

The Peacemaker's Pledge
by Cam Taylor
Ephesians 4:1-2; Romans 12:18

No one likes adversity and a struggle. But God uses adversity and conflict to stretch and challenge us to become more like Christ.

The ABC's of spiritual growth - ADVERSITY BUILDS CHARACTER.

That's what this body is experiencing right now - but how we look at will make all the difference.

If you look at what's happening right now as bad and to be avoided, your response will reflect that belief. If you see it as an opportunity - just like a few weeks back when I talked about

The nonce word [cris-i-tunity](#) was used in the "Fear of Flying" episode of *The Simpsons*. Lisa says, "Look on the bright side, Dad. Did you know that the Chinese use the same word for 'crisis' as they do for 'opportunity'?" Homer replies, "Yes! Cris-atunity." Although The Simpsons Archive spells this portmanteau "cris-atunity", "crisitunity" is more commonly used.

And the goal here is to work towards greater health. Up until Easter, we'll be shining the lazer light on one of the 4 diagnosis I shared with you last week: **Great health will require ... a strengthening of unity within the body through a process of confession, repentance and rebuilding of broken relationships.**

Ephesians 4:1-3 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

Romans 12:18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

This morning I want to give you a way of thinking and practice that will help you live this out and apply to your walk with Christ and each other.

If this were a sports arena - what I'm doing is inviting you onto the ice. Christ is inviting you into the arena of action - not to stay a spectator in this journey with Christ.

As a matter of fact - when Paul writes "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" the phrase make every effort has a interesting story.

Make every effort - the Greek word used by Paul is a word that a trainer of gladiators might have used when he sent men to fight to the death in the Coliseum: "Make every effort to stay alive today!" So too must Christians agonize for peace and unity. Token efforts and halfhearted attempts at reconciliation fall far short of what Paul had in mind.

And unity doesn't mean uniformity - we are given various gifts, talents and callings (1 Cor. 12:12-31). We rejoice in our diversity but when those differences rob us of harmony and peace, there is work to be done!

So on a practical level - how does the Bible teach us to keep the unity of the Spirit and live in peace with our brothers and sisters - making things right when they have gone sour?

The Four G's for Living in Unity & Peace

1. Go to God & Glorify Him (1 Corinthians 10:31)

1 Corinthians 10:31 So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

Working things out with others - living in unity/resolving conflict - starts with a focus not on our desires or what others should do but REJOICING IN GOD; Praising Him - focusing on the RESOURCEFULNESS of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; His Forgiveness, wisdom, power and love.

Other Scriptures that reinforce the priority we need to put on GOING TO GOD.

Psalms 37:1-6

Colossians 3:1-4

Illus - the story is told of an aged silver miner who spent all his life searching for silver in the mountains of the Old West. He had become so obsessed with his search that his wife and children had left him. When he died the handful of people who came to bury him found in his possessions a note instructing them to bury him under his cabin. As the earth was overturned a lustrous gray material began to appear. It became known as the largest silver vein in California history. The miner had been a millionaire all his life, but had never been able to claim his wealth!

The Bible says we are spiritual billionaires because of Christ's death. Claim the gift God has for you and tap into the resourcefulness of heaven!

Key question: *How can I please and honor God in this situation?*

2. Go to Self – Get the Log Out

Matthew 7:3-5 Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

Instead of blaming others for conflict or resisting correction - trust in God's mercy and take responsibility for our own contribution to the conflict (and broken down relationships). This means taking a look in the mirror before we go to someone else to speak about a problem or an offense and taking a hard look at how we are contributing to the problem.

Confessing our own sins before the Father and possibly with a friend. Asking God to change our hearts and attitudes that are hurting relationships and our witness in the world. And preparing to repair broken relationships by a soul search and coming clean before the Lord.

Key question: *How can I show Jesus' work in me by taking responsibility for my contribution to this situation?*

Other Scriptures to consider as we Go to Self:

Proverbs 28:13

1 John 1:8-9

3. Go to Others – Gently Restore

Galatians 6:1-3 Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

Now it's time to stop pretending conflict doesn't exist and stop talking about people behind their back and forming that dreaded "triangle" of sin. It's time to talk to others who have caused an offense. The ultimate goal of course being reconciliation - not condemnation with this being the first step towards that possible reconciliation (but that is what the 4th G is all about).

If conflict can't be resolved in private - we will ask others in the body to help us resolve a matter between us and someone else.

Key question: *How can I lovingly serve others by helping them take responsibility for their contribution to this situation?*

Other Scriptures: Prov. 19:11 Galatians 6:1-2

4. Go Together – Go and Be Reconciled

Matthew 5:23-24 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.

The goal here is not just to talk to others about an offense or hurt but to actively pursue genuine peace and reconciliation. That's the miracle of the cross and what the resources of heaven are all about in relationship healing.

It's about FORGIVING OTHERS AS GOD IN CHRIST HAS FORGIVEN US!

ILLUS - a beautiful picture of that is the story how the praying hands came to be.

The praying hands were created as a result of compassion, love, unselfish sacrifice and true and loyal friendship. In the last half of the 15th century, two struggling young artists, Albrecht Durer and Franz

Knigstein, worked as laborers to earn money to continue their studies. Because their labors did not allow enough time to advance in their studies, they agreed to draw lots to determine which of them would continue to work and support them both - the winner would remain at his studies.

Durer won, and agreed that when his studies were complete, he would return and finance the studies of his friend. Durer developed his talent and genius, and as an established success, returned to keep his agreement with Knigstein. He soon discovered the enormous sacrifice his friend has made for him. The hard labor had twisted and bent Franz's fingers, so that he could no longer manage the delicate brush strokes required of a master painter - but Knigstein felt no bitterness; he was overjoyed at the success of his friend.

One day, Durer found him kneeling in prayer - his gnarled hands entwined in spiritual supplication, for Albrecht's continued success. Albrecht sketched his friend's hands, and later completed the masterpiece known as the "Praying Hands." Galleries and collections all over the world now feature Durer's works, but his one masterpiece outshines them all. It tells the story of love, labor, sacrifices and gratitude. It is a constant reminder to all, that they may find courage and comfort.

Key question: *How can I demonstrate the forgiveness of God and encourage a reasonable solution to this situation?*

Other Scriptures: Eph 4:1-3, 31-32

Ephesians 4:1-3 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. **Make every effort** to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.