

Mended Part 3 – Relational Wisdom for a Fractured World

Introduction

As we conclude our study of the book of Philemon, we want to delve deeper to hear the heart of God about relationships through Paul's letter. In part one of the series, we discussed what to do if we had wronged someone. In part two, we reflected on what to do if someone had wronged us. Now, in this final part of the Mended series, what do we do when we find ourselves in the middle of two people in conflict with each other? How we respond and the role we play in such moments will go a long way toward mending not only the relationships around us but also strengthening the health of our families, communities, and even our witness as followers of Christ.

Discussion

1. Avoider, Side-taker, Translator... or Peacemaker?

In conflict, we often slip into familiar roles:

- The **Avoider** who pretends nothing is wrong,
- The **Side-taker** who wears the jersey of one team against the other,
- The **Translator** who merely passes messages between people.
- But God calls us to something greater — to be **Peacemakers**, not just peacekeepers.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” Matthew 5:9 a.

- a. Why do you think Jesus equated peacemaking with being called children of God?
- b. Which role do you most naturally take in conflict — avoider, side-taker, or peacemaker?
- c. How do you think God feels about conflict and what role would God have you play?

2. Peace is the Presence of Flourishing

Peace is not the absence of war or violence. Peace is the presence of **flourishing**.

- a. Read Philemon v16. When have you struggled to see someone “through God’s eyes?”
- b. How does seeing people through God’s eyes challenge the way you respond when hurt or offended?

3. Paul’s Appeal to Philemon

Read Philemon 8-10. Paul didn’t command Philemon; he appealed to him in love to welcome Onesimus.

- a. What does this tell you of God’s heart? How does this shape the way we encourage reconciliation in others?
- b. Do you agree that unresolved conflict in the community hinders spiritual growth and revival? Why or why not?

- c. What would it look like for your community to be truly flourishing in diversity?

4. The Referee Analogy

Paul's approach reminds us of the role of a referee in a game. A referee is not on either side but cares deeply about how both sides play and whether the game continues in unity. Likewise, Christians are called to act not as side-takers but as reconcilers, preserving the bond of fellowship among brothers and sisters in Christ. As Paul exhorts, "*Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace*" (Ephesians 4:3).

- a. Are we sometimes afraid to speak the truth to our friends who are in conflict with each other? What would hinder us from doing so?
- b. Who is *one person* in your life right now that God may be calling you to reach out to as a peacemaker?

What will you do?

Five Guiding Principles for Peacemaking (Philemon)

1. Aim for God's glory, not personal comfort
2. Deal with your own heart first
3. See others through God's eyes
4. Use positive pressure rooted in love, not manipulation
5. Respect their choice while maintaining relationship and accountability

Memory verse:

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." — Matthew 5:9

An E1R1 Reflection

People around us are hurting and in desperate need of God's love. Each one of us knows at least one person who is struggling in fractured relationships, weighed down by bitterness, or alienated from community. And each one of us has been called to reach out to that "one" — to be a conduit of His love, His wisdom, and His peace.

We are most like God when we are peacemakers. Jesus declared, "*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God*" (**Matthew 5:9**). When we step into messy situations not as avoiders, side-takers, or manipulators, but as peacemakers, we show the watching world what the kingdom of God looks like. Every action, every word, every decision becomes a testimony of the reconciling love of Christ.

As Christians, we carry the presence of Christ and His reconciling power. Revival begins not just with passionate worship or powerful preaching, but with mended relationships that reflect the very heart of God.