



WHAT IS THIS ABOUT?

What does it mean to bless your enemies? Check out this video: sermonspice.com/product/622/when-you-dont-get-along. Then READ ROMANS 12:14-19a.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN? _____

Paul writes these verses to Christians living in Rome, the capital of the empire. Christians are a tiny minority in this pagan culture, often persecuted and ridiculed for their faith. Paul counsels believers to avoid trouble by refusing to retaliate, by responding with good in the face of evil, and by seeking reconciliation. This is how they can earn the respect of others and ultimately bear witness to the One they follow. Paul also calls believers to empathize with the experiences of both the poor and the pagan in Roman society. The notion that Christians are better than other people will never create harmony.

WHAT DO YOU THINK? _____

How would it feel to bless those in your family, community, church, workplace or school who antagonize you? Does this passage downplay the intensely emotional and violent clashes we see in the news lately? How do we resolve conflict when loving our enemies seems impossible, and our desires for justice collide?

Is being a peacemaker the same thing as being a “doormat,” letting others walk all over us? Or does being a peacemaker mean that we cut people out of our lives when they disagree with us, so we can live in a harmonious, agreeable bubble? Does peace simply mean the absence of conflict, or does it mean something else? What?

This week’s sermon outlined a plan to initiate conflict resolution. Discuss these steps:

- 1. Take the initiative.** Why is it so difficult or unpleasant to take the first step? Would you rather wait for an apology, or avoid conflict entirely? Why? Why does taking the first step require so much courage and humility? Is it worth it?
- 2. Confess your part.** Does an argument have to be all (or even mostly) your fault in order to confess your part in it? Why do you blame others instead of recognizing what you could have done differently?
- 3. Listen for the hurt.** What changes when you listen for the hurt buried in someone’s mean words or bad behavior, instead of criticizing them? Are we called to judge, or to heal? If you took the time, humility and courage to understand the root of someone else’s pain, could it transform your anger into compassion?
- 4. Speak your “truth” with love.** What is the truth? How can you be sure that your truth is more true than someone else’s? Does anyone have sole possession of the truth? What does it mean, then, to speak your truth in love? Is humility required?
- 5. Attack the problem, not the person.** What is the difference between revenge and resolution? When you’re in an argument, what interests you more: being right, or fixing the problem? Why? Again, is humility required?

WHAT’S THE NEXT STEP? _____

How can you put this five-part plan into action this week? Are there ways you can be accountable to your group, and support each other, in this process?

LOOKING FOR MORE? _____

Researcher Brené Brown calls blame a “discharge of pain and discomfort” [vimeo.com/118479328]. What does blame accomplish? Why is it so intoxicating? What changes when you begin to see your part in a conflict without blaming others?