

When Good Becomes Bad

A client wrote: *"I think progressing into a separation would be unwise and jumping the gun. I don't want that. I ultimately want a restoration of my marriage and my family."*

Having spent nearly 30 years helping people resolve conflict, mostly in secular settings, I was surprised at the prominent role idolatry plays in Biblical peacemaking. My friend, Ken Sande, in his seminal book, *The Peacemaker*, encourages people in conflict to see whether there are any "heart idols" contributing to the breakdown in communication and relationship.

Idolatry can be subtle and insidious, especially when the object can appear innocuous or even 'godly'.

The letter continued: *"I love [my spouse] deeply and while it shreds me apart to see [them] continue in the infidelity, I would love to see God restore [them], our marriage and our family."*

At an N.A. meeting, a speaker was criticized for suggesting that his addiction was "religious." Their point was that their dependence caused them to plan, anticipate, prepare and isolate prior to using; in short, a liturgy of addiction.

All idols demand sacrifice!

Friends and family feed, house and otherwise support addicts thinking they are acts of love. This is deception as it prevents abusers from coming to terms with their idolatry. They are literally "loving them to death."

This is called enabling behavior, leading to co-dependence. It's only after we admit we are powerless over our idols and that our lives have become unmanageable; and decide to believe and trust in a power greater than ourselves can we experience sobriety, sanity and holiness.

So can good things, like children, or marriage, or even Christian ministry become idols?

Consider Genesis 22 or Matthew 7:21 – 23. I believe that there is a reason that the first commandment includes the admonition "you shall have *no* other gods before me."

Christ Mass 2017

Our writer concluded: *"I know that I will have ups and downs . . . and I know that just because God has shown me something, doesn't mean He'll take the trial away. I just want to go on the record to say that I am willing to let God use me and shape me in this situation as He sees fit."*

"God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering" Genesis 22:8. It is for His coming that we ready ourselves (by clearing out idols?) in Advent and celebrate during Christmas.

Finishing Strong Thanks to You

The Chinese proverb "May you live in interesting times" comes to mind as we reflect on the work we have completed this year, as well as that which is still in progress. We continue to work with wives and husbands, school and church boards, and employees and businesses; clients struggling with broken trust and communication. This year we even helped to resolve a conflict in Europe! In many instances, the fruit of our free consultations, by phone or in person, have sufficiently helped folks restore communication, with one another; rendering further services to them, unnecessary!

As we approach the New Year, Conflict to Peace will encounter new challenges in ministry. Weathering those challenges will require the generous support of all our friends and, hopefully, new friends who want to partner with us and expand our services to honor God by helping His people find resolutions to their conflicts.

We need your continued financial support. And we most definitely need your ongoing prayer support.

Thank you for partnering with this important ministry, it has made all the difference to myself and our other conciliators.

Have a blessed celebration of Christ's birth and make the most of every opportunity God may bring to you, in 2018, to be an instrument of His peace!



The Rev. Mark Sholander, President