

# Steps To Peace

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19 January 2025

Father, what a joy to be able to come before you as your body, your body and coppelis individual members that you've brought together for the purpose of worshiping you and bringing you glory. And God, we know you love your church. Christ said that he would build his church and the gates of Hades would not prevail over it. And so we want to be that church that you're working in, that you're using for your glory. We're not a perfect church and we have a lot of needs, but we can see the work you're doing.

Help us to do it better for your name's sake. And Lord, we want to thank you for Cheryl's testimony and pray that you continue working her body and bring healing, continue working in her son and her daughter to bring them fully to Christ, to know him. We pray for Mark as he's going to be going in for this kidney surgery, cancer. And we just pray that they would get ahead of this and Lord, that get it all out and that you would extend his life. Pray for Hannah's grandfather as he's going through the things that he's experiencing in his life.

And we just pray that you would meet his needs and you'd be there for him and also lift up. Scotty has got physical needs and just be working his body. So, Lord, we pray in Jesus name who taught us to pray. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

And give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

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You may be seated.

Well, I mentioned at the start that Paul is giving instructions to the church. And he cares about the church. He cares about the church that he established in First Thessalonians. And so he wants them to be in a relationship with God and with each other, with their leaders that will glorify him. And that's really important that a church body, we're made up of members, but that we love one another.

I don't know if you've ever been in a church that fought or not. Anyone ever been in a church that fought or not? That's hard to believe.

Well, I have. Before I came here in 1976, 1977, I was attending a church in Milton Freewater, Oregon, Baptist Church. And we loved the church. We had a lot of young people that loved the Lord, that loved us, and we enjoyed being there. Well, we were without a pastor for a year.

And when you're a denominational church like that, they send in candidates and they come in and they preach and you visit with them and then you vote on them. And we'd had two come in and we'd voted no. Finally, we had a man come in and he gave a sermon. He was really outgoing and the whole church voted for him except wife and I. We were the only two that voted negatively against him.

There was just something about him that didn't seem right. Well, after about a year, we were just going crazy. This guy would be preaching his message, and all of a sudden he'd break out into song and sing a song every Sunday. And then at the end of the service, he would give this long, extended altar call, just as I am, over and over and over again. Same people in church every Sunday.

Nobody knew, you know, that needed to be saved. And I happened to be on the elder board with two other young men. And he would sit us in front of his desk just like those three monkeys, you know, here no evil, see no monkey. And he would tell us what we're going to do. We never voted on anything.

He never asked us what our opinion was. I got to the place where I would leave church, just really angry, you know. Finally told my wife, I don't know if I can keep going there, which is really hard because we love the people and looking at that. And then I got a job at Ocean Spray Cranberries and moved here. So it took care of my problem.

Ten years later, I happened to meet with somebody in that church because what had happened is that next year the head elder said, I'll take a motion to fire the pastor. You know, there was a second. I second it. I second it. And they voted.

And it was 80 to 20, firing the pastor. But he wouldn't leave.

The denominational representative came in for about three years trying to work it out and finally got him to agree. That easy for you to leave than everybody in the church to leave. And he did leave. But the person shared with me, after 10 years, we were known in our town as the church that fought, as the church that fought. Can you imagine what that must have been like?

The conflict, the discouragement, people living, no outreach, no peace. It's hard to imagine, isn't it? Well, just imagine if the bride of Christ, if we're the bride of Christ, what Christ thinks when the church isn't getting along and we're told that the church is the bride of Christ. And just think what it must be like for him when his bride is quarreling, fighting, backbiting, gossiping, won't get along. In case you don't know what that'll be like for him, we get a clue in Proverbs because he gives several proverbs.

Proverbs 12:4 says, A disgraceful wife is like decay in his bones. Ouch. Proverbs 21:9. Better to live in a corner of a roof than share a house with a quarrelsome wife. 2019, 2119.

Better to live in a desert than with a quarrelsome and ill tempered wife in 2715. A quarrelsome wife is like a constant dripping on a rainy day. We all know what that's like, right? When's spring going to come? Not a pretty picture.

When the church of Christ is not coming together and demonstrating their love vertically for our God and our Savior Jesus Christ, and horizontally for his children. That's why Paul tells us here in verse 13. At the end of that verse, he says, be at peace with one another. Be at peace with one another. Do you realize the church is made up of one another's, you know, one another, one another, one another.

And it's this relationship of a diverse people that come together for one purpose, to love and to glorify our God. First Corinthians 12 likens the church to a body. And just like a body, there's all different parts and they're all important. And when they all work together in harmony, it's a beautiful thing. But one of those parts get out of whack.

A kidney, a heart, lungs, whatever it is, that is not good, it's not healthy. So we're commanded to live at peace with one another. And so that's easy to say, isn't it? Be at peace. Be at peace.

Peace on you. I've been churches where they do that and kind of like, well, that didn't help.

How do we be at peace with one another? Well, Paul gives us six steps to peace here in this passage. I'm not going to look at all six, but the first four. So first of all he says admonish, or in the niv, warn those who are idle. Warn those who are idle.

The word idle was a military term back in the days that it was written and it meant to be unruly. An idle person was an unruly person. And it describes someone who was out of order, who didn't stay in their assigned position and do what they were asked to do. Those of us that have served in the military, we may remember that one of the very first things they taught us was how to march. And that first day or two, it was just a commotion, you know, people trying to figure out where to go and what to do and when and how to keep in step and how to keep the line straight and all of those things.

And so they took a bunch of individuals and what they did is they molded us into a cohesive group that worked together. And every person in that group was important. If one person even got out of step and you looked at it from the side and everybody's going up and down and here's this other guy going just the opposite way, and it was

just like a sore thumb. And guess what the squad sergeant would do? Oh, you'll get over it.

No, he would warn you and get in step, soldier, and you're embarrassing our troop. And he would get us to work together. And when someone gets out of step, they're on their own. That means they're concerned about themselves and they're not concerned about the group. And so we have a responsibility in the church.

If we're brothers and sisters in Christ, when we see someone get out of step, so to speak, get out of rank, out of love, we're supposed to go to them and warn them about the consequences. And if they're wise, they accept that and act on it. If they're unwise, they'll go somewhere else or whatever they'll do. But we have that responsibility and it leads to peace. When the church body is not getting along, there is no peace in it.

A second thing that Paul encourages tells us to do as far as steps of peace, he says to encourage the timid. Encourage the timid. Timid here means faint hearted, easily discouraged. Every church, including our church, is filled with a lot of different kind of people. Some are really confident and aggressive and just let me at it, you know, I don't care what's in the way.

Others are, help me go. But some are timid and they struggle and they have a hard time. And so we can't just go to that timid person and say, buck it up. What's wrong with you? Come on.

All you got to do is try. I found that timid people don't respond to that very well. It just makes them more timid. And so he's saying that we're to come alongside and encourage them. A timid person needs encouragement.

And so when we see someone that is struggling in a relationship and we realize it's because of their fear, we come along and that God is working through all of those things for their good, even the trials in their life. And we come alongside and try to encourage them to be able to take that stand for Christ and to walk with him in every way he can. And I don't know about you, but I found the churches full of timid people. I would guess that over my 45 years in ministry that most of my counseling and the

problems I've had have dealt with timid people who, for whatever reason, someone that may be stronger just really kind of just squashed them and they couldn't handle it. And they needed encouragement.

They don't need beat up. They need to be encouraged. So that's the second thing. Third, he says, help the weak. And again, if you're in a church and there's more than one or two members, you're going to have strong, you're going to have middle, you're going to have weak people.

Weak here deals with your faith. It deals with maybe your physical condition could be a lot of different things. And so more than anything else, a weak person needs someone to come in their time of need to help them and to lift them up. And I've been so blessed in our church that when people are going through sicknesses or maybe having lost a loved one and they feel weak, that the church body has reached out to help them in their time of need. I couldn't help but reminded of my father towards the end of his life.

And my dad got Lou Gehrig's disease, horrible disease. And he just shriveled up more and more and lost more and more strength to visit him one time and said, let's go out to lunch, dad. And he was up for that. So we got in the car and drove into Shelton, got to the restaurant, and when he got out, he was really struggling to try to get into the restaurant. And I saw that and I went over and I grabbed my dad by the arm and dad let me help.

And together we walked in the restaurant, did the same thing after that. And that is probably my best memory of my dad, that we actually interacted with each other because of his weakness. In the same way, when we see someone's weak and we have the resources to come alongside them and lift them up, it will bless you more than it blesses them. And so we're to help the weak. And the fourth one, it says, be patient with everyone.

Now, I know here has the spiritual gift of patience, right? We're told don't pray for patience because if you do, God's going to send trials, something to test your

patience. But it is a fruit of the Spirit. It's a work that the Holy Spirit should be doing in your life to make you more and more impatient. Not impatient, patient.

And we all struggle with that, don't we? It's easy to get impatient with someone else. They're just not measuring up to what we think they should be doing. Come on. What's wrong?

What's taking you so long? I used to joke this wasn't in my message, but I used to joke that I had the gift of encouragement. And when we lived in the cabin down here and it was time for church, I'd get myself and my kids ready for church. We'd get out in the car and we'd still wait for my wife. You know, it takes a woman longer to get ready, doesn't it?

So I did everything I could to help her. Honk, honk, honk.

I gradually learned that patience works so much better. And we're called to be patient with each other. And we want them to be patient with us, don't we? Be patient with me. God's still working in my life.

And that's true of every one of us. And if you're asking for it, then you need to extend that to others. I don't think God's going to extend to you if you're not patient with others and he sees what you're doing. And why should I give you that? And you know, if you won't demonstrate it with others.

Well, there are two other steps of peace here. First of all, no retaliation. And then second, looking for ways to do good to each other. I'm going to save those for my next message. And I'd like to close by explaining why this is so important, that we as a church, and not just our church, but every church, we.

Why we as a church should be at peace with each other. Because you may think, how does that involve me? I don't have anything to do with that person's life. Besides, I don't even like them.

But God has a reason for that. I've been reading John Piper's book on Providence for the third time now, and I came across something that just really hit me that I think may apply to peace with the church. John Piper is famous for saying, God is most glorified in you when you are most satisfied in him. God is most glorified in you when you are most satisfied in Him. And he was using the illustration of the Israelites as they were coming out of the desert, and of course, they received a law, Mount Sinai.

And he used the first and the Ten Commandments to explain why this is important. Anyone know the First Commandment?

Well, that's the most important commandment. And the other is, you shall love your neighbor yourself. The First Commandment. You shall have no other gods before me, There are no other gods beside me. And he says, that's like a bookend.

And he says, the tenth commandment. What's that? Thou shall not covet. And he said, they're saying the same things. If someone has another God, what are they saying about the true God?

Not enough. If someone is coveting, what are they saying? I want something more. You're not. This isn't filling the desire of my heart.

And that's what the law is based on, that God would be glorified in him. And so what are these commandments telling us, and how does that apply to us as a church? And what it's talking about is satisfaction and desire that God meets the need of our soul. And one of the ways he does that is by placing us in a body to bring people into our lives that helps meet those needs. Sometimes it's somebody we really like and enjoy being with.

Sometimes it's somebody that I don't know. But they encourage us or they warn us because they're concerned for the relationship. And so if we love God with our heart, soul and mind, we are saying that he satisfies us.

We bring him glory as a result of that. And if that's true, why would we want anything else in our life besides Him? If we want something else and it's not enough God, we



want something else, and we covet that. We're saying we're not satisfied with God, that He isn't enough. And I'll show how this applies to the church.

Piper was applying it to the Israelites going through the desert and their relationship to God in the desert. Because they are always going after gods. They are always lacking in faith. They keep failing. And of course, a lot of them got left in the desert as a result of that.

In the same way, he wants his church to be satisfied, to love one another as the bride of Christ for the glory of God. I'll let Piper kind of explain this with an illustration of marriage. And I use marriage because we really are the bride of Christ. We're married to Jesus Christ, and when we, the bride, don't get along. I already explained what that meant back in Proverbs.

Better to live in a desert, better to live dripping water. And so Piper says, and we can apply this to our marriages. When a wife is satisfied in her husband and never looks for satisfaction elsewhere, she magnifies the worth of her husband and his jealousy is never stirred. Her supreme enjoyment of her husband is her exaltation of his work, of his worth. That exaltation is the point of the first and last commandments of the law.

And the point is we can't be satisfied with God and bring him glory if we're struggling with his bride. That horizontal relationship is what leads us into that vertical relationship with God. And so we have an enemy. And what's his goal? To divide, to bring dissension, to cause us to be unsatisfied.

Where God has placed us in the body of Christ, it doesn't mean there's not times where we can't disagree with what the church is doing or even leaving the church in the right way, that happens. And God can work through that. But it does mean when we're in the church, we should be looking for ways to be at peace with each other and warning people, encouraging people, helping people, being patient with people. I've been in churches that did that, and I've been in churches that didn't do that. And I'll tell you what, in the churches that didn't do it, church was no fun.

It just was not an enjoyment at all. Kept coming and kept trying to reach out to people who are having problems. I mean, I could have this long list of problems I've seen in church when the church used to be this way. Just before church started one day, two of the members were standing in that doorway yelling at each other, and they were doubling their fists and saying things about each other that shouldn't be said. And here I am, the pastor.

I was younger then, and my thought is, what do I do if they get in a fight? Well, like a fool, I went over, got between them. Come on now, we can work this out. We can work this out. Praise God.

He did. Those two men became really close friends and helped each other through difficult times. And so when we see a church where people are coming together in love, looking for ways to build each other up and to be at peace with each other, that's a joy to each one of us. But I think even more, it's a joy to our Heavenly Father. And we understand, don't we?

If we had kids, we just love it when our kids fought all the time, right? And calling each other names. And he's got more than I do. And you know, on and on and on. And you're just trying, let's have some peace in our home.

And just saying that doesn't work. And we got to find ways to build that peace. And that's what Paul is sharing with us today. And thank God that it's a work of the Holy Spirit. Because if it was our work, the truth is we're different.

And there's some people we like and some people we don't like, some people that we just enjoy being with, and some people, you're not getting me with them, okay? But it's not a work of the physical and the natural. It's a work of the Holy Spirit. It has to be the love of Christ in us being extended to those that God has brought into our lives. And so I'd like to encourage you with that.

We're going to look at a couple more in a couple of weeks, and then our responsibility to God as far as what he wants each of us to be individuals. So let's pray.

Well, Father, I am extremely glad and joyful for the body of believers that you put me in. God, looking back at my life, I love the church that first Sunday I visited as a third or fourth grader, and I look forward to spending time with the members in the church and sometimes people that are just really easy to get along with and sometimes people that are hard to get along with, but I still love it. And I just pray, Father, that you put that love in each one of our hearts for others, that we'd see if one person is out of step, that we need to do what we can to help them to be in step with the rest of the body. I pray that you'd protect us from the evil one. We know he's the accuser of the brethren and God.

We confess that sometimes we hear that accusation and we line up behind him and say, that's right, that's right. Instead of finding ways to help that brother or sister to get back in step. And so, Lord, grateful for the work you're doing in our life. I thank you for the peace that we are experiencing, for the love, for the joy, the comradeship. And I just pray that it would grow in Christ's name.

Amen.