of restoration. If the other person does not have a heart of restoration then you know who is controlling him – it isn’t God’s Spirit!

4. The local church (other believers) is the mechanism that God uses to seek to restore the wayward believer who is jeopardizing his testimony and the testimony of the church.

**Third, because God's desire is to deter other church members from similar destructive actions**

1. When believers are held accountable and confronted with their sinful actions, this will hopefully protect other believers from future similar actions.
  - **Illustration:** If parents permit sinful actions with an older child, their younger children will probably act the same way. But if the younger children see consequences for wrong actions, this will hopefully deter them from making the same mistakes.
  - It is the same principle that we use in our justice system. If crimes are punished, this serves as a deterrent to crime. On the other hand, if crimes are ignored, and criminals suffer no consequences for their actions, chaos is the result.
2. If, in the church, people slander other people, or cause division, or spread false doctrine, or are involved in public, disgraceful activity, and it is ignored by fellow believers and the offenders suffer no consequences, then an environment of chaos and disorder begins to take over the church.
3. This is not the way of God. I'll give you a couple of illustrations:
  - Achan (Joshua 7) – Achan disobeyed and took the accursed thing in Jericho. He died for his sin and served as an example to the rest of Israel. They learned that they had better take God's commands seriously.
  - Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5) – After this event it says, "*And great fear came upon all the church.*"
4. Today, God isn't going to strike a person dead if they lie in church, and we sure aren't going to take anybody out in the parking lot and stone him, but the church is not to sit back and do nothing. We are commanded to take action, as we read earlier in several different passages.
  - I am not saying that a person needs to be brought up before the public assembly and humiliated. This would not be profitable. But the person should be confronted by other believers (maybe a group of believers from his LIFE Group) and held accountable for his actions.
5. Why? We are to take action out of love for the church as a whole, out of love for the one who is in sin and acting disobediently, and out of love for other church members who could follow the other person's bad example.