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Presentation Transcript
True Spirituality 14 – Peace
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This presentation is the fourteenth in a series on *True Spirituality*, and it is the final installment. The subject is *Peace*.

It's hard to believe that we started this fourteen months ago, but time flies when you're having fun, huh?

So what is *peace*? If we're going to talk about it, we should define it. So I looked it up in Webster's, and it says that peace is a state of tranquility or quiet, as freedom from civil disturbance, or a state of security, or order within a community provided for by law or custom. And they use the term *breach of the peace* as an example. Or it can be freedom from disquieting or oppressive thoughts or emotions. Three, it can be harmony in personal relations. Four, it can be a state or period of mutual concord between governments, a pact or agreement to end hostilities between those who have been at war or in a state of enmity. Think about the absence of war. It would be peace, wouldn't it? From my perspective, I think of peace as an absence of anxiety that can be caused by any and all stressers. So, that's what we're talking about today.

I want to start in the beatitudes in Matthew 5, verse 1, where it says:

Mt. 5:1 – *Now when He saw the crowds, He went up on a mountainside and sat down. And His disciples came to Him, and He began to teach them, saying, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”* This, by the way, is where we began our study fourteen months ago, when we began thinking about true spirituality. Because unless we are humble enough to listen to God, we are completely oblivious to spirituality. We know *nothing* without God. So, unless we're willing to listen to Him, we stay that way – ignorant of all things spiritual. God is a spirit and we're not, so if we're to learn anything about Him or the spiritual realm or spirit life, we have to pay attention to Him.

V-4 – *“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are*

the pure in heart, for they will see God.” Then finally: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the sons of God.”

Now, I believe that these seven characteristics are a progression, moving from the most fundamental to the most sublime. If that’s true – and I believe that we *can* show it to be true – then that would make being a peacemaker the final stage of Christian development, and the epitome of our life’s work, and something that we ought to give a lot of thought to.

In the beginning, in the Garden of Eden, human kind lived at peace, didn’t they? Everything was great! Perfect! Then, through poor choices, peace was lost. And then, in the end, God gives it back to us through Jesus Christ. So He died so that we could be at peace with God, free of anxiety over our past sin and over anxiety of all that goes on in the world. Then He’s going to come to make war against those who will not follow the way of peace. You know, some people just can’t be around in a peaceful place – or they will make it *unpeaceful* – because they always have to disturb things.

So I want to read you Romans 3:10 now. It says:

Rom. 3:10 – *As it is written, “There is no one righteous, not even one. There is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away. They have together become worthless. There is no one who does good, not even one.”* He’s quoting from the Old Testament. *“Their throats are open graves. Their tongues practice deceit. The poison of vipers is on their lips. Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood. Ruin and misery mark their ways. And the way of peace they do not know. There is no fear of God before their eyes.”*

So there is a *way* of peace – that’s God’s way. This whole series, actually – when I looked back on it recently – is about being a peacemaker, if you think about it. It’s *all* about that. It started with listening to God. The way of peace comes from Him. And we’ve studied about our relationship with Christ, with the Law. And that has everything to do with the way of inner peace, doesn’t it? We’ve talked about being at peace with God, and others, and self. And we’ve talked about faith, which has to do with trusting God and being free of anxiety. We’ve talked about mercy, which is a quality of the peaceful. But so far, we’ve pretty much *preached*. And yet, at LifeResource Ministries we’re fully committed to *teach* – to show people *how* to do things. So, it’s not only necessary to point out what *is* necessary, but to show *how* to *do* it, as well. So that’s kind of what we’re all about.

Let’s talk a little bit, for awhile, about making peace with God. That’s been a theme of so many of our presentations so far. You know, I was looking back through the presentations we’ve made in the last couple of years, and we had *Being Good Is Not Good Enough*. That’s about our relationship with God. We talked about *The Law in Our Hearts*. We had a series that began on Atonement: *Aloneness, Helplessness, Togetherness* – about how God is going to make us all at peace with Him and at one. We talked about *Growing in Grace*. We talked about *Attuning to God’s Plan*. We talked about *Arrested*

Development just recently and how many people can't be at peace because they're stuck. We have one on *Anxiety*, but that hasn't come out yet. It's just on my list of things to do. So, many of the presentations in this series have had to do with making peace with God. If you don't *feel* like you're at peace with God, and you want to study more on it, you can order any of these presentations free of charge, or download them in just a few minutes, with just a few clicks, from our Website. (I was talking to somebody yesterday. He said, "I really need to learn how to do that." It's just so easy. You just put the mouse cursor on the thing that says, "MP3" and you right-click it. Then it gives you a choice of whether you want listen to it *now*, download to your disc, you can do anything you want with it. So, it's just *so* easy.)

If we could just use *one* word to describe the process of becoming at peace with God, what do you think it would be for you? What word would you say is the key word to focus our thinking on how one would become at one with God? Overcoming. That's a good one. Trusting God. Yes. Faith. Yes. Humility. Obedience. Obedience and overcoming – there's a very big connection there. Yeah. Love. Yes. Repentance. We all know what it is. All of those things kind of go back to humility, I think. We can be at peace in our relationship with God if we're just willing to listen and believe Him. He'll show us the way.

What other areas can we talk about where we can talk about being at peace. So what other areas of life can we think about making peace? One of the places I think about is at work, because I hear so many stories – so many horror stories – from people about what happens at work. I even have one for you.

I was at my clinic one day.... And I mentioned before that I like everybody there. And I do, but, when I first started, there was a person there that had somewhat of control over everybody in the place. And I was sitting there listening to her talk to one of the other therapists – an intern, actually. She was really overbearing, and bossy, and demanding, and impolite, actually. And this intern was just deferring, and ignoring the insulting behaviors, and just trying to get along, you know, and make it work – being humble, not taking offense to things – all the things you have to do to try to deal with somebody that's difficult like that. And there was this other therapist there watching. She's one of my favorite people at the clinic. She's very much an extrovert – really funny and quite outspoken. So the minute this difficult person left the room, the extrovert said to the intern, "I don't know how you put up with that!" And the intern smiled and said, "Well, you know, I was just trying to get along and trying to make it work. It's really not that hard, because it's really not my problem. Everybody she encounters feels the same way about her and I only have to deal with her a few minutes a week, so why make a big deal out of it and cause a lot of trouble." I thought, "That is *so* good. I need to remember that."

And I heard another one just last night. I was talking to a lady who said that she's a public accountant, and she was contracted by the school system, where she lives, to do accounting for them. There was one school in their system that had made a lot of really bad decisions about finances, and had contracted a lot of things out to people, and they didn't come through and do what they said they were going to do. So now they're in

financial difficulty. And of course, the head bean counter for the system descended upon the school to read them the riot act, and tell them that unless they shape up their act, they were going to be taken over by a private company, and duh, dah, duh, dah, dah. He was just doing his job, and they probably *did* need to have the riot act read to them, because there was a lot of money that was spent that they never got anything back for it. So that's wasting everybody's money. So he's in there doing what he's supposed to do, and she was sitting there thinking about her job, and he, all of a sudden, looked right at her, and he said, "You know, I really don't trust you." He said, "I don't trust outside firms to do work for us." And that's one of the problems they'd had – was they contracted work out. He said, "I'm going to be keeping a close eye on you." She said, "You know, a year ago I would have gone ballistic. I would have just exploded. But I just looked back at him, and smiled, and thought to myself, "That's okay. You don't really know me. And in a year from now, you're going to like me, because I'm going to do such a good job, you'll *have* to appreciate it." She didn't say that out loud, but she has a plan. That's very much being a peacemaker – just suffering the insult and then going to work to change his opinion. So I really thought a lot about that.

Let's look at some scriptures that relate peace in the workplace. These could apply other places, too, but I thought about them in the workplace.

Prov. 9:8 – *Do not correct a scoffer, lest he hate you. Rebuke a wise man and he will love you.*

Then, the same thing, pretty much, in Proverbs 13:1.

Prov. 13:1 – *A wise son accepts his father's discipline, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.*

So why try to tell them, if they're not going to listen to it. It's only going to make for trouble. I seem to have to learn that one over and over again on a regular basis, but I'm slowly learning it. You know, there are some people...you try to help them, and all they do is take offense to it, because they're paranoid. They think anybody that has anything to say to them that's the least bit critical is against them. They don't understand that sometimes people bring up their faults to try to help them.

Verse 2 says:

V-2 – *From the fruit of a man's mouth he enjoys good, but the desire of the treacherous is violence.*

Stay away from the politicians, and the plots, and the people that like to talk about that stuff. You can be a peacemaker that way.

V-3 – *The one who guards his mouth preserves his life. And the one who opens wide his lips comes to ruin.*

I remember when I realized that, just because I *thought* something, didn't mean that I *had* to say it. We can, actually, stop short of saying what we're thinking. I remember talking to Joe Tkach once, and he told me – after I had made a statement that had gotten me in some hot water – he said, “Well, Bill, you can't unring a bell.” And that's why we should stop short of saying it. Once it's out there, boy, it's out there, and some people are going to remember it *forever*. Just hold it in.

V-5 – *A righteous man hates falsehood, but a wicked man acts disgustingly and shamefully.*

So, if you want to be a peacemaker, it's always a good thing to tell the truth. We can learn to tell the truth in a kind way – in a loving way – but, you know, there's nothing more difficult in the workplace than somebody that is always saying one thing and doing another – or saying two different things to two different people. It causes all kinds of uproar and destroys peace. The other thing about that is, if you always tell the truth, life is so much less complicated – when you don't have to remember what you said.

V-6 – *Righteousness guards the one whose way is blameless, but wickedness subverts the sinner.*

To be guarded by God – you know, righteousness guards the one whose way is blameless – means to be at peace. You can be at peace when there's trouble all around. That young girl who was being harassed by her supervisor at my clinic...she wasn't really suffering. The one that was in anxiety was the one that was giving her a hard time. You know, as we learn to practice these simple principles – you can practice these anywhere, but I think about them in the workplace – what we're really learning how to do is how to become a peacemaker – how to be tactful and how to avoid stirring up trouble.

Let's go to Psalms 146. It says in verse 3:

Psa. 146:3 – *Do not trust in princes, mortal men, in whom there is no salvation. His spirit departs. He returns to the earth. That very day his thoughts perish.* There's a lot of this in the Bible, isn't there? (We just had a scripture reading on how life is a vapor.) *How blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, who keeps faith forever, who executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets the prisoners free.* So don't put your faith in the company, or the boss, but in God. And take care of those people who are oppressed.

You know, I think in work – where the young girl was being harassed by her supervisor – I think the other woman that said, “I just couldn't put up with that,” was kind of trying to take care of her in a way. She was acknowledging the difficult situation. Sometimes at work we see people that have made a few mistakes and are under the gun, and we should try to take care of them as we can.

How about making peace at home? How can we make peace at home? In Ephesians – I believe it is – it talks about how children are supposed to submit to parents, but it also says that parents should not provoke their children to wrath. So, don't make submitting hard is the point of that. There are two ways people do that mainly. One is they're too strict. And the other way they make them angry and provoke them to wrath is by having no boundaries whatever. You get the same result from the two divergent points of imbalance.

So how do we make peace at home? Well, I think we need to focus on how to set those boundaries so that our kids can live within them. I mentioned this boy that has reactive attachment disorder that goes off. How do you deal with some kid that can't be corrected without them going ballistic? What you do is...and she gave me an example of how they got into a confrontation over the television. What he'll do is he'll explode if she tries to come down on him too hard about that. This is not a normal child. This is a kid that's really been wounded deeply. So what you do is, you just back off, and say, "Fine." Then, after they've calmed down, you talk about it with them – when they're much more receptive. So getting them to do what you want is a two-stage process really. You talk to them about it first and you know they're going to blow. Then you talk to them about it again after they've calmed down – and you get much better results. At the school he was at, the first time he wouldn't do what they wanted, they'd stand him out in the hall. So they never got any kind of results with him, because they didn't know how to deal with him.

I was talking to a man the other day – both he and his wife are divorced and have kids, and they're all under the same roof – and the little nine-year-old girl is the one exhibiting the most difficulty. She's really, really rebellious. She does things deliberately to push his buttons. He says that he blows, then he has to walk away. I suggested he read this book – *Parenting with Love and Logic* – because it points out how if you're angry, your kid thinks that you're the one with the problem – which is just the opposite of what you want them to think. You want them to think *they* have a problem so they'll start working on fixing it. So he'd read this book, and he really understood it, and he said, "You know, it just dawned on me. I work for Taxation and Revenue and I stand at a desk all day – a window – talking to irresponsible people who are upset about the fact that they didn't do what they were supposed to do." And he said, "What we've been trained to do is to be kind and sympathetic, but firm." He said, "I don't know why I didn't think of that with her!" And yet that *is* what causes peace in the home, too – kind and sympathetic.... You know, the lady told me she watered her house plant, and she looked in it and saw her son's little gameboy in there. He put it in there and she soaked it down. So she said, "A week ago I would have screamed at him and bought him another one. But this time I just picked it up and handed it to him, and said, 'I'm so sorry you put that where it got wet.'" So she gets to be the sympathetic one who helps him figure out how to solve his problems for himself. I guess that was, take his allowance and buy one for himself. You know, when you're sympathetic, instead of angry, it just makes things go so much better.

So, what have we talked about so far in our two-year history that has to do with making peace at home? Well, we gave a sermon, or a presentation, called *Authenticity*, where we

actually detailed a method of communicating with people that strips away their defensiveness, so they can hear what you have to say and a way that causes you to listen to them, too. What a novel thought! Listening to each other. We did a series on *Rupture and Repair* – talking about how to repair ruptured relationships. We did a series on *Reclaiming Lost Children*, showing how we *can* have an influence on those who've left – our children and other people's children – and that we're *supposed* to be doing those things. So, we *can* be peacemakers at home.

I have this little boy. He and his mother have been having quite a lot of difficulties. He has spina bifida. I've talked to you about him before. He has a lot of attachment issues, because he wasn't allowed to be held for the first.... They wouldn't let her hold him. And he had all these surgeries – one right after another – and he's having a hard time. Plus, his dad – they're divorced – always talks bad about his mother while he is with his dad. And he comes home and blows his stack at his mom, because she doesn't ever let.... It sounds to her like he's believing everything his dad tells him. And I've been telling her, "At one level he might, but actually he does get upset with you instead of him because you're the one he *can* get upset with. You're the one that he knows cares about him." We see this all the time with kids. I didn't think that I'd really made that point with her. She's heard it, but I didn't think she really believed it. She thought that her son didn't like her. So we had a session together recently, and she said, "Well, I just wish that he would hug me and kiss me more, and that he would let me hug him and kiss him." And he said, "Oooh, that creeps me out!" Well, after a very little bit of discussion, he agreed to allow himself to be hugged and to hug her, which made her very happy. Okay, so I said to him, "So what would you like to see out of this? What changes in your family would you like to see to make it better." And he said, "I wish my mom would come to school with me." Now that's quite a request from somebody who hates his mother, isn't it? I mean, that had to just shatter her perception. But it gets better from there. She said, "How often would you like me to come?" And he said, "Every week." She said, "For lunch?" He said, "Yes, have lunch with me." I said, "Why would you like your mom to come have lunch with you?" And he said, "Because I like her to spend time with me." And he said, "And she's cool." And I said, "Your mom is cool. Do you think your mom is a cool dresser?" He said, "Yes," and he flashed this huge smile. I said, "Do you think your mom is pretty?" He said, "Yeah!" I looked over at her, and she was just grinning from ear to ear. You know, if we can just talk to each other, sometimes peace happens. And I'm sure that that's not the end of the story for them. I'm sure there are things to be resolved and all, but maybe it's the beginning – where she can begin to understand that he's thrown up a wall, because of what's happened to him, but underneath that, there really is love and care.

So, I just think that's a really great story about peacemaking and helping people to explore what's really important to them. I said, "You want to show off your mother when you go to school, don't you?" And he says, "Yeah!"

Here's another example of peacemaking in the home that's really interesting. A lady came to us – probably in her early 50s, I would guess. Her daughter ran away from home when she was fifteen – went down the street, moved in with a forty-year-old, got high

and started doing drugs and producing babies. She had eight children and every one of them but the first one was a drug baby. Some of them are in speech class with a speech pathologist because of the effect of the drugs. She was telling me this sad tale. The oldest one – a boy – is back east, finishing up high school, living with relatives. The mother of all these kids is in prison. So grandmother has seven children, ranging from...let's see, they're fourteen, thirteen, twelve, eleven, ten, and then, I think, seven and two. So she's got a two-year-old and a fourteen-year-old.

So I'm listening to this story, and I'm just going, "How does she even deal with this at her age?" She's got them all. They moved away from back east to get a new start. I was flabbergasted. Well, about the third week I saw her, she brought all the kids with her to sit in the waiting room while the little boy had therapy and she talked to me. The little boy – the ten-year-old – is the one that's acting out. He's throwing these gigantic tantrums at home – not at school, just at home. And I had this picture in my mind of this little holy terror, you know. And we were thinking, "What's going to happen to the waiting room with all these kids?" I walked out there, and here were all these clean-cut, well-groomed, bright-eyed, friendly kids. The older girl's attending to the little ones. And they were playing games – just entertaining themselves. And I thought, "I don't have a thing to teach this woman. I need to get her to talk to me!" And even the little guy that's the problem is so polite and respectful. You can tell he wants to do the right thing.

(Something said in the background) That's exactly right. It's all acting out behavior. And it's interesting that his mother won't talk to him when she calls, and his older brother won't talk to him either. They've both pushed him away. So he's the one that's probably really hurting the most. Plus, he's the middle kid. He's completely lost in the middle. So we know what to do about that. But that isn't what I was going to tell you. I'm just telling you that as background, because the peacemaking has yet to be told.

This past week, she said, "I wish that you would help me learn how not to be so angry and anxious." And I said, "Well, anybody that does what you do has a *right* to be upset sometimes." And she said, "Yes, but you know, he feeds on that. It just sets him off." So, here's grandmother taking responsibility to change herself, because she knows that she can't change him. And she's going to do what she can do to help him, which is to not present anger and anxiety in the home for him to feed off of.

That's so *opposite* to what we see. We see all these parents that bring these kids and want us to fix them. And they don't realize their kids are only reacting normally to *their* abnormal parenting, or personalities, or whatever. Now, *that* lady's the peacemaker – willing to take responsibility and to work on herself to resolve her grandson's issues.

Peacemaker. Those are some things to think about in the family. Probably the last one, I would think, about being a peacemaker in the family is the issue of marital faithfulness. Unfaithfulness is a *huge* deal-breaker in a marriage. We see marriages crumble as a result of that all the time. Where that happened and been discovered – even when it's not discovered – it still causes problems. So there are some things we can think about there.

Work. Family. Where else do we have a chance to be peacemakers? Church. What do you know? Thank you.

Let's go to Romans 12, verse 9. This is, to me, the quintessential treatise right here.

Rom. 12:9 – *Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil and cling to what is good. It's not saying "hate who is evil," or "who is good," but what. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Have some respect for other people. Let's listen to them when they talk. Let's learn what they believe and try to help them understand what we believe. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you. Bless and do not curse. That's kind of what the young intern was doing there. She was being persecuted, and yet she was just kind back. Rejoice with those who rejoice. Mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.*

"People of low position." There are only some people that think that way about other people. I worked at a mental health clinic at one of my internships. It was right next door to a homeless shelter. There was a guy that slept in a truck in our parking lot every night. He used to be a truck driver, but he was schizophrenic and he couldn't hold a job any more. But he did still have his truck and he had some SSI or something, so he just lived out of that. He'd bathe at the homeless shelter and had enough money to buy gas and stuff. One day I was walking in – and I'd spent a lot of time talking to him (between clients I'd sit out in the waiting room and talk to whoever would talk to me) and he was always happy to talk, because he was lonely. When you're schizophrenic, relationship is always a challenge. So he spent a lot of time alone. So I dropped my wallet one day – walking into the clinic – and didn't notice it, and left and got home. Of course, it was missing. Well, I got a call from the clinic, and they said that Joe – that was this guy's name – found it and brought it in. It was out in the parking lot and he brought it in. So I told Elaine about it and she made him a batch of chocolate chip cookies. We put them on a paper plate, covered them with plastic wrap, and I took it to him. I walked up to him, holding this plate of cookies, and I said, "Joe, I understand you found my wallet." He got this totally dismayed look on his face and started making a defense for himself. You know, "I didn't steal it. I just found it." And I said, "I know. I dropped my wallet. I lost it. And *you* found it. And I'm so glad that you are the one who found it." I said, "My wife was so proud of what you did she made you these cookies." And he was just dumbfounded. He wasn't used to being treated like a human being – or trusted. He was used to being distrusted and mistreated.

So, I don't think anybody here thinks about people as being low position.

V-17 – *Do not repay anyone evil for evil. You know what happens when you do that? The circle just starts. "You did this to me. I'll do that to you." "Oh, well you did this to me, well I'll just go you one better." And that's how it works. Not peacemaker. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it's possible – as far as it depends*

on you – live at peace with everyone. And that’s an interesting statement, isn’t it? You know, there are just some people that you can’t be at peace with, because they won’t let you. But not most.

V-19 – *Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath. For it is written: “It is mine to avenge. I will repay,” says the Lord. On the contrary, if your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

That pretty much says what we need to do. That’s *how* to be a peacemaker.

1 John 3. Paul touched on this, but John hits it again.

1 Jn. 3:16 – *This is how we know what love is. Jesus Christ laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions, and sees his brother in need, but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with word or tongue, but with actions and in truth. This, then, is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in His presence....* “How we set our hearts at rest in His presence.” Being at peace with others – taking care of people – is one of the things that brings peace within, as well.

Verse 19 again.

V-19 - *This, then, is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in His presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts and He knows everything.*

Taking care of people, deferring to people, listening to people, being kind to people, not thinking that we’re better than other people, assuming that we know better than others. That includes everybody in the church. It includes the one that considers himself, and everyone else considers him, to be the leader. He doesn’t need to think that he knows *more* than other people.

What else can we learn about this? If you have a congregation, and people are squabbling about stuff, you don’t have peace, do you? So we have problems, a lot of times, because of that. When we think that what we believe is more spiritual than taking care of each other and living at peace, then we’ve got it wrong. Being at peace is more important than being right. That’s what the Bible says.

2 Timothy 2:9. And he’s talking not to the church, but to a particular young minister. And yet, somehow, it got put in the Bible for the whole church to read. So, yes, he is talking to all of us.

2 Tim. 2:9 – *For which I am suffering, even to the point of being chained like a criminal, but God’s word is not chained. Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect,*

that they, too, may obtain salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with Him, we also will live with Him. If we endure, we will also reign with Him. If we disown Him, He will also disown us. If we are faithless, He will remain faithful, for He cannot disown Himself. Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words. It is of no value and only ruins those who listen. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed, and who correctly handles the word of truth. Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them – and here he names a couple of people – are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have wandered away from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some. Nevertheless, God’s solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: The Lord knows those who are His, and everyone who confesses the name of the Lord, must turn away from wickedness. In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay. Some are from noble purposes, and some from ignoble. If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the master, and prepared to do any good work. Flee the evil desire of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. Don’t have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. The Lord’s servant must not quarrel.

I’m going to stop right there. You know there are some people that think we should keep the Passover on the fourteenth and some on the fifteenth. And they have torn congregations apart over that. Now that’s a point of the law. Which day to keep the Passover is written in the Law of God. And so that is striving about the law. And we’re told not to do that. Now, you don’t have to believe what somebody tells you if you don’t think it’s right, but we don’t have to fight about it. It’s all going to get straightened out when Christ comes back. It’ll all be real clear which day Passover is on. So why do we have to fight about it? The really important thing is *not* that, but it’s that we learn how to get along with each other. That’s the really important thing.

V-24 – *The Lord’s servant must not quarrel. Instead he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him, he must gently instruct in the hope that God will grant them repentance, leading them to a knowledge of the truth.*

I think one of the things we, in the independent church, have – that has really been a plague for us – is the uninformed opinion. We’re all so dogmatic about what we think. And yet, when you have people with two opposite views – both of them saying they got it out of the Bible – somebody *has* to be wrong – maybe both.

V-25 - *Those who oppose him, he must gently instruct in the hope that God will grant them repentance, leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will. When there’s arguing, and hassling, and bickering in the church, that is the work of the devil. He causes that. He likes that.*

Let's look at another one over here in Titus 3, verse 9.

Titus 3:9 – *Shun foolish controversies, and genealogies, and strifes and disputes about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.* There you go.

So, which is more important to us? Are we willing to rip a congregation apart over something like that? Paul also said here to Titus in Titus 3:10:

V-10 – *Reject the fractious man after a first and second warning, knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned.* What's the sin? Well, it's being fractious – causing division. That's the sin. Tearing the congregation. Think about all the kids that depend on a safe congregational home to develop their faith. Think about that millstone Jesus said people should put around their neck if they offend children.

So, striving over such foolishness is a mark of spiritual immaturity. And so is tolerating it. When there's a group of people that believe one way, and there's somebody else that believes differently, we all need to go with what most of the folks believe. Now, you know, I'm not talking, by the way, about major core things. None of us would be attending here if this group didn't keep the Sabbath. We'd go look for a place that did, wouldn't we? That's not what I'm talking about. I'm just talking about the little differences that we have.

There's plenty of places where Paul admonishes us – not only ministers, but brethren – to stand up for the unity of the group. One of the things that we can do with people that are very adamant about explaining what they believe to the detriment of other people – and not letting others explain what they think – one of the things those people need is to be heard. A lot of times, the reason people are like that is because they don't think anybody is going to listen to them. And the second thing we can do is try to build a good rapport with that person so that they will tend to value what we think. If you have a good relationship with somebody, you can get away with a lot more than if you don't. So, try to be friends with them.

Another thing we try to do on our Website is to teach people how to structure the sessions to direct the discussion about the topic, instead of about something else. We also believe it's good to limit everybody's involvement by spreading the opportunities to participate around so that nobody talks too much and no one talks too little.

Another thing that you can do, in a case like that, is to redirect people. When they are off task, the facilitator's job is to get them back on. We announce that we are going to talk about a specific topic and his job is kind of like a cowboy – to herd everybody the right direction.

Failing all of those things, you'll notice that those things became increasingly more – what should we say – directive. You start out with just listening. Then trying to build the relationship. Then structure the sessions to direct the discussion. Then limit everybody's involvement. That's a little bit more directive. And then specifically redirecting someone

back to the topic. And if all of that fails, you can always bring up their misbehavior – if you feel it is misbehavior – within the group. “Is everybody feeling as uncomfortable as I am about this?” If we can, ask them to desist.... We’re talking about Hymenaeus and Philetus by now, right? People that really are difficult people. There’s lots of much easier ways to deal with people – and we’ve talked about some of them already – and most people respond very well to those much gentler, milder approaches. And if worse comes to worst, we can ask them to leave. And there are examples in the Bible of that happening. Sometimes, with some folks, it’s a sad thing, but the only way you’re going to have peace is when they are not there.

So we’re hoping to teach some of those very principles at our Feast site to those who want to participate in small groups, so they can study in peace, and fellowship in peace, and worship in peace like God wants us to.

So, why is peace important to God? Let’s just think about it? Well, He’s planning a peaceful Kingdom. Isn’t that such a great thing? War is one of the worst things that can happen to human beings. It’s a terrible thing. And relational carnage is a terribly difficult thing for us to endure. And God doesn’t want that for us. He’s going to create a Kingdom for us to live in eternally that’s going to be a peaceful Kingdom. It’s going to be a *peaceful* Kingdom. He wants us to learn to be peacemakers *now* so that we’ll know how to participate effectively in that Kingdom when it comes to us.

So everything that God tells us and everything that He does for us and teaches us points toward that day when the entire creation is going to live in peace. And God speed that day!