

Telemachus was a monk who lived in the 4th century. He felt God saying to him, "Go to Rome." He was in a cloistered monastery. He put his possessions in a sack and set out for Rome. When he arrived in the city, people were thronging in the streets. He asked why all the excitement and was told that this was the day that the gladiators would be fighting and killing each other in the coliseum, the day of the games, the circus. He thought to himself, "Four centuries after Christ and they are still killing each other, for enjoyment?" He ran to the coliseum and heard the gladiators saying, "Hail to Ceasar, we die for Ceasar" and he thought, "this isn't right." He jumped over the railing and went out into the middle of the field, got between two gladiators, held up his hands and said "In the name of Christ, forbear." The crowd protested and began to shout, "Run him through, Run him through." A gladiator came over and hit him in the stomach with the back of his sword. It sent him sprawling in the sand. He got up and ran back and again said, "In the name of Christ, forbear." The crowd continued to chant, "Run him through." One gladiator came over and plunged his sword through the little monk's stomach and he fell into the sand, which began to turn crimson with his blood. One last time he gasped out, "In the name of Christ forbear." A hush came over the 80,000 people in the coliseum. Soon a man stood and left, then another and more, and within minutes all 80,000 had emptied out of the arena. It was the last known gladiatorial contest in the history of Rome.

Matthew 5:9

Blessed are the peacemakers – for they will be called sons of God.

Conflict doesn't change the world – it's making peace that changes the world!

Why – will peacemakers be called sons of God?

Because peacemaking is the family business!

In our relationship with God we display our family likeness by manifesting the fruit of the spirit of peace and in doing what is important to Him: making peace.

Jesus said, *"blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God."*

And in His last will and testament (if you like) in **John 14:27** he said *“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you”*

He came to bring peace; He made peace through His blood on the cross, and calls us to be peacemakers.

Now we are all unique – we are all fearfully and wonderfully made – God has made us all different and individual.

So it stands to reason that we will have differences of opinion – we have different likes and dislikes – what’s important to me may not be important to you. We are whom the Lord made us – although we are also coloured by our sinful nature – so the fact that we have disagreements will be the norm.

This beatitude accepts the fact that there will be disputes – but it tells us to resolve them.

If you’re the sort of person that seems to have lots of disagreements – it may not necessarily mean that you are a disagreeable person – it maybe the Lord has just made you a little more individual than everyone else – but it will also mean that you will have to try that little bit harder to resolve your disputes.

God has given us the ministry of restoring relationships – we are called to live in community – we’ll always have issues – so we’ll always have to resolve them.

For this reason much of the New Testament is devoted to teaching us how to get along with each other.

The quotes that I could use from the New Testament could go on and on – but here’s one Paul writes in **Philippians 2:1-2 (The Message)**

“If you’ve gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you care— then do me a favor: Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends.”

Jesus wants us to be known for our love for each other – it says in **John 13:34-35**
“As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” – that’s why broken fellowship is a disgraceful testimony to unbelievers.

So what causes disputes between believers – the Corinthians were renowned for it – and Paul was very embarrassed and angry about it.

So what causes dispute between us?

Well if you break it down then – Pride, selfishness, jealousy, envy – all these things God hates – and all these things we find to a greater or lesser extent in us – and make us interpret words that are spoken to us, in the wrong way.

Pride – encourages us to take offence at things that may be said about us that doesn’t line up with our own opinion of our selves.

Jealousy and envy – encourages us to belittle the achievements of others and deny the talents that they may have.

Then there’s – arrogance, boastfulness, self-centeredness,

These character traits make us express our selves to others in ways that get peoples backs up!

When you get a person who has a problem with arrogance and ego, talking to a person who has issues with pride and jealousy – then you may well have a boiler house of tension.

I think we can all probably hold our hands up to some if not all of these issues – I know I can.

And how do most of us relieve that tension?

Gossip!

It's amazing how gossip can get things of your chest – really venting your opinions about another person – it put's them down and lifts us up!

Boy does that feel better – we take it for granted that the person we're gossiping with will agree with us – or that they will agree with what we're saying

Gossiping may well help us to feel better – which is why some so called social experts claiming that gossip is a good thing – but it doesn't muster peace

Gossip is a way of infecting other people with our own prejudices - encouraging them to see other people in the way that we see them.

God hates these things – they are character traits of our sinful nature and they must be dealt with if we want peace.

We must have peace before we become peacemakers.

Peace is a sure sign that we have accepted our reconciliation with God.

Peace is the result of a forgiven heart – when peace rules in our hearts then we can become peacemakers.

Being a peacemaker means becoming the initiator in reconciling conflict between others and us.

Our part in the family business is to tear down walls that divide us and constantly work for understanding.

The first thing to do when trying to resolve a conflict is to talk to God – we find that often in conflicts if we seek God first – He will either change our heart or the other persons heart and the conflict gets resolved without us having to do much more.

No matter what the dispute is – that's the place to start.

Then - Always take the initiative - it doesn't matter if you are the offender or the offended – God wants us to make the first move in reconciling our differences.

Don't wait for others to make the first move - they may be doing the same thing waiting for you.

Do you remember as children - *"I'm not making the first move - they started it - they can make the first move"* - sometimes we're still like that as adults

If we try to resolve who started it then we may well have another dispute on our hands - and the arguments will start piling up in front of us

Forget who started it - that issue will only get in the way

It's a hard step to make the first move no matter what the circumstances - but that's what God calls us to do.

Restoring broken fellowship is so important to God - it takes a priority over our worship of him - because it gets in the way.

Jesus says in **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."

That's how important it is to God!

I said just now that God made us all individuals - but in terms of our sinful nature -

Paul tells us in **1 Corinthians 10:13**

"No temptation has seized you except what is common to man."

The next step is for us to try to understand the other person's point of view.

As we are all seized by the same temptations then we should be able to understand where they're coming from - put yourself in their shoes.

Listen to what they have to say - sympathise with their feelings - use your ears more than your tongue.

Don't try to talk people out of the way they feel - let them get what they want to say off their chest - feelings are not always true or logical - in fact resentment can make us act and think in foolish ways.

David wrote in **Psalm 73:21-22** (TEV)

"When my thoughts were bitter and my feelings were hurt, I was as stupid as an animal"

It's true that people don't think straight when their angry and people can get excited over the most trivial things

"Years ago, a large statue of Christ was erected high in the Andes on the border between Argentina and Chile. Called "Christ of the Andes," the statue symbolizes a pledge between the two countries that as long as the statue stands, there will be peace between Chile and Argentina. Shortly after the statue was erected, the Chileans began to protest that they had been slighted -- the statue had its back turned to Chile. Just when tempers were at their highest in Chile, a Chilean newspaperman saved the day. In an editorial that not only satisfied the people but made them laugh, he simply said, "The people of Argentina need more watching over than the Chileans."

While **Proverbs 19:11** says

"A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense."

Fourthly – confess your part in the conflict

The best way to get people to talk is to admit our own mistakes.

And Jesus said it was also a way for us to see things more clearly.

Matthew 7:5

"First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye."

Confession is a powerful tool for reconciliation – when we begin by humbly admitting our mistakes – it defuses the other person's anger and disarms their attack.

Then accept responsibility for your mistakes and ask for forgiveness.

This is true I've noticed if people argue with me I find it easier to argue back

Step five – attack the problem and not the person.

We can't fix the problem if we are more concerned with fixing the blame – we have to make a choice – you won't get very far if you say to someone lets try to sort out this problem you made.

We have to decide if you want to fix the problem we can't fix the blame.

Proverbs 15:1

"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."

Often in resolving disputes the way we say something is as important as what we say. If you say it in an accusing manner then it will be received in a defensive manner.

Proverbs 16:21 (TEV)

"A wise, mature person is known for his understanding. The more pleasant his words, the more persuasive he is."

Nagging never works!

Paul also says in **Ephesians 4:29**

"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen."

Peace comes at a price – it will cost us our pride & our self-centeredness.

These we should be happy to get rid of – but they're hard to let go.

But letting go of them will bring great reward

Paul says in **Romans 12:18**

"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."

And finally Emphasise reconciliation, not resolution

It's unrealistic to expect everyone to agree about everything – reconciliation focuses on the relationship – while resolution focuses on the problem.

When we focus on the reconciliation – the problem loses significance and often becomes irrelevant.

Jesus didn't say, "Blessed are the peace lovers" because everyone loves peace.

Neither did he say, "Blessed are the peaceable," who are never disturbed by anything.

Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers – those who work for peace" – those who actively seek to resolve conflict. Peacemakers are rare because peacemaking is hard!

Peacemaking is not avoiding conflict – running from a problem – or pretending it doesn't exist.

Jesus is known as the prince of peace – but he was never afraid of conflict – in fact on occasion he provoked it!

Neither is peacemaking appeasement – always giving in, acting like a doormat, allowing others to walk all over us – Jesus doesn't want that for us!

Jesus refused to back down on many issues, standing his ground in the face of evil opposition.

And we have to do the same – no matter how hard it may be we have to let go of our pride – our self-centeredness and embrace the calling of Jesus – because to follow Jesus we have to follow what he calls us to do.