



A Checklist for Christian Love: Part 2

(Romans 12:14-21)

The Sermon on the Mount: Blessed are the Peacemakers

- **Matthew 5:7-10**
- ⁹ “Blessed are **the peacemakers**, for they shall be called sons and daughters of God.
- **Genesis 13:5-9**
- ⁵ And Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents, ⁶ so that the land could not support both of them dwelling together; for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together, ⁷ and there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. . .
- ⁸ Then Abram said to Lot, “Let there be no strife between you and me, and between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, for we are kinsmen. ⁹ Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself from me. If you take the left hand, then I will go to the right, or if you take the right hand, then I will go to the left.”

“Repairers of the Breach”

- “Breach”: “A gap or rift, as in a dike or fortification” (an opening in a wall)
- “Repairers of the Breach”: someone who fills the gap
- Nehemiah repairing the walls of Jerusalem after the Jews’ return from Babylon
- Milwaukee ROTB: provides a daytime warming and resource center for the homeless
- And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,
the restorer of streets to dwell in. (Isaiah 58:12)
- “In a spiritual context, a "repairer of the breach" is someone who **restores the right way, beginning with himself**¹. They may have no influence or control over what others do, but they do have control over what they do, and when they repair their own personal breach with God, the breach in the wall closes a bit¹. In a more general sense, the term refers to someone who restores friendly relations between two people or groups of people who have a difference of opinion so great that it causes a breach in their relationship”

I. Peacemaking

A. Do Not Seek Revenge

- **¹⁹ Beloved, never avenge yourselves, (Romans 12:19a)**
- It is “human nature” to seek revenge:
- “Nature . . . Stamped upon the human heart, in the strongest and most indelible characters, an immediate and instinctive approbation of the sacred and necessary law of retaliation” (Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p. 71)
- Revenge escalates: we feel what others inflict upon us but do not feel what we inflict upon others
- **God’s alternative:**
- Do not say, “I will do to him as he has done to me;
I will pay the man back for what he has done.” (Proverbs 24:29)
- When he [Jesus] was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten (1 Peter 2:23)

I. Peacemaking

B. Pray for Those who Harm You

- ¹⁴ **Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. (Romans 12:14)**
- ⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and **pray for those who persecute you,**(Matthew 5:44-45)
- ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. (Luke 6:28)
- ⁹ Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, (1 Peter 3:9)

- **Praying for those who harm you “humanizes” them**
- **Praying for and forgiving those who harm you gives you freedom from hate**
- Corrie Ten Boom

The Stoning of Stephen

- ⁵⁴ Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. ⁵⁵ **But he, full of the Holy Spirit**, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶ And he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”
- ⁵⁷ But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. ⁵⁸ Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named **Saul**. ⁵⁹ And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”
- ⁶⁰ And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep. (Acts 7:54-60)

I. Peacemaking

C. Do What is Praiseworthy

- **but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. (Romans 12:17b)**
- “See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but **always seek to do good to one another and to everyone**” (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
- **Praiseworthiness:** ⁸ Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. (Philippians 4:8)

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)

“The Categorical Imperative”

- Act only according to that maxim by which we can at the same time will that it should become a universal law. In simpler terms, before you act, think to yourself: “What if everyone did this?” [Example: stealing] {Treat others how you want to be treated}
- Treat humanity, whether in our own person or in the person of any other, never merely as a means to an end, but always as an end. This means recognizing the intrinsic value of every person and respecting their dignity and autonomy. [Example: doing something for someone merely to get them to give you something more valuable in return/*quid pro quo*] {*Imago Dei*: We are all created in the image of God}
- Example of a universal law: “Treat others with respect”

Peacemaking

D. Food, Reflection, and Saving Face

- **²⁰ To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing, you will heap burning coals on his head.” (Romans 12:20)**
- **Food and fellowship show your compassion and shared identity/humanity**
- ¹⁶ And the scribes and the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, “Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?” ¹⁷ And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners” (Mark 2:16-17)
- **Reflection by and shame upon your enemy (unless a sociopath):**
- Let them be put to shame and disappointed altogether
who rejoice at my calamity!
Let them be clothed with shame and dishonor
who magnify themselves against me! (Psalm 35:26)

I. Peacemaking

E. Responsibilities (and Limits) of Living in Peace

- **¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. (Romans 12:18)**
- A double “qualifier”: “if possible” and “so far as it depends on you”
- **The purpose of being nice: that some may come to know Jesus as Savior, and that others will grow in their relationships with Christ and others**
- “First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, ²for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. ³This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of **God our Savior,** ⁴**who desires all people to be saved** and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (1 Timothy 2:1-4)

II. Overcoming Evil

A. Don't Play with Fire

- **17 Repay no one evil for evil (Romans 12:17a)**
- Do not say, "I will repay evil";
wait for the LORD, and he will deliver you. (Proverbs 20:22 ESV)
- **"See that no one repays anyone evil for evil**, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone" (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
- **Play with wickedness and you will get burned**
- **Evil begets evil; good begets good (Both escalate)**
- ⁵ You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶ but showing steadfast love to thousands^[b] of those who love me and keep my commandments. (Exodus 20:5-6)

II. Overcoming Evil

B. Leave Vengeance to God

- But leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” (Romans 12:19b)
- **God is holy and righteous; thus, His wrath is just:**
- ¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. (Romans 1:18-19)
- **God often acts through humans** (e.g., David and Goliath)
- ⁴⁷ and that all this assembly may know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hand.” (1 Samuel 17:47)

II. Overcoming Evil

C. Love Defeats Hatred

- ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:21)
- **Victory by means of spiritual strength**
- ¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. (Ephesians 6:10-13)
- **Victory by means of passive/non-violent resistance**
- Aslan the lion in *Chronicles from Narnia*
- Civil Rights Movement
- Jesus on the Cross

III. Harmonious Living

A. Empathy Creates Community

- **¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. (Romans 12:15)**
- **Empathy creates community**
- ¹⁴ And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. (Colossians 3:14-15)

III. Harmonious Living

B. Live Humbly

- ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly [*Or give yourselves to humble tasks*]. (Romans 12:16a)
- ²⁵ But Jesus called them to him and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ²⁶ It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, ²⁸ even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:25-28)

III. Harmonious Living

C. Think Humbly

- **Never be wise in *your* own sight. (Romans 12:16b)**
- **Intellectual humility: know that your knowledge is limited**
- Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is high; I cannot attain it. (Psalm 139:6)
- **Neither “intellectualism” (smugness) nor “anti-intellectualism” (ignorance)**
- “Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: (Isaiah 1:18)
- The simple believes everything,
but the prudent gives thought to his steps.
¹⁶ One who is wise is cautious^[d] and turns away from evil,
but a fool is reckless and careless. (Proverbs 14:15-16)

The End of the Matter:

The Holy Spirit and Living by Christian Love

- “*Paraklētos* is a Greek word that literally means, ‘One called alongside.’ It functions as a name of the Holy Spirit who comes alongside us in various ways. Sometimes He meets us as a helper, at other times as a friend.”

--Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms

- “Only with the peace of Christ ruling in our hearts are we able to live at peace with other people ([Colossians 3:15](#)). And since [peace](#) is a fruit of the Spirit ([Galatians 5:22](#); [Romans 8:6](#)), we must depend on the Holy Spirit’s work in our hearts to become successful peacemakers in this world.” (*Got Questions: Romans 12:18*)
- ²⁵ “These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. ²⁶ But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. ²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. (John 14:25-27)



Let Us Pray

A photograph of two hands raised in prayer, holding a glowing white cross. The hands are silhouetted against a bright, golden sunset sky with clouds. The sun is visible through the cross, creating a lens flare effect. The background shows a horizon line over water.