

# Transcendent Joy: Learning How to Rejoice No Matter What

Message #19: **Turning Peacebreakers into Peacemakers** (Philippians 4:2-3) – April 16, 2023 - Pastor Jeff

- As human beings, we are uniquely created in the image of God and therefore reflect Him as moral, rational, emotional, volitional, creative, ruling, purposeful, eternal and relational beings. Some of our greatest joys and deepest sorrows are directly connected to our relational life.
  - Our theology of hamartiology (the study of sin) teaches us that relational conflict is a product of sin and God's curse (Rom. 3:17; James 4:1-4)
  - Our theology of Christology (the study of Jesus Christ) teaches us that the "*Prince of peace*" (Isa. 9:6) went to war against sin at the cross because we were "*alienated*" (Col. 1:21), "*hostile*" (Rom. 8:7), and "*enemies*" of God (Rom. 5:10). His death "*reconciled us to God*" (Rom. 5:11) and He became "*our peace*" (Eph. 2:13-14).
  - Our theology of soteriology (study of salvation) teaches us we are in a progressive sanctifying process of "*being transformed into the same image from glory to glory*" (2 Cor. 3:18).
- When conflict arises between brothers and sisters in Christ, we need to learn how to utilize God's relationship-rebuilding tools He has given us in our toolbox.
- In this passage, Paul calls out two women (Euodia and Syntyche) who were in conflict "*to live in harmony in the Lord*". We learn several truths about how to pursue this "*harmony*" and find additional instruction throughout God's Word to support our efforts to "*live in harmony*".

## ❶ Peacemaking involves some core commonality (4:2, 3b)

- What unites us is far greater than what divides us, and Paul reminds us of some core realities that we all share in common.
- The first core commonality is what we share "*in the Lord*" together. What gives us the motivation to resolve a conflict is our mutual love for Jesus Christ and how He united us. We tune our lives to the same standard of Christ (Phil. 1:27; 2:2-5).
- The second core commonality is what we share in the struggle for "*the cause of the gospel*". We are on the same ministry team and united by the same good news message.
- The third core commonality is that we are listed in the same and most essential book, "*the book of life*". This is God's eternal and heavenly registry of all the saved (Luke 10:20; Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:15; 21:27)

## ❷ Peacemaking involves some constructive coaching (4:3a)

- Paul again promotes a body life solution whereby believers provide support for one another as we practice the one another's and find some helpful support from mature believers and leaders in the church family.
- Paul calls upon a "*true companion*" to "*help these women*" work out their conflict. We do not know definitively who Paul is referring to, but it could be a guy named Syzygus (the Greek word Paul uses for "*true companion*") or Epaphroditus (who delivered the Philippian letter) or someone else. Whoever it is, we can pick up several clues about what kind a person can help believers resolve relational conflicts.
  - It is a believer who is mature in their faith as assumed by Paul's use of the words "*true companion*" (a yokefellow who helps bring people together). Gal. 6:1 ("*you who are spiritual restore such a one*")
  - It is a believer who is objective. Paul didn't take sides (Prov. 18:17) but urged ("*I urge*") both women to "*live in harmony*".

- It is a believer who is clear, direct, and honest. Paul didn't tiptoe around the elephant in the room, but he named names, yet didn't publicly expose the ugly details.
- It is a believer who is affirming and appreciative where possible. Paul didn't berate the women but affirmed their shared struggle in the work of spreading the gospel with him and other "*fellow workers*".

### ③ Peacemaking involves some concrete change (various Scriptures)

- Conflicts are never resolved with good intentions, but specific actions. This point will draw upon other supporting Scriptures that instruct us about being peacemakers. Jesus commanded us to "be at peace with one another" (Mark 9:50) and Paul echoes this same sentiment in Romans 14:19. Using the word "Peace", the following five specific action steps are designed to help us "presever the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3).

**Put on humility:** The flesh always wants to put self ahead of others and it has a way of creating conflict. It is helpful to remember these pride-crushing truths: what God commands (Col 3:12; Phil. 2:3-4; 1 Pet. 5:5), opposes (1 Pet 5:5; James 4:6), sacrificed (Phil 2:7-8), transformed (2 Cor. 5:15) and loves (Isa. 66:2)

**Extract your sin logs:** It's easy to stand in judgment of the faults and offenses of others, but Jesus tells us we must first deal with our own sins (Matt. 7:3-5). We must avoid hypocritical judgments (Matt. 7:1-2), but also recognize there is a place for "*righteous judgment*" (John 7:24; 1 Cor. 5:12; John 7:7; Titus 1:9-11; Matt 7:6).

#### Address the offense:

- If the offense is against you, consider overlooking the offense (Prov. 19:11; Col. 3:13; Eph 4:2; 1 Cor. 13:5); pray for the offender's receptivity to the pursuit of reconciliation; look for what God may want to teach you in this conflict (Gal. 5:22-23); address the offense privately (Matt. 18:15), but honest and gracious (Prov. 27:5; 12:18; Gal. 6:1); guard against gossip, backbiting, slander (Eph. 4:29-32); believe the best about others unless the facts prove otherwise (1 Cor. 13:7); grant full forgiveness (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13).
- If you committed the offense, ask the Lord to humble your heart and grant you wisdom as you seek to reconcile without delay (Matt. 5:23-24). Confess your sins and ask for forgiveness (Prov. 28:13; Eph. 4:32) and resist being defensive.

**Control your tongue:** This is one of the primary perpetrators of conflict (lies, gossip, slander, harsh, rude, insensitive, angry, loveless words) and they can decimate relationships (Prov. 18:21; James 3:6, 8).

- Watch out for destructive communication. Watch the flow (Prov. 10:19), tone (Prov. 15:1), and content (Eph. 4:29; Phil 2:14; Eph 4:31; Prov. 17:9).
- Pursue constructive communication like "*give a blessing instead*" (1 Pet. 3:9), speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15)

**Emulate Jesus Christ:** Every relational conflict is an opportunity to learn how to reflect Christ. Paul told Euodia and Syntyche to live in harmony "*in the Lord*" and Paul sent Timothy because he sought after the interests "of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:19-21). Jesus brought us peace and placed us into one forever family (Eph. 2:14, 16; Rom. 5:1 2 Cor. 5:19; Col. 3:15)

Download a copy of our "[Addressing Conflict Biblically](#)" resource.