



“Recycling Pain”

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” (Matthew 5:9 ESV)

“The great illusion of leadership is to think that man can be led out of the desert by someone who has never been there.”¹

The only people God uses are broken people

Max Lucado once suggested that church folks should come to Sunday services in the kind of vehicle that expresses how their week had been. Some would come in a limousine—the perfect week, the perfect job, the perfect responses, etc. God has been good; we feel good; and the world has been good. There’s nothing wrong with that. When that happens to you, give gratitude. Others of us would arrive at church in an ambulance; we’d be on a gurney with tubes sticking into our arms, perhaps even a ventilator. We’d been in multiple accidents, some of which were our own fault, others not. We’re not sure if we are going to survive, but a team of people are hovering over us watching our vitals.

I think it’s encouraging to know that—more often than not—the people God uses to bring spiritual health to others are the very ones who used to live on gurneys. God uses broken people to help heal broken people. In fact, those who are “wounded healers” see that though their pain, God has forged a ministry of restoration and recovery—they have become peace-makers. Biblical scholar D. A. Carson wrote: “Gospel peacemaking is about spreading the gospel, lessening tensions, seeking solutions, striving that communication is understood. Getting personally involved.”

Some of the greatest blessings to the church family are those who struggle with addictive behaviors; they speak transparently about their history; they are willing to be vulnerable with the sins with which they currently wrestle. They have concluded that it’s healthier to be honest than to pretend. They know they need Jesus. They who have received the peace of Christ, now desire to be used by Christ to extend peace to others. God never gives us just enough grace and peace and comfort for ourselves. He always gives enough to pass around. *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion*

¹ Henri Nouwen in *The Wounded Healer*. Cited in *Christianity Today*, Vol. 40, no. 7.

and the God of all comfort, 4who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. (2 Corinthians 1:3-4 NIV)

The proof of recovery—focusing outside yourself.

You stop being so self absorbed—my needs, my hurts, my problems—and you start saying, “How can I help other people?” The proof of recovery is that you want to help others, not just keep focusing on what’s happened to you. (Baker 2007, 242)

“Yield myself to God to be used to bring this Good News to others, both by my example and by my words.” (Baker 2007, 254)

Yielding myself to God takes work. Peace-making requires effort. It’s not a passive process that happens automatically. To make peace you have to get busy; you have to act. Peacemakers pay attention these questions: Are we a community of grace? Are we talking about our sin or pretending that it doesn’t exist? Are broken people attracted to our community? Is conflict out in the open or suppressed? Are forgiveness and reconciliation concealed or pursued? Are we constantly returning to the Cross in our conversation, prayers, and praise?

Am I willing to share my story so that others may feel hope and I may feel healing?

Who can better help an alcoholic than someone who has struggled with alcoholism? Who better to help someone dealing with the pain of abuse than one who also suffered with abuse? Who can better help the person who lost a job and went bankrupt than someone who has experienced the same thing. Who can better help the parents of a teenager who is going off the deep end than a couple who had a child who did the same? We’re not talking about spiritual exhibitionism; we’re talking about the question, “How can I use my pain to help others? How can my pain bring others peace?” (Baker 2007, 247)

“For they shall be called sons of God.”

They and they alone are declared to be sons of God. Jesus used “sons of God” rather than “children of God” to impress the point that peace-makers act in the very likeness of our peacemaking God. Our peacemaking God suffered pain on a Roman Cross so that we could enter His family.

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. (Colossians 1:19-20 NIV)