

Blessed are the Peacemakers

A few months ago, Pastor Sam Creagar participated in a learning experience with an organization call Global Immersion (<https://globalimmerse.org/>). This is an organization that asks the question, “What would it look like if the Church took seriously our call to be peacemakers?” This is a great question, because this IS part of our calling, right? But how do we do it? How do we go about becoming peacemakers in a world full of conflict and struggle? In his message, Sam shared about a four-practice framework for peacemaking that he learned about and experienced from Global Immersion:

- **See:** Commit to seeing the humanity, dignity, and image of God in every person. Understand the truth from their point of view. Listen to their stories and honor them with compassionate awareness.
- **Immerse:** Be willing to move toward conflict and into discomfort in order to be present in places and with people who need transformation and redemption.
- **Contend:** Get involved, get creative, and engage seeking justice alongside the people you’ve learned to love.
- **Restore:** Share your life with former enemies and celebrate with all people the big and small ways God is restoring our broken world.

In this study, we want to consider this framework and how we might grow in our ability to be peacemakers in our world.

1. Where do you see conflict, brokenness and suffering around you?

Read Matthew 5:9

2. Up to this point, how have you thought about this verse and what it means?

Sam said:

Throughout Scripture the word “peace” is used to describe our need, our hope, and occasionally our reality of wholeness, completeness, and flourishing. It is reconciliation between the people around us and with the God above us. It’s both an inner state of surrender to the Lord and an external commitment to holistically repaired relationships that reflect God’s definition and expectation for justice, mercy, and grace. Peace is seeing the goodness of God restored and flourishing in our own lives and the lives of the people around us.

3. How does this description of the word, “peace,” help shape how we ought to think about and apply this verse?

Practice 1: SEE

Sam said:

Throughout the Gospels we read that on several occasions Jesus shared meals with men and women who were considered social outcasts and people who were thought to be unworthy of acknowledgment, let alone relationship. He listened to the stories of the unclean, cared about the needs of people from outside his own nationality, and he even looked beyond sins of lawbreakers and sought to know them based on who they were and who they could be, instead of identifying them solely according to what they had done. Jesus was able to look at people and see them as more than just the sum total of their actions, efforts, successes, or failures. He was committed (and to this day is still committed) to seeing people the way God created them to be -- made in His image, worthy of love, and in need of compassion and understanding. This is the way Jesus sees the world, sees the lost, sees you and me. The question we have to ask ourselves is, are we willing to also see others in this way? Are we going to see the humanity, dignity, and the image of God in everyone? Or will we allow our biases and assumptions get in the way?

4. Who is it that you need to “see” in your own life? Who is someone that, for whatever reason, you’ve never looked at as having humanity, dignity, and value as a fellow image bearer of God?

Practice 2: Immerse

Sam said:

I wonder what it might look like to immerse into conflict and chaos here in Manhattan? How can we move toward places and people who need connection, love, redemption? . . . If you live in a multicultural neighborhood you could try learning the home language of one of your neighbors. Head to one of the community meals that happens every night in our town, but don’t go as a server -- go as a guest. Rub shoulders and swap stories with other diners. Try shopping for groceries at one of Manhattan’s Asian Markets or international grocery stores. Join a community sports league with people you’ve never met before. Or if you, like me, are UN-athletically gifted, go to a coffee shop in town, but don’t take your music, your books, or your journal. Just sit there, say hi to the person next to you...and see what God does next. The bottom line for peacemaking through immersing is to move toward people. Don’t isolate yourself. Displace yourself a little bit and find out what God is up to in the places you don’t often go and among the people you don’t often connect with.

5. Where or how might God want you to move towards immersion?

Practice 3: Contend

6. Read Luke 4:17-19. What does this say about Jesus’ mission? As you reflect on the gospel accounts, how did Jesus seek (i.e. “contend”) to bring about these things?

Sam said:

Because contending first requires the work of seeing and immersing -- of establishing relationships with the people you want to love and serve -- you may not be able to think of a way to begin this practice right away. That's okay. If you leave here today and start investing in seeing the dignity of people and immersing into their stories, that will be more than enough for me to sing praises to God. But you might also be ready to contend in some small way or maybe even a big one. Maybe you're already contending, already pushing back against injustice and standing in the trenches with those who are oppressed. If you feel you are in this place then my challenge to you would be to keep going, keep praying, and seeking after what God has planned for your next step. And then, help the rest of us out . . . invite us along in the work you're doing. Challenge us to see and feel what you've encountered. Justice is a big deal to God. It should be a big deal to us, too.

7. What thoughts do you have about how you can take steps towards living out the practice of contending for justice?

Practice 4: Restore

Sam said:

The fourth and final peacemaking practice restore – Share your life with former enemies and celebrate with all people the big and small ways God is restoring our broken world. There is a catch to this practice of restoration: it's less something that we do and more something that God is doing that we get to be a part of.

8. Have you had the privilege of experiencing this part of the peacemaking process?
9. As you reflect on all of this, where do you sense God wants you to start? What is one small step that you can take to grow in being a peacemaker?