

# PEACE MAKERS



*in a noisy world*

## *07 Cultural Intelligence Without Gospel Compromise*

Because Christ calls His people to love real neighbors in the world as it is, faithful peacemaking requires learning how to enter unfamiliar settings with humility, clarity, and truth.

### **EMBARK**

*Three Encounters*

Read the following situations and discuss what faithful engagement might look like in each one.

*Situation 1* Carlos begins attending your church. He is warm, sincere, and clearly interested, but some of his assumptions about God, the Bible, and church life are very different from those of most people in the congregation.

- What would it look like to welcome Carlos wisely?
- What would be helpful curiosity, and what might come across as suspicion or impatience?

*Situation 2* Alicia works with people from a very different background than her own. She wants to represent Christ well, but she sometimes feels unsure how to speak about spiritual matters without sounding awkward, naïve, or confrontational.

- Why can cultural unfamiliarity make faithful witness feel difficult?
- What might help Alicia grow in wisdom and confidence?

*Situation 3* Sam wants to share the gospel with a neighbor whose worldview is shaped by ideas about identity, justice, and freedom that are very different from his own. He feels torn between two instincts: saying too little, or saying too much too fast.

- What dangers exist on both sides?
- What would thoughtful, patient engagement look like?

### **Follow-Up Questions**

- Which situation feels most familiar to you?
- What makes it difficult to enter someone else's world with humility?
- Why do Christians sometimes move toward either avoidance or antagonism?

### **EXAMINE**

**READ John 4:4–10**

1. What boundaries or expectations does Jesus cross in this encounter?
2. What does His approach reveal about His willingness to engage someone very different from Himself?

**READ John 4:13–18**

3. How does Jesus move from ordinary conversation to spiritual truth?
4. What does this teach us about clarity without avoidance?

*clarity without*  
**COMPROMISE**  
*compassion without*  
**CONFUSION**

READ Acts 17:22–23

5. What does Paul first reveal about his understanding of the people of Athens?
6. Why does this matter for faithful witness?

**READ Acts 17:24–31**

7. What truths does Paul affirm clearly and directly?
8. What does this passage teach us about contextual awareness without compromise?

**READ Colossians 4:5–6**

9. What does Paul mean by acting wisely toward outsiders?
10. How does gracious speech support faithful witness?

## EXPOSE

Biblical faithfulness does not require cultural withdrawal. Jesus spoke with a Samaritan woman whom others would have ignored. Paul spoke with Athenian philosophers whose worldview was filled with confusion and idolatry. Neither man assimilated. Neither man antagonized. Both entered unfamiliar worlds with clarity, courage, and purpose. That is biblical cultural intelligence. It means paying attention. It means listening carefully. It means understanding what matters to the people in front of you. And it means speaking the truth of God in ways that are clear, faithful, and understandable.

Jesus did not avoid uncomfortable difference. Paul did not confuse familiarity with faithfulness. Both remind us that faithful witness requires more than having the right message. It also requires wisdom about how to bring that message to real people in real settings.

Christians must not assimilate to the world. But neither should we approach people with suspicion, distance, or unnecessary harshness. Faithful witness requires both:

- **clarity without compromise**
- **compassion without confusion**

Peacemakers learn how to enter unfamiliar worlds without losing the gospel. That means asking not only, “What is true?” but also, “How can I speak this truth in a way that genuinely helps this person hear it?”

## ENGAGE

*A Wiser Approach (8–10 minutes)*

Choose one of the three situations from the EMBARK section and work through the following questions as a group.

- What assumptions might this person be bringing into the conversation?
- Which wrong response would be easiest to fall into?
  - avoidance
  - awkward overexplanation
  - unnecessary confrontation
  - shallow accommodation
- What might a wiser first step look like?
- What truth must remain clear in this situation?
- What kind of tone would best reflect the character of Christ?

## For further discussion...

11. Why do unfamiliar people or settings often make Christians uneasy?
12. What can we learn from Jesus about moving toward people who are different from us?
13. What can we learn from Paul about speaking truth in a culture shaped by false worship?
14. What would it look like for our church to grow in cultural intelligence without losing gospel clarity?

## MEMORY VERSE

Colossians 4:5-6 (CSB) “Act wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer each person.”