

Kingdom Living Today

Illustrating the WAY of God's Kingdom for a Modern World

39. Peacemakers Sow And Reap A Harvest Of Righteousness

**"BLESSED AND FILLED WITH JOY ARE THOSE WHO PROMOTE PEACE.
THEY ARE TRULY THE FATHER'S CHILDREN.**

A PERSON AT PEACE WITH ALL HAS A HEART FULL OF PRAISE TO ME!"

Jack greeted the two men at his front door that evening with welcoming delight. "Howie, it's been a few months since you and Grace came over for dinner with Nate and Jessica. (See Kingdom Living Today, 30. *Today's Decisions Cause Tomorrow's Consequences*) And Nate, I'm glad you came along with your father-in-law."

"I'm glad Nate's here too," Howie replied as Jack ushered both men into the living room. "I believe he can be a great help in what I think God wants me to do."

Jack could sense the disturbed tone in the older man's voice. As they all sat down he turned to Howie, slightly younger than himself, and asked pointedly, "How are you doing?"

"I'm not doing all that well," came the somber reply. Jack took in the rather gaunt face and asked with concern, "Tell me, what can I do?"

"A few days ago my doctor told me I have Stage 4 colon cancer," Howie answered in almost a monotone. "I've got less than a 15% of chance of still being alive five years from now even with aggressive treatment." He paused with a deep sigh then added, "The cancer isn't the reason I called you, Jack, but it's surfaced an issue that I don't want to leave unsettled just in case..." His voice trailed off and he looked away. Then he went on, "It has to do with some of my five kids and their relationship with me."

Jack leaned toward him with compassion. "Howie, I'll do whatever I can for you."

Howie pressed on, "Since Grace and I met with you and Dee awhile back, we've been seriously going through the materials you recommended from the Restoration Ministries website. That little book, *Growing Relationships Through Confrontation*, gave me some hope that I could clear up the ill feelings some of my kids have against me."

Jack nodded encouragingly as the other man continued, "Then Nate mentioned that in your Friday morning gathering with the men in your home fellowship family you've been training them to function as a '*nasi*' [NAH-see], someone who moderates a group discussion." He asked earnestly, "Would you help me clean up the bad feelings in my family? I don't want any of them feeling like that toward me any longer."

"It'd be my privilege," Jack replied kindly. He asked the two men to hold hands with him as he led them in prayer, seeking Jesus for wisdom and guidance. (Matthew 18:19,20) When he finished, he asked Howie to go on.

"I messed up a lot of things as I was trying to get ahead in this world and raise a family at the same time. I look back now and can see how my ego and desire for a comfortable life caused me to fail both my wife and my kids. (1John 2:15,16) Three of my kids don't respect me at all, especially my oldest son, Craig, who's filled with a lot of bitterness. The sad part for me, besides his bitterness, is that he's turned out just like me—successful in the eyes of the world but hurting his family." (James 4:4)

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*Sharing the Hebraic Foundations of the Earliest Followers of Jesus
Preparing Today's Followers of Jesus to Fulfill Their Part in His Kingdom*

At this point Nate broke in, wanting to soften his father-in-law's sense of guilt. "I talked with Grace about this, Jack. It's not like Howie pursued this path without her approval. She and the family enjoyed what Howie's career afforded them, even if they complained about his lack of involvement with them as a Dad." He reached over to touch Howie's arm. "I think back then they all thought this is just the way life is."

Jack looked at Nate. "How about Jessica? How does she feel about her father?"

"She was fourth out of the five," the young man replied. "She told me she always felt like she was Daddy's little girl, like there was nothing he could do wrong. It's only since he and her Mom have started talking with us about the convictions they're having after going through the Hebraic foundations that Jess and I are finding out how much of a mess my father-in-law's goals have caused his kids."

Howie rejoined purposefully, "I want to do whatever we can to see forgiveness and peace come into all my children's lives.(Colossians 3:12-14) I think I grieve the most over Craig. Maybe it's because as the oldest he had the most responsibility, but his bitterness and chasing after the things the world values has made him a prisoner—he's cut off from the emotional needs of not only his own family but everyone around him."

"If there's a bull-in-a-china shop," Nate interjected, "it's Craig. But I sense from things he's told Jess and me that he really wants out of that prison!"(Psalms 34:14)

Howie turned to Jack with hope. "What is this *nasi* character? Ever since Nate mentioned how that works, I sense deep inside that having a mediator of some sort is part of God's answer to my can of worms."

Jack smiled at the man's eagerness to learn. "The role of a *nasi* in group discussions has been lost in both our society and Christian culture, although the ancient Jews readily recognized his place. And I believe that for us who follow Jesus, that role is much more than facilitating dialogue."(Romans 15:5-7)

"What do you mean?" Howie inquired.

"Our God knows that love can't grow wherever peace is lacking," Jack responded quickly. "That's why our Lord Jesus emphasizes, '*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.*'(Matthew 5:9) He's citing the importance of peacemakers in relationships." The two men listened intently as he added, "The Hebrew word for peace is *shalom*, and the Hebrew letters of *shalom* mean 'authority that keeps chaos in check.'"

"So you're saying that a *nasi* serves as a peacemaker?" Howie asked.

"That's right," Jack answered. "A *nasi* serves with a certain degree of authority to ensure that a peaceful process is maintained until a decision or resolution is reached."

"What do you mean by authority?" Howie interjected.

Nate jumped in, "I'd like to answer that if I may." Jack nodded his approval. "Biblical authority is the privilege and responsibility to:

- *include* those things that contribute to peace and harmony, or *exclude* those things that rob peace and harmony;
- *commend* those actions and attitudes that contribute to the peace and harmony, or *correct* those actions and attitudes that rob the peace and harmony."(Psalms 37:30)

Howie was impressed with his son-in-law. "I can tell that those words aren't just something you've memorized, Nate. You mean what you're saying, and I can sense these truths in the peace Grace and I always find in your home." The young man smiled appreciatively as Howie continued, "You definitely live out 'authority that

keeps chaos in check.’ I see it in my daughter’s peace and in the joy of little Riley.”(Luke 10:5,6) The two men hugged. Turning to Jack, Howie asked him to tell them more about a *nasi*’s role.

“First, a *nasi* needs a strong sense of righteousness and justice when it comes to guiding group discussion.”(Proverbs 8:20) Rather than lording himself over the others or trying to get his own way, a *nasi* sees to it that there’s an atmosphere of equality among those involved in the discussion. No one’s input is more important than anyone else’s.” The men could readily see how important those safeguards are. Jack went on, “It isn’t the decision itself that’s the goal, but guiding a peaceful and just process until EVERYONE, if possible, is at peace concerning the final resolution or decision.”(James possibly served as a *nasi* in Acts 15)

“So I gather that character has a lot to do with someone being chosen to serve as a *nasi*,” Howie observed.

“Yes, it is,” Jack responded. “In a sense, a *nasi* serves as God’s representative in a group discussion to make sure a just and peaceful process takes place—hopefully one that leads to a just and peaceful resolution.(Ephesians 4:3) He’s responsible for facilitating the dialogue until the group collectively reaches an understanding in which the peace of God is experienced.”(Romans 14:17-19)

Nate noted again, “He does this by commending and including the things that he believes will contribute to peace, and correcting or excluding those that rob peace.”(James 3:18)

Jack affirmed the younger man with a grin as he went on, “Until people have some experience with the process of a *nasi*-guided discussion, a facilitator will find himself in some discomfiting situations. He may have to confront some about old habits such as arguing for the sake of argument. Or, admonish some about not fully listening to what others are saying because they only want to get their own point across.” Looking straight at Howie he said, “And when it comes to families, a *nasi* can’t permit the old baggage which family members bring with them to obstruct the process of peace.”

“What do you mean by old baggage?” Howie wondered.

“No one grows up in a home without their perception of each person in their family being shaped for a lifetime by the hurts they’ve experienced there. As adults, few if any siblings take the time to update themselves about the changes that have occurred in each other along the way—changes caused by being married, by parenting, by military service, by their jobs. But most people keep their parents and siblings trapped by what happened when they were growing up.”

“I see that,” Howie said, endorsing Jack’s insight.

Nate interjected, “Jack shared with us men one morning that many adult relationships are hampered because people carry with them unresolved bitterness toward their parents and siblings. That bitterness impacts all their other relationships.”(Hebrews 12:15)

“I can certainly see that in Craig’s case,” Howie threw in sadly. “I’ve met some of the people he’s worked with over the years and heard firsthand how hard-nosed and emotionally cold he is.”

Jack intervened before Howie could dwell too long on that thought. “Hopefully

what you're endeavoring to do now will give Craig a chance to rid himself of those begrudging feelings." Howie nodded, trying to have hope. "What else can you tell us about a *nasi*?"

Jack smiled, sensing the older man's determination to do everything he could to see healing in his family. "In order to reach a peaceful resolution, in today's vernacular, a *nasi* makes sure everybody puts their cards on the table. He doesn't let anyone just sit there silently without voicing their thoughts and feelings. He insists that they give their input because in this process, silence does NOT mean consent." He then added, "A person's word judges him or her as our Lord says: *"For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."*(Matthew 12:37)

Howie cleared his throat nervously as he commented, "But I can guess there's going to be a lot of emotion that may come out if we let our feelings surface. Then what do we do?"

"That's a great question!" Jack replied. "A *nasi* must allow and even encourage appropriate emotions. A person wraps their emotions around the things they value. And as dark as it is, bitterness may be someone's value and it must be allowed to be revealed. Craig needs to be encouraged to speak about what's inside him, as do all the others." He paused a moment. "I know that we're not a culture that's used to sharing our emotions. The negatives ones often only surface after we've become so frustrated we can't hold it in any longer."

Howie spoke up. "Letting negative emotions surface can be pretty tricky for a *nasi*, right?"

"That's true," Jack agreed. Then his tone changed. "I encourage you, don't defend yourself when these feelings come out! If there's ever going to be healing, you MUST let them talk! Entrust yourself to the *nasi* to include or exclude."

"Who should serve as the *nasi*?" Howie implored.

"I can tell you that Nate has the ability to be your *nasi* in this situation," Jack affirmed. Gulping, Nate responded, "Me???"

"Isn't he too young for this?" Howie asked somewhat skeptical. "We'll probably only get one shot at this. Why do you think Nate will work?"

Jack declared, "He's married into your family. Are either of you aware of any ill feelings toward him among your wife or kids?" Both men shook "No."

"I've watched Nate closely as both a husband and father in his own home," Jack noted, looking at the younger man. "He has a strong sense of both justice and righteousness.(Psalms 85:10) And, I KNOW the Spirit of Christ in him won't let him fail as the *nasi* you need for this meeting!"

Tearfully Howie put his arm around Nate. "Would you be our *nasi*?" Matching tear for tear, Nate proclaimed, "I'd be honored to."

"In light of my cancer," Howie noted, "it sounds strange to say that I'd give my life to have my relationship with Craig and the others healed. Deep inside I feel like it's not worth taking another breath until forgiveness fills my family. I feel like Jesus has taken over my whole being, flooding me with peace!"(2Thessalonians 3:16)

"It's His Spirit, Howie," Jack proclaimed. "He wants you to know He's with you through this attempt at reconciliation.(2Corinthians 5:14-21) I'm going to ask our fellow-ship family to keep praying for you until the victory of forgiveness is achieved."