

MESSAGE BIG IDEA

Conflict is inevitable; how we respond is our choice. Conflict is not something to avoid; it's an opportunity to follow Jesus, the peacemaker.

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 5:9, Matthew 5:23-24, Ephesians 4:15

ICE BREAKER AND OPENING THOUGHT

The purpose of these questions is to start a conversation. Don't worry about everyone sharing something life-changing; just get everyone comfortable talking and sharing.

BIBLE STUDY

Help the group navigate the question of peacekeeper vs. peacemaker. Peacekeepers ignore difficult issues and problems to make sure that nobody gets upset. They pacify and appease to keep things stable. Instead of risking any more broken relationships, they prefer to ignore the difficult issues and settle for "false peace," hoping against hope they will somehow go away. Peacemakers refuse to pretend that what is wrong is right. True peacemakers love God, love others, and love themselves enough to disrupt false peace. They expose lies and pretense to the light and replace them with the truth. That is the mature and loving thing to do.

LIFE APPLICATION

Most people are not very good at resolving conflicts. Help the group recognize that conflict was central to the mission of Jesus. He disrupted the false peace of those all around him – the disciples, the crowds, the religious leaders, the Romans, and those buying and selling in the temple. He taught that true peacemaking disrupts false peace. True peace will never come through pretending what is wrong is right.

CHALLENGE

Take some time with the group to practice these strategies before you leave. No one is going to want to do this, but it's essential to practice. It's ok if they seem hokey and awkward. Push the group to step out of their comfort zone. Ask them to commit to implementing at least one over the next week. During the next week, identify a conflict that is going on in a relationship and make a plan. Choose a strategy to address it. Conflict is inevitable. Conflict is normal and necessary, and healthy conflict is the way to become a Peacemaker.

Additional Resource: See the *Emotionally Healthy Relationships* course by Peter and Geri Scazzero session 7.