

Life of David, Faking Peace vs. Making Peace, 2 Samuel 14-15, 10/12/25

Men's weekend!!!

A lot to cover, get out your own Bible...

I remember when reality TV started. The Real World 1- it was like watching a trainwreck, you couldn't look away, and then all of a sudden reality TV exploded... Big Brother, the Bachelor, Jersey Shore, now Love Island... on and on. It exploded because it tapped into something kind of messed up about humans... we are entertained by people's drama, conflicts, and dysfunctional inability to resolve them. Just scroll through your social media feed — conflict is the new entertainment. We comment, we repost, we laugh. But sadly off-screen, our own lives aren't that different. The true reality is this same conflict and dysfunctional inability to resolve it often marks our lives, it shows up in our careers, relationships, families, holidays, roommates, friendships, into marriage, parenting.

And it's not that conflict is always a bad thing, we are all going to have conflict in our relationships. It's how we do conflict, and how we resolve it that either heals or wounds our lives. The #1 Determiner of success in marriage is the ability to resolve conflict.¹ Healthy relationships have conflict. Unresolved conflict marks the lives of unhealthy people.

Jesus tells us in the beatitudes in **Matthew 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.** See it's not just that peacemaking is healthy, Jesus tells us that when we are peacemakers, we resemble God. Which means that one of the best ways we can show the world who God is how we resolve conflict.

But the problem is many of our relationships are marked by peace-faking more than peace-making. Well you aren't alone, today in our study in the life of David in 2 Samuel 13-15, we are going to look at marks of peace-faking and how it resulted in disaster in the house of David. And then we want to contrast that with the marks of peacemaking like Jesus.

Catch you up on where we are. David is now living with the consequences of his sin with Bathsheba and his murder of Uriah in chapter 11-12, brokenness and strife enter his household for the next 7 chapters. I heard a pastor say, "You can always be forgiven of sin, but you can't un-sin."² Just because God forgives someone doesn't mean that the impact of their sin goes away, especially for his or her family. And it began in chapter 13, David's son Amnon rapes his half-sister Tamar, David's failure to confront results in another son of David, Absalom taking revenge and having Amnon killed and then Absalom gets out of dodge. You thought your family was dysfunctional. You can't make this stuff up... And this is where we pick up the story at the end of Chapter 13.

38 After Absalom fled and went to Geshur, he stayed there three years.

¹ Stat from Prepare/Enrich Marriage Training

² JD Greear, <https://summitchurch.com/GetFile.ashx?Guid=3225bc35-6ff6-4bd8-a5fa-977f8fa0f3f1>

39 *And King David longed to go to Absalom, for he was consoled concerning Amnon's death.*

Do you see this pattern of conflict avoidance in David's life? First with Amnon and now with Absalom? David is again conflicted. Does he forgive Absalom outright and appear to condone what he did, or punish him and possibly lose another son? Instead David does neither. Here's the first mark of peace-faking.

1. Peace-faking Avoids Conflict. And just as David chose avoidance over confrontation, don't we often do the same thing? Do you shut down? Give the silent treatment to your spouse? Do you attempt to bury an offense and act like it never happened? When your manager asks you after a meeting if everything is OK because you seemed off, do you say, "No, I'm fine. My lunch didn't sit with me." When really you want to say, "No, you totally undermined me in that meeting!" This is peace-faking. We often think that by peace-faking the conflict will go away, but it doesn't, it festers either in you...or in the relationship or both. And this is what we see with David.

As chapter 14 opens, David's commander Joab can see what David won't admit — being estranged from Absalom is eating him up inside. That's often how peace-faking works, isn't it? You think you're hiding it, but the people closest to you can tell something's off. Joab knows David well enough to realize that direct confrontation won't work, so he uses the one method that's always reached David's heart — a story. Remember how Nathan got through to him back in chapter 12? Same playbook. Joab sends a wise woman from Tekoa to tell the king a made-up story about two sons: one killed the other, and now the family wants vengeance on the surviving son. She asks David what she should do, and David compassionately rules, "Let the boy live; reconciliation is better than revenge." Then the woman drops the twist — "Your Majesty, this story is about *you*." David is like, "Dangit- fell for it again." But this time, the message isn't about his sin with Bathsheba — it's about his refusal to reconcile with his own son.

So David agrees, **21** *The king said to Joab, "Very well, I will do it. Go, bring back the young man Absalom."* And it looks for a moment that David is going to confront the conflict, figure out a way to have the difficult conversation, deal with the sin Absalom committed, forgive him and restore the relationship.

23 *Then Joab went to Geshur and brought Absalom back to Jerusalem.*

24 *But the king said, "He must go to his own house; he must not see my face."*

So Absalom went to his own house and did not see the face of the king...

28 *Absalom lived two years in Jerusalem without seeing the king's face.* You don't have to be a counselor to know this is off...David allows Absalom to come home, but not face-to-face — not back into relationship. It's a strategic compromise: he looks merciful without actually reconciling. By keeping Absalom close but distant, David sends a message: "*You're tolerated, but not forgiven.*" It's amnesty without peace. Absalom isn't punished, but he isn't embraced either. He's left in limbo — near his father's house, but far from his father's heart.

#2 Peace-faking builds walls. Not bridges. That's what peace-faking does — it brings alienation. The walls stay up, even if the distance shrinks. What about your relationships? National studies find **27% of Americans are currently estranged from at least one family member because of unresolved conflict.**³ Some of us come from families where it's not safe to have disagreements or go against the family way because there is a pattern of when that happens the walls go up. The walls of conversation at Thanksgiving, just don't make eye contact with each other (tell Maggie to pass me the gravy). Or maybe more serious, they are walled off from contact, or cut out of a will.

We all can put walls up, can't we? Even with people in our same house, same cubicle, same soccer field... But this is peace-faking, not peacemaking.

I'm not immune...Several years ago, I had a phone call with someone who attended our church that went really poorly, I will spare you the details, but they said some mean things to me, and some things I didn't think were true, and it escalated to a point that I ended the call abruptly, and they left the church. It was really unsettling, but at the time I decided, it is what it is, that's on them if they want to respond that way. I put my walls up in my heart. Several years went by, and then I saw this person at the gym. And we kind of made eye-contact and then acted like we didn't see each other and went to opposite sides of the gym. Real mature. And as soon as I saw this person, all those feelings of rejection, of injustice toward me, came bubbling right back up. I thought I made peace, at least in my head with this person, but I realized I hadn't. There can be no true peace without face-to-face resolution and restoration, the walls have to come down. I will come back to that story later.

Well this peace-faking is driving Absalom crazy, he demands a face-to-face meeting with his father, even if it means the end of his life.

33 So Joab went to the king and told him this. Then the king summoned Absalom, and he came in and bowed down

with his face to the ground before the king. And the king kissed Absalom.

Oh, praise the Lord, finally! David kisses Absalom — everything's fixed, right? Not so fast. That single kiss is one of the most deceptively peaceful yet tragically hollow moments in David's story. In that culture, a king's kiss meant formal acceptance, but notice what's missing — no words of truth, no tears, no repentance, no real relationship. Just a gesture. The silence of this scene speaks louder than the kiss itself. It's not reconciliation; it's performance. And much like another silent kiss from Judas on the cheek of Jesus, and that hollow peace becomes the seedbed of rebellion. The very next chapter, Absalom begins plotting a coup to betray and overthrow his father and take the throne for himself.

The third mark- **Peace-faking breeds bitterness and fallout.** Because when truth isn't spoken and grace isn't given, resentment festers in the dark. Maybe you've feigned a hug and

³ https://www.apa.org/monitor/2024/04/healing-pain-estrangement?utm_source=chatgpt.com

kiss...when you really were thinking, “Ugh I can’t stand her.” Or you quickly said to someone, “We’re all good, it’s water under the bridge...” but you are still carrying the water. Passive-aggressive behavior. Slamming cabinets louder than necessary — to communicate “nothing’s wrong.” Washing the dishes *extra loudly* so everyone in the house knows who’s doing the work. Posting a “subtle” Bible verse on someone’s social media clearly out of spite. We all have our own version of pretending peace while harboring hurt. We don’t explode, we just leak. It’s a breeding ground for bitterness and fallout.

Well that’s as far as we are going to go in this sad story that sounds a lot like a reality TV show in its dysfunction and conflict avoidance.

And I think deep down, just like David, we don’t want all this peace-faking. We want restored relationships, we want to be able to address issues, heal our wounds and be restored. But maybe you are holding back, out of fear, out of hurt, a lack of willpower, or lack of knowledge. But friends, a greater king has come- who was called the Prince of Peace! Who not only shows us a better way for true peace, but becomes our peace and gives us the power to make peace through the gospel. **Three marks of peacemaking like Jesus.**

#1 Peacemakers confront the truth. Unlike David, there was no conflict avoidance when it came to Jesus’ ministry. There was no passivity or inaction in his teaching or conversations. Jesus told people the truth even when they didn’t like it. He told them about their ultimate conflict that we all have, which is a conflict with God because of our sin and rebellion against him. Jesus says- you are like a lost sheep in the thicket without hope, a lost son destroying your life chasing empty pleasure. Jesus even confronted the religious leaders with the truth. That their religion was empty because they weren’t recognizing the deeper sin of pride and hypocrisy in their heart that kept them alienated from God. Jesus confronted people with the truth. Like a good surgeon, he’s willing to hurt in order to ultimately heal.

And this is where Jesus instructs the church to start. He gives us a blueprint for conflict resolution in the church. **Matthew 18:15 *If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense.*** Our first step isn’t, let me go tell everyone in my small group, “Can you pray for jerk. You wouldn’t believe what jerk did to me. And then the jerk had the nerve to say this to me.” And if that happens in your group, you should lovingly redirect them- don’t nod in agreement. You encourage them to resolve conflict. You say, “Have you addressed this with this person? Do they know you are hurt? Have you told them how it made you feel and given them an opportunity to make it right?” No? Can I help you to do that? When are you going to reach out to them?” And you know what that does, it makes our church a really unsafe place for gossip and a really safe place for conflict resolution Jesus’ way. This leads to the second mark of peacemaking like Jesus.

#2 Peacemakers initiate Restoration. Joab had to force David to act, and even then he avoided true restoration. But Jesus didn’t wait to act. Out of a heart of love, he left his throne in heaven to come to earth as the God-man for this very reason! With a heart full of truth and love, Jesus initiated with the world calling us to repent and follow him. Ultimately, he initiated to the point

of giving his life for us. **Romans 5:8 While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.** Jesus didn't wait for us to get ourselves together. Jesus went first.

Peacemaking requires someone to go first — even if they're not the one most at fault...did you hear that couples? And especially let me speak to the men. Our world suffers when men called to lead in their marriages, lead their families, lead in the church instead of leading are passive. Who abdicate their God-given role to initiate. Churches suffer when pastors and elders in a church allow conflict to go unchecked. Kids suffer when the husband sits back and lets their wives do all the confrontation and discipline. Marriages suffer when men don't initiate to resolve a conflict, and hide in their work, or hide in their man-cave. Jesus initiated with you, you be the first to initiate with your wife. I have a good wife, because when we get into a conflict, she isn't afraid to say to me, you are the leader, you need to initiate.

In the sermon on the mount you know what Jesus says peacemakers do? If they are making an offering in worship on the altar and remember that they have an unresolved conflict, they leave their gift at the altar and go first to resolve the conflict and be reconciled. That's how important this is. Your horizontal relationships and your vertical relationship with God is intimately connected. What this means is that for some of us, after church we don't first need to get home for a football game, it means first we need to reach out to schedule a sit down. It means that before you go to your small group this week, or instead of going to Adult Ed class, you need to work to forgive, to resolve a conflict.

#3 Peacemakers Absorb the Cost. It costs something to make peace. David wasn't willing to pay the political and relational cost in order to confront Absalom and restore the relationship. But Jesus was. **Romans 5:1 Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith,**

we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. What did it cost Jesus to restore our peace with God? His very life.

Ephesians 4:14 For He Himself is our peace. He forgives all our sin, he pays for all of our sin at the cost of his life. Peacemakers are willing to absorb the cost in order to make peace.

Here's the problem: we often don't pursue peace because we aren't willing to pay the cost, to initiate with someone, or forgive someone who hasn't asked for it. Or when your part of the conflict seems like a speck compared to their log. What they did is inexcusable!

As C.S. Lewis once put it, **"To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable, because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you."** But the way of Christ calls us to absorb the cost.

So there I am in the gym, feeling those bad feelings and thinking those bad thoughts about that other Christian on the other side of the gym. And I'm lifting more weight than I usually do because anger gives you extra strength like the Incredible Hulk. And then the Spirit convicts me, and all these verses run through my mind, and I think about what Jesus did for me... and he humbled me in that moment, and said, get over there. And so I made the awkward walk across the gym.

And I said, “Hi, you know, I’m glad I saw you, although at first I wasn’t. But I know the last time we talked things went poorly. We both said things we probably wish we wouldn’t have said. And I want to ask your forgiveness for ending the conversation abruptly without following up with you. That probably made you feel rejected and unvalued. That’s not the way of Jesus. I’m sorry and I want to ask for your forgiveness, and say I’m sorry for how everything turned out. You are always welcome at Brandywine, and if you want to talk more, my office is open.”

They accepted my apology. And thanked me for coming over. In my heart I knew I was now at peace. Even though it wasn’t reciprocated yet. I was at peace, I went as far as it depends on me. It cost me something, but it’s nothing compared to what it cost Jesus.

Now, listen there are lots of questions we have about conflict, I want to leave you with a resource. [A Field Guide to Resolving conflict](#), that walks you through detailed step by step way to do it. Enews.

What does it look like for you to no longer be a peace-faker, but a peacemaker?