

# A Christmas Biography


Jesus: Prince of Peace

# TALKING WALKING POINTS

# Leaders' Guide

2021.12.19



A publication of  the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

**Talk** together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11  
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

## Questions for Reflection or Discussion

- 1 Joseph Stalin once advised: *"Choose a victim, work out an exacting revenge, and then go to sleep. There is nothing sweeter in all the world."* Jesus said: *"Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you."* Whose value system is more prevalent and influential in **your** world—Stalin's or Christ's—and **why**?
- 2 Pastor Doug identified two causes of conflict (see [Sermon Summary](#)). Which of those causes have you personally seen lead to conflict? Would you tell us about it?
- 3 Which cause do you think is more difficult to overcome—and **why**? What strategies might be helpful?
- 4 Pastor Doug also discussed the difference between forgiveness and trust (see [Sermon Summary](#)). **Why** do you think it is important to keep that difference clearly in mind? What difficulties might occur if someone **doesn't** keep trust distinct from forgiveness?
- 5 Read Luke 6:27–35. Notice that the command to "love your enemy" brackets this passage (v. 27 & 35), and ten actions "unpack" concretely what it looks like to love one's enemy. List those ten actions:
 

v. 27		
v. 28		
v. 29		
v. 30		
v. 31		
v. 35		
- 6 Which of those actions have you personally tried?

## Application-Challenge

- 7 How did it help bring **peace** to the situation?

Christmas is the perfect time to offer grace to others, while celebrating the grace that God has shown you.

***With whom do you need to make peace?***

Give them the Christmas gift of forgiveness and reconciliation.

- 1 Stalin's attitude is so wicked, it would be easy to assume that Jesus' value system is more prevalent and influential in our families, work places, and neighborhoods, but don't lose sight of how shocking Jesus' teachings are too! Lead your group in an honest evaluation of the values that animate their worlds.
- 2 You may need to "prime the pump", so be prepared with your own answer to this question. Mostly you'll need to make sure that folks don't just answer with what motivates **others!** Keep the discussion focused on our own motives; it's impossible to know for sure what drives others.
- 3 Simple answers—such as, "Just don't be selfish!"—won't do! Obviously, we need the Lord's help, but what have **you** found helpful in dethroning the "my point of view" grid from which we too often evaluate every situation. Lead your group in an honest evaluation.
- 4 For those who've received God's forgiveness, forgiving others is obligatory! See Ephesians 4:32. Trust is a totally different matter—it should only be given to those who are **trustworthy!** Proverbs 11:15
- 5<sup>27</sup> But I say to you who hear,  
love your enemies,  
do good to those who hate you,  
<sup>28</sup> bless those who curse you,  
pray for those who mistreat you.  
<sup>29</sup> Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also;  
and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either.  
<sup>30</sup> Give to everyone who asks of you,  
and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back.  
<sup>31</sup> Treat others the same way you want them to treat you.  
<sup>32</sup> If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.  
<sup>33</sup> If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.  
<sup>34</sup> If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you?  
Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same amount.  
<sup>35</sup> But love your enemies,  
and do good,  
and lend, expecting nothing in return;  
and your reward will be great...
- 6 Be ready to "prime the pump" on this one. Think of concrete examples from your life—but make sure you don't reflect negatively on spouse or kids!
- 7 Make sure you don't overlook prayer as a key to help—but do make sure that you follow through if you promise to pray for one another.

# Sermon Summary (Key Text: Luke 2:10–14)

You might think that the Christmas season would lead to “peace on earth, good will toward men”, but the holidays are notorious for family feuds. Recently a woman in Wal-Mart warded off competing shoppers with pepper spray! The world desperately needs reconciliation, the restoration of peace. We need peace with God. We need peace with others, and we need peace in our own hearts. Reconciliation diffuses conflict and turns chaos into calmness. It quiets quarrels; it turns tension into tranquility and stress into serenity. The world desperately needs the peace that reconciliation brings. The good news is that Christmas is all about reconciliation! Jesus, the Prince of Peace, came to bring peace and to empower us to be peacemakers. Nearly every problem we face can be traced back to two fractured relationships: our alienation from God and our alienation from one another. Jesus came to bring reconciliation—first with God, and then with one another (Romans 5:1, 6-11). Jesus came to bring peace with God, but he also came to bring peace among men. And that’s what makes the whole Wal-Mart Christmas shopping slugfests so ironic. Christmas is about peace, not conflict. It is about sacrifice for the sake of others, not grabbing all that you can for yourself. But is civility and good will toward men even possible in a culture dominated by cynicism, put-downs and name calling? Oftentimes as we gather with extended family during the holidays we experience more conflict than we do peace. The starting point to experiencing peace in your life is understanding **the causes of conflict**.

**[1] Our natural self-centeredness.** When I want everything my way, and you want it your way, and if neither of us is willing to compromise out of love, sparks will fly and the relationship will suffer (Proverbs 20:3). Even when you love someone, you are not going to agree on everything. But I guarantee this, if you selfishly demand your way, even the smallest of disagreements can blossom into a relationship shattering conflict.

**[2] Expecting others to meet needs that only God can meet.** We make demands upon others instead of looking to God. Instead of complaining and blaming others for unmet needs, the Bible tells us instead to ask God (James 4:1–2 & Philippians 4:6–7).

Jesus came to bring peace, but there will never be peace among nations until there is peace within communities, there won’t be peace within communities until there is peace within families, and there won’t be peace in our families until there is peace in our individual lives. And that won’t happen until the Prince of Peace reigns in our hearts. But Isaiah 53:6 says that our sin stands in the way. Having spent a great deal of time counseling people over the years, I have noticed that there is a deep longing in all of us to be reconciled with our fathers—but there is an even greater need within us to be reconciled to our **heavenly** Father. The good news of Christmas is that Jesus came to be the bridge of reconciliation between us and God the Father (2 Corinthians 5:19).

But first we have to see our selfishness for what it is—an offense against a Holy God who has called us to love Him supremely and to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. We have done just the opposite! We love ourselves supremely and only love our neighbor when it’s convenient, when they are easy to love, when we are getting something out of the relationship. We call this selfishness. God calls it sin. And that is what separates us from God.

Once we’ve been reconciled to God through Christ, peace comes through living and enjoying one day at a time, accepting what cannot be changed instead of worrying about it, trusting in God’s loving care and wisdom, and surrendering to God’s purpose and plan for your life. Anytime you attempt to mend a broken relationship you are doing what God wants. You are attempting to be a peacemaker. The Bible calls it, “The ministry of reconciliation.” Notice that Jesus did not say, “Blessed are the peace lovers.” That is because everyone loves peace. No, he said, “Blessed are the peacemakers” (Matthew 5:9).

To be a peacemaker is to actively work for peace—to take the initiative in promoting reconciliation when relationships break down. It involves offering forgiveness to those who have hurt you. You pass on to others the same grace and forgiveness that God has extended to you. You seek to bring people together. But know this: there is a big difference between forgiveness and trust. Forgiveness is to be instantaneous and free (Matthew 6:15). We offer it to others in the same way God offers forgiveness to us. Jesus paid the price so that we could be freely forgiven. But restoring trust is a different matter. Forgiveness takes care of the past. Trust is all about the future, and it must be earned over time. Trust can be lost in a second, but it takes a long time to rebuild.

To be a peacemaker, overlook minor offenses and refuse to talk about others behind their backs. For offenses too serious to overlook, graciously and privately take the initiative to reconcile. Remember to attack the problem, not the person. Admit your contribution to the problem and ask for their forgiveness. Express your forgiveness of them, even if they refuse to admit any blame on their part. In cases where a conflict cannot be resolved in private, ask another brother or sister in Christ to serve as a mediator. With whom do you need to make peace this Christmas? To whom do you need to offer the Christmas gift of forgiveness and reconciliation?

## Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

***“Blessed are the peacemakers”...yes, but how does one make peace? Glad you asked!***

**Monday**—Step One: Make it your goal in life to please God. (1 Corinthians 10:31)

- Based upon 1 Corinthians 10:24-31, what was the issue that was causing divisions between believers in Corinth?
- “Meat sacrificed to idols” probably isn’t a sticking point between you and the others in your Community Group, but what **are** some differences between you and other TCCers? (For example, if it were only up to you, what aspects of TCC’s structure or ethos would you change? Think of things such as style of music and preaching, length of services, ministries offered, and calendar of events.)
- Are the things you mentioned covered in the “whatever” of 1 Corinthians 10:31b? If so, what must your attitude be?
- What light does 2 Corinthians 5:15 shed on this issue?
- How does Ephesians 5:8 say you should “walk”? What reason does it give for walking that way?
- Have you ever known a truly peaceful person? Describe his countenance. What were her words like? How did you feel in his presence?
- Was his/her life free of all conflicts? If not, why do you think s/he was so at peace?

**Tuesday**—Step Two: Get the log out of your own eye before addressing others’ sins. (Matthew 7:1-5)

- According to v. 4, what does our Christian brother (sister) have in his eye? What do we have in our eye?
- Why do you think Jesus said that?
- Have you ever had a speck of dirt in your eye? What was it like? Would a log in the eye have the same effect?
- What additional effects would a log in the eye have? (This was Jesus’ point!)
- So, if we **both** have an irritant in the eye, but **I** have something additional, why is **that thing** critical to resolve **first**?
- **How serious** is the order of first getting the log out of my own eye, then helping my brother? What phrases do v. 4 & 5 use to show the seriousness?
- Think of a person you think has wronged you. List his/her wrongs against you. How might Proverbs 19:11 relate to this?
- Now, list your wrongs against him/her.
- **Which** list was easier to make—and **why**? What might this reveal about your heart? What will you do about that?

**Wednesday**—Step Three: Gently restore.

- According to Matthew 7:5, after sinners get the log out of their own eye, then what are we commanded to do?
- We’ve all heard, “I’ve done the same thing... Who am I to...” **Why** isn’t the fact that “we too are sinners” an allowable excuse?
- Read 1 John 1:8-10. Are the people described as “spiritual” in Galatians 6:1 sinless?
- What does Galatians 6:1 command spiritual believers to do? Is that a good, loving thing to do? Is it a **comfortable** thing to do?
- What does Galatians 6:2 call this restorative process? Is that a good, loving thing to do? Is it a **comfortable** thing to do?
- What does that say about our attitude if we’re **eager** to confront?
- Does Galatians 6:1-2 suggest that this restorative/burden-bearing experience is rare/extraordinary or is it to be commonplace?
- Have you ever been “ensnared/caught up in any trespass”? Has a fellow believer ever restored you gently? Describe it.
- Have you ever known a fellow believer who was “ensnared/caught up in any trespass”? Did you bear his burden/gently restore?

**Thursday**—Step Four: Go and be reconciled.

- According to John 13:34-35, why is it so important to go and be reconciled?  
Who do you know who needs to know that you are Jesus’ disciple?
- According to John 17:23, why is it so important to go and be reconciled?  
Who do you know who needs to know that God truly did send Jesus?
- According to Matthew 5:21-26, why is it so important to go and be reconciled?  
With whom are you in opposition at this time?
- According to Matthew 18:12-15, why is it so important to go and be reconciled?  
Who do you know who is straying from Jesus?
- Why is it so hard to go and be reconciled?

**Friday**—Read Romans 12:18.

- What is the significance of the phrase, “If possible...”?
- What is the significance of the phrase, “...as far as”?
- What is the significance of the phrase, “...it depends upon you”?
- What is the significance of the phrase, “...be at peace with”?
- What is the significance of the phrase, “...all men”?
- If the phrase “as far as it depends upon you” is the mid-point, what phrases might be at the two following extremes:  
“\_\_\_\_\_” <<< “as far as it depends on me” >>> “\_\_\_\_\_”
- Is there **anyone** in your life with whom you’ve **not** done **everything**, “as far as it depends upon you”, to be at peace with? **Who?**
- What should you do for a situation in which you **have** done everything you possibly can, and yet you’re still not reconciled?

**Saturday**—Sometimes we need help in peace-making. What do each of the following verses tell us to do in such situations?

- Matthew 18:15-17
- James 5:19-20
- Hebrews 3:12-13
- Romans 15:14
- Proverbs 15:22



Think of a common area of conflict in your family.

Pastor Doug mentioned two main causes of conflict. As a family, discuss how those two issues factored into the most recent example of that conflict.

Our children are good at identifying hypocrisy in us, so make sure you don't get defensive! Listen as they identify things for which you need to ask their forgiveness. Then, gently ask how they've seen either of those issues in themselves.

Close in prayer.

Men! Start the new year off right!

GENESIS  
34-50

JACOB AND EGYPT

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