



The Peacemaker

Personal & Group Study Guide

By Ken Sande | www.rw360.org

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Welcome to *The Peacemaker* Personal and Group Study Guide.

This study guide is designed to be a companion as you read through *The Peacemaker* book. Each chapter is summarized briefly, and several questions are posed to help you reflect on key lessons and personal applications. To deepen your understanding of the principles taught in this book, we encourage you to write out your answers to the questions in this study guide, either by inserting text into this document just below a question or by keeping a separate journal of your responses.

One of the best ways to use this study guide is to ask one or more friends to read *The Peacemaker* at the same time you are and to get together personally each week to discuss your answers to these questions.

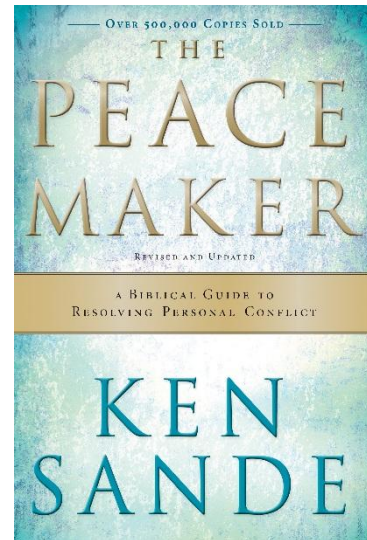
If you are currently involved in a conflict, you'll find several practical application questions at the end of each chapter in *The Peacemaker* itself. Those questions will help you to apply the lessons of that chapter to your current situation.

Even if you are not presently facing serious conflict, *The Peacemaker* will prepare you to address small differences quickly and effectively, preventing them from becoming large and disruptive. Much of what is taught is also wise advice for everyday living, helping us make the most of the relationships God brings to our lives.

The Peacemaker is divided into four parts, each of which deals in depth with one of the four key principles of peacemaking. Each principle has been stated in English to begin with the letter "G." Taken together, they are known as the "Four G's" of peacemaking.

I pray that God uses *The Peacemaker* and this companion Study Guide to help you glorify God more fully, bless others and experience the peace of Jesus Christ.

Ken Sande



Glorify God

Biblical peacemaking is motivated and guided by a deep desire to bring honor to God by revealing the reconciling love and power of Jesus Christ. We are to draw on his grace, follow his example and put his teachings into practice. As we do so, we can find freedom from the self-centered decisions that cause conflict and display the power of the gospel in our lives.

1 Conflict Provides Opportunities

Few people enjoy conflict. Fewer still view conflict as an opportunity. Yet, if we believe God is sovereign and desires our best, we have to also believe that conflict is not an accident. God promises use every circumstance in our lives to shape and mold us into the image of Christ. As Ken writes, “Every time you encounter a conflict, you will inevitably show what you really think of God.” This chapter introduces foundational tools, such as the Slippery Slope, and core principles, such as the Three Opportunities, that will help you to not only survive disagreements but to actually steward them for God’s glory.

Questions for Reflection:

1. Consider the Slippery Slope of Conflict on page 22. In general, do people in your church and community tend to Avoid, Attack, or be Peacemakers? Where do you place yourself on the Slope? What does this suggest about how you view conflict?
2. Spend a few minutes reviewing the main points raised in Chapter 1. Which ideas or principles do you find most helpful? How do they enlarge and deepen your understanding of how God uses conflict in your life?
3. Where would you most like to grow and change in your relationship with God and other people? What new attitudes, skills or habits can you adopt that will help you achieve that goal. Conclude by praying that God will show you ways to make these new attitudes and habits part of who you are and how you relate to others.

2 Live at Peace

The search for peace is constant and elusive. Christians understand that real peace is found in Jesus – it is our relationship with him that provides us with the personal peace we long for and the ability to live at peace with others. Such peace is fragile and is easily broken when we adopt the worldly attitude that life is all about satisfying our desires, looking out for “Number One.” One of the most troubling examples of this is when Christians go to court against other Christians, something Paul explicitly condemns in 1 Corinthians 6. Chapter 2 of *The Peacemaker* reminds us to focus, first, on peace with God, which enables us to live at peace with others and personally experience the internal “peace that passes understanding.”

Questions for Reflection:

1. How do you define “peace?” What are some of the words that come to mind when you hear the word, “peace?”
2. How do you define the distinction between “unity” and “uniformity?” Do Christians in your community tend to focus more on unity or on uniformity? What impact does this have on your church? On your larger community?
3. Do Christians make use of the court system where you live to resolve disputes with other Christians? If not, how are disputes usually resolved?
4. What about you? Are you pursuing the sort of peace this chapter encourages? If not, what are some changes that you would like to make?

3 Trust in the Lord and Do Good

We all say that we “trust God.” Yet, when we find ourselves in serious conflict, many of us end up trusting ourselves instead. Fear and pride can drive us to think and behave in ways that are fundamentally opposed to God. If God is sovereign, however, we can trust that he is looking out for us every moment, even when circumstances are difficult and life is challenging. As Ken writes, “The trials that he gives us require that we practice the character qualities that will make us like our Lord.” The Bible is full of examples of people who trusted God, from Joseph and Esther to Paul and, ultimately, Jesus himself. Trust is a decision. Chapter 3 reminds us that God uses that trust to show us how to walk confidently with him.

Questions for Reflection:

1. What does it mean to you to “trust God?” Have you ever trusted him completely with a difficult situation in your life? How did trusting God change your attitude and behavior?
2. Many people believe that faith and trust in God should result in freedom from suffering. Is this a biblical view? How would you respond if someone said to you, “If God loves me, he wouldn’t let this happen.”
3. Is there someone you know or have heard about whose trust in God is admirable? Describe their character and their behavior. What did their behavior reveal about their attitude toward God? What can you learn from them?
4. Think of a current conflict in your life, or reflect back on one in which you were recently involved. In what ways are you trusting God as your guide and source of strength? What more can you do to make your trust in him more evident and complete?

Get the Log Out

Attacking others only invites counterattack. Jesus teaches us to face up to our own contributions to a conflict before we focus on what others have done. When we honestly admit our own faults, our opponents will often respond in kind. As tensions decrease, the way may be opened for discussion, negotiation and reconciliation.

4 Is This Really Worth Fighting Over?

Rights and responsibilities. The tendency, these days, is to focus on my rights and pay less attention to my responsibilities. Too often, this leads to conflicts with others. Scripture, such as Matthew 7:3-5, requires that we think differently. We are called to take account of our responsibilities before asserting our rights. This is easier to do when we spend time clarifying the issues that confront us as either substantive or personal. In many instances, the best response is to overlook an offense. Other times we will need to pursue a godly solution. In either setting, Paul calls us to rejoice in the Lord always. James counsels us to consider it “pure joy” when we face trials of many kinds. We are to see ourselves as stewards of rights and responsibilities and use them to bring glory to God and healing to relationships.

Questions for Reflection:

1. Describe the difference between “material,” or “substantive” issues, and “personal” issues. Is the difference clear to you? If not, re-read the section “Define the Issues.”
2. Equally important is the distinction between “overlooking” an offense and “denying” that there is a problem. Many people confuse the two, telling themselves that they have overlooked a wrong, while not fully forgiving the wrongdoer. Have you ever experienced this? What was the impact on your relationship?
3. Paul and James counsel us to be joyful in every circumstance. How can a Christian “rejoice in the Lord always,” while also confronting serious challenges?
4. Recall a time when you or someone you know failed to count the cost of pursuing their “rights.” What was the impact on the relationship involved? On the person who continued to pursue their rights?

5 Conflict Starts in the Heart

This chapter is all about idols, not the kind made of wood and stone, but the kind we build in our hearts. We are created to desire, but too often our even our godly desires become demands that set us on a destructive path with others. When desires drive our attitudes and behaviors in ungodly ways, we have crossed the boundary into idol-worship. Ken quotes David Powlison: “When you and I fight, our minds become filled with accusations: your wrongs and my rights preoccupy me. We play the self-righteous judge in the mini-kingdoms we establish.” This is why getting logs out of our own eyes is such an important first step. Repentance is the solution to idolatry, replacing idol worship with worship of the true God.

Questions for Reflection:

1. Chapter 5 is key to understanding and dealing well with conflict. Before you move on, make note of three key points that you want to remember.
2. What are some of the idols worshipped in your culture? What sorts of “sacrifices” do people make as they worship those idols?
3. Are there idols within the Christian community? Within your church? What are they? And what impact do they have on the unity of believers?
4. Finally, where in your own life are you tempted to idol worship? What do those idols tell you about your priorities? Is your struggles with sinful desires? Or is it with good desires wrongly pursued? What does repentance look like for you?

6 Confession Brings Freedom

The gospel brings freedom to wrongdoers. In Christ, our sins are removed from us “as far as the east is from the west.” Recognizing we are both sinful and forgiven enables us to strip away pride and pretension, examine ourselves honestly and confess our sins when we are wrong. Confession is seldom easy, but when done well, it brings freedom and helps us to be reconciled to others. The 7 A’s are a checklist for constructing and making good confessions, ones that are both freeing and reconciling. Godly sorrow opens the door to transformation of our hearts and transformed hearts lead to changed behavior. We are never too old to experience God’s transforming love, or so sinful that his grace cannot penetrate.

Questions for Reflection:

1. Have you ever experienced the freedom that comes from confessing and renouncing sinful behavior? Recall the experience and what you felt. What impact did it have on your attitude? On your behavior?
2. Describe the difference between worldly sorrow and godly sorrow. In your experience, do most Christians understand the difference? If not, how might the gospel both convict them of wrongdoing and free them to fully repent?
3. Are apologies and confessions common among Christians where you live? If not, how do Christians respond when they have sinned against someone? When they have been sinned against? Are these responses consistent with Scripture?
4. Describe one lesson that you have learned from this chapter and how you plan to incorporate it into your life.

Gently Restore

When others fail to see or acknowledge their contribution to a conflict, we sometimes need to graciously show them their fault. If they refuse to respond appropriately, we may need to involve respected friends, church leaders or others who can encourage repentance and restore peace.

7 Just Between the Two of You

If “owning” our own sins is hard, speaking with someone who has sinned against us is often harder. Most of us have experienced harsh confrontation and rebuke. Even when merited, such incidents can leave us feeling personally assaulted. The point of passages such as Matthew 18:15 is not punishment, but restoration. We are called to win our brother over. To do so, we need to adjust our message to fit the person who receives it, “building others up, according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.” Engaging others in this way is both an art and a skill and requires that we first examine our hearts and confess our sins. This takes on different forms in different cultures, but the goal of confronting others is the same – loving restoration, returning them to full functioning within the Body of Christ.

Questions for Reflection:

1. Do people in your community speak directly with each other when wrongs have been committed? If not, how are such personal issues dealt with? With what results?
2. Do you find it more difficult to confess your sins, or go to someone who has sinned against you? Why do you think that is? What role do the cultures in which you live (family, church and society) play in how you handle such situations?
3. Have you ever “confronted” someone harshly, or been harshly confronted? What impact did it have on you? On your relationship with the other person?
4. If someone were to “confront” you, what would you want them to do? What would you find most helpful? Does your answer provide you with a way to go to others to show them their fault when they have sinned against you?

8 Speak the Truth in Love

Truth spoken without love risks condemnation. But, love spoken without truth risks empty praise. When Paul tells us that we are to speak the truth in love he calls us to speech that is both hard-edged and kind. This tension can be difficult to manage. When sinned against, our natural response is often to bring “the law” against the wrongdoer. With the law, we often bring condemnation and punishment. For Christians, the law must always be seasoned with the gospel and with forgiveness. This is, after all, how Jesus confronts us. Being quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, is a good rule of thumb when working through conflicts of any kind. This helps us remain committed to what is best in the wrongdoer’s life and brings honor to God.

Questions for Reflection:

1. Where do you fall on the truth-love spectrum? Do you focus most on speaking the truth, or on loving others? What does this tell you about your priorities?
2. Which listening skills do you find hardest to practice – wait, attend, clarify, reflect, or agree? What can you do to improve your ability?
3. Has someone every spoken the truth in love to you? What impact did it have on you? On your relationship with the person who spoke to you?
4. Is there someone you need to talk with about their wrongdoing? If so, prayerfully ask God to help you plan how to show them their fault by speaking the truth in love.

9 Take One or Two Others Along

When we disagree with others, Scripture requires us to keep the matter as private as possible as long as possible. We are to speak *to* others, rather than *about* others. Sometimes private conversation proves futile. Matthew 18:16-17 sets out further steps we may need to take: involve 2 or 3 others (Mt 18:16); engage the church, especially leadership (Mt 18:17); and, if all else fails, treat the wrongdoer as a “pagan or a tax collector” (Mt 18:17). Even removing someone from worship has as its goal repentance and restoration, rather than punishment. Our response is not to shun someone who has been disciplined, but to evangelize them, to win back their hearts for God.

Questions for Reflection:

1. Within your church and community, do people go to others privately when sinned against? Or, do they mostly speak to others about the offense, rather than to the wrongdoer? How can you help them respond in a more godly way?
2. Does your church have a process of discipline for members who refuse to repent of serious wrongdoing? If so, does it focus on punishment, or on restoration? What have been the results?
3. Have you ever served as a reconciler, helping others resolve their differences? Where in your life are there opportunities to play this role?

Go and Be Reconciled

Peacemaking involves restoring damaged relationships and negotiating just agreements. When we forgive others as Jesus has forgiven us and seek solutions that satisfy the interests of others as well as our own, the door is opened to reconciliation and peace.

10 Forgive as God Forgave You

Forgiveness is the heart of the gospel. Through our faith in Jesus, we are a forgiven people. Scripture commands us to forgive others in the same way we have been forgiven. Some of us confuse forgiveness with forgetting, or with feeling good about the wrongdoer. Real forgiveness is a choice, a decision made in gratitude for the forgiveness we have received. When we forgive someone, we release them from liability for the sins they committed against us. The Four Promises of Forgiveness are tools that help us live out the forgiveness we have granted. The Replacement Principle helps us see the sinner accurately by recognizing godly aspects of their lives. Forgiveness is hard and requires that we rely on God's strength, not our own.

Questions for Reflection:

1. Do Christians in your community practice godly forgiveness? What are some of the ways in which fellow-believers misunderstand forgiveness? How can you help them change?
2. Which of the Four Promises do you find easiest to make? Are any of them difficult for you? Be sure you rely on God's strength, asking that he transform you from the inside to live out those promises.
3. Make a list of the sins for which God has forgiven you. Be specific. Thank God for his forgiveness and for the changes he is helping you to make. Then, the next time someone sins against you, recall this list and ask, "How do my sins – for which I've been forgiven – compare with the sins committed against me?" The more we appreciate the forgiveness we've received, the readier we become to forgive others.
4. Is there someone who has sinned against you? How does the Replacement Principle apply to your attitude toward that person? What changes do you need to make?

11 Look Also to the Interests of Others

Conflict narrows our focus, leading us to view matters in absolute terms – I’m right and she’s wrong; I want what is good, so she must want what is bad. Life is seldom this black and white and such thinking can betray a self-focus that has tipped into idolatry. Paul’s counsel in Philippians 2 – to be concerned not only for our own interests, but also for the interests of others – is an antidote for hearts that have become hardened. The PAUSE Principle enables us to negotiate substantive disagreements in a way that takes the concerns of all into account. The key is understanding “interests” and negotiating in a cooperative manner. Cooperative negotiation works best when relationships are strong and itself is a tool in moving us toward reconciliation.

Questions for Reflection:

1. Do you negotiate competitive or cooperatively? What is the relationship between your preferred negotiation style and where you place yourself on the Slippery Slope?
2. Recall a conflict in which your emotions impacted the way you negotiated. What was the result? What would you do differently next time?
3. Are reconciling personal issues and negotiating substantive disagreements thought of as distinct where you live? For example, can you be relationally reconciled with someone and openly disagree at the same time? Or, are disagreements hidden beneath the surface to promote harmony? What does your answer tell you about priorities in your community? In what ways are they biblical? Unbiblical?
4. The heart of negotiating cooperatively is identifying “interests” and using them to create different solutions. Have you ever experienced this kind of problem solving? If you’re not certain what is involved, please re-read Chapter 11.

12 Overcome Evil with Good

Sometimes, nothing seems to work. We pray faithfully, take personal responsibility, speak restoratively, consider the interests of others and...still there is no peace. As Christians, we know this never means that God is not working, or that he doesn't hear our prayers. We must continue to trust him with the timing and not become discouraged. Waiting on God should never be passive. We are to watch what we say. We can seek the wisdom of godly advisors. We must continue to do what is right. We need to remember that it is God's job to change hearts, not ours. And we can deploy the "ultimate" weapon – a deliberate, focused love that meets the needs of enemies. In doing so, we imitate Jesus himself, who rescued us "while we were yet sinners."

Questions for Reflection:

1. How do Christians in your community respond to enemies? How do you respond? If your response godly?
2. Recall a time when you, or someone you know or know about, "overcame evil with good." What did they do that helped win over their enemy?
3. Is there a conflict in which you are involved that appears incapable of being resolved? How have you responded? What can you do to actively wait on God? In particular, what would it look like for you to deploy deliberate, focused love?

Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. – 1 Corinthians 15:58



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