

SIMPLE, BUT NOT EASY

By Megan Greulich

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In college, I first learned the difference between peacemaking and (what I thought was) peacekeeping. I read Michael Emerson and Christian Smith's *Divided by Faith*, which highlights racial inequality and segregation in American churches. While it was easier to ignore the facts in front of me, the answer was simple: I knew racism and division in our churches should no longer be allowed to continue, unrecognized and unnamed for what it truly was. And while earlier on in my faith walk I might have preferred to "keep the peace," or "avoid stirring up trouble," I finally understood then that what we were "keeping" was not the "peace" that God intended for us.

Blessed are the peacemakers, Jesus told us. Peacemaking is messy, and far from easy—one day in a history class or at a marriage retreat reminds us that building long-term peace can be a process filled with conflict. Pursuing peace may lead us through difficult times, and the destination may not be what we expect. But it is an essential pathway for those of us who wish to seek justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.

As we reflect on the church's hotly debated issue of women and leadership, few could call reconciliation between egalitarians and complementarians an easy task. It is a debate that has divided denominations, churches, families, and friends. It forces us to confront our beliefs about the very nature of God, and the nature of who we are as women and men in Christ.

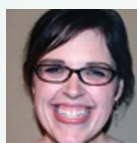
We may be convinced of the importance of this debate. But in the midst of what can be such a painful conflict, we still may find ourselves asking difficult questions. Do we compromise? Do we walk away? Do we honor God by stubbornly holding to a view we believe is true? What if we are wrong? What happens if we are right and we give up our convictions?

Conflict resolution is not easy. Yet we know we have a model of peacemaking in Jesus. In the midst of the most desperate conflict of all time, our separation from God, Jesus provided the ultimate solution: love.

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It was a simple answer, but it was far from easy. Love. It was not a modifying of convictions or a resolution to keep quiet. It was passion, courage, and sacrifice. It was *agape*. So what does love look like for us as egalitarians? Sometimes it is patience, a willingness to walk alongside a friend or family member as they search for answers. Sometimes love is compassion, a recognition of God in the eyes of someone who disagrees with us. Sometimes love is humility, a quiet moment of lowering our defenses and admitting that our tone or our assumptions were in error. Sometimes love is courage, a sacrifice of our own personal comfort to stand for what is true. And sometimes love is action, a resolution to speak for those who have not been allowed to use their own voices.

Perhaps love is the most obvious solution for reconciliation, one that we might even call a "Sunday school answer." Yet so often it is the solution we most easily overlook.



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