

MOVING FROM FEAR TO LOVE: A STUDY IN RESOLVING WE VERSUS THEY DYNAMICS IN RELATIONSHIPS

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We often hear that the opposite of love is hate, along with the notion that the two emotions are on a linear continuum. This study introduces the possibility that they are not linear but rather stem from the same part of the brain circuitry with a very thin line between. In fact, this study also proposes that underneath hate is fear.

Bryan Post, a nationally known family therapist, who writes and practices about the impact of stress on our behaviors, believes that there are only two PRIMARY emotions, and that all other feelings are secondary to these two. Further, stemming from emotions and feelings are all behaviors. (See chart). Please note that the two primary emotions are love and fear, not love and hate.

When we engage in WE versus THEY thinking/attitudes/behaviors, which Miroslav Volf calls "OTHERING", we are supporting the linear model, which offers fewer opportunities for reconciliation. Volf, a Protestant theologian at Yale University, has become known as the "theologian of the bridge". The focus of his work seeks to establish "faith as a way of life" in which there is consistent dialogue between all groups, conversations which seek to build unity.

Using *Speakpeace*, edited by Charyl Brumbaugh-Cayford, and published by the Brethren Press in 2017, this study will include interactive dialogues about topics and ideas that might tend to be divisive. Each session will discuss 3-4 previously selected readings which will be available the previous week. Each reading has a scriptural reference for further study.

The four sessions will have a weekly theme suggesting four ways to build connection, through speech, spaces, thinking and systems.

The image of the enemy

You rise up against my people . . . ; you strip the robe from the peaceful, from those who pass by trustingly with no thought of war (Micah 2:8).

[A dangerous tendency] which can contribute to the likelihood of war is to believe in a distorted image of the enemy. This image involves seeing one's own policies as righteous and those of the enemy as the embodiment of evil. Killing other human beings is easier if one views them not as fellow members of the human race but as less than human, as impersonal agents of an evil power.

A person is better able to hate an enemy by concentrating on only one undesirable trait of a group while disregarding other features. The Russian leaders, for example, can be viewed as exclusively evil men only if one ignores the humanitarian achievements of the Soviet leadership. . . .

The truth, of course, is that often soldiers on one side are as innocent of wrongdoing as are soldiers on the other side. What makes "us" want to kill "them" is not that they have, as individuals committed any crime; they just happen to have been born on the other side of an arbitrarily drawn political boundary. . . .

Because the image of the enemy is used to justify atrocities committed by one's own side in destroying the enemy, it encourages a double standard of morality for judging the policies of one's own country in comparison with other countries. Instances of Americans committing genocide against the Indian American are overlooked, though Americans condemn genocide when others practice it. Americans obtained nearly one third of the continental United States from Mexico through the use of force. Americans do not view these wars as aggressive, but some Mexicans have a different view.

—Robert C. Johansen

respond When you hear the word "enemy" who comes to mind? Is there something that you can appreciate about them?

pray Lord God, you made us all.

They are my children, too

Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve me against the wrath of my enemies (Psalm 138:7a).

In the exodus story, God's people are trapped between death by Pharaoh's army and death by drowning in the sea. According to the story, God opened a way for them to walk through the water to safety on the other side. Pharaoh's army followed them, but the waters came back and all the Egyptians were drowned. Then Moses and the Israelites, in chapter 15, sing a long hymn praising God for delivering them. "Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in power—your right hand, O LORD, shattered the enemy" (Exodus 15:6).

The destruction of Pharaoh's army is another story that troubles New Testament people, especially when they remember the instructions of Jesus to love one's enemies (Matt. 5:44). However, there is an old interpretation—a midrash—that looks at this story from a different perspective. In heaven, the midrash says, the angels were also dancing and rejoicing over the rescue of the Hebrews. Then one of the angels said, "Look! We are rejoicing, but the Creator of the Universe is crying!" They asked, "Lord, why would you weep when Israel has been delivered by your power?" And the answer was, "I am weeping for the dead Egyptians washed up on the shore—somebody's son, somebody's husband, somebody's father. The Egyptians are my children, too."

Suddenly the story of the destruction of Pharaoh's army takes on a new dimension. Surely those of us who have been rescued from certain destruction will rejoice. How could we keep from singing? But New Testament people would insist that our singing should also acknowledge the fact that all rescue comes at a cost to someone.

—Robert C. Bowman

respond Military drones are being used to kill terrorists, and often their children and family members also are killed. Read a news report of a recent strike.

pray Since Love is Lord of heaven and earth, how can I keep from singing?

read Hebrews 11:1-3

War is not inevitable

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen (Heb. 11:1).

We believe that war is not inevitable. Those beliefs are not based upon a peculiar peace doctrine of our own; they arise from our application of Christian standards to all human relations, whether individual, group, class, or national. To settle conflicts in any of these relationships by war is not efficient, not constructive, not permanent, and certainly not Christian. We believe that nonviolence, motivated by goodwill, is more powerful than the sword, making possible the survival of both parties, while warfare insures the ultimate destruction of both.

—*Church of the Brethren Annual Conference, 1935*

respond What hopes do you have for peace? Make a list of five peaceful changes you hope to see happen in the world.

pray God, give me glimpses of hope that cannot be seen in any other way than through the eyes of faith.

read Psalm 37:35-40

EYN and the Nigerian Civil War

Behold the upright, for there is posterity for the peaceable (Psalm 37:37).

Although the Brethren [missionaries] did not expose the . . . members [of Ekklesiyar Yan’uwa a Nigeria, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria] to the Brethren Pacifist stance, the influence of their teachings about loving your neighbors as yourself and their practical ways of bringing peace in Christian homes, when things soured, affected and influenced the EYN on how they handled the Nigerian Civil War . . .

Political writings in the Western Region led to the coup in which many leaders from the North were killed. This coup was interpreted as an Igbo coup. This led to the molestation and killings of hundreds of innocent Igbos in the North. Consequently, Ojukwu announced the birth of a new nation—the Republic of Biafra. In an attempt to stop Ojukwu from breaking up the nation, a civil war which lasted for thirty months began. Some of the EYN sons who were conscripted into the army of the Federal Government met Charles M. Bieber during the war in Biafra serving with the International Red Cross Society.

EYN with the TEKAN [Fellowship of Churches of Christ in Nigeria] member churches played very significant roles during the Civil War:

1. Some Igbos were hid in TCNN ceilings [at the Theological College of Northern Nigeria] and on the mountain on which the present two gigantic water tanks currently stand.
2. Some TCNN students abandoned the comfort of their hostels to join the Red Cross Society to take relief materials to the victims of the civil war.
3. TEKAN, which includes EYN, made several calls to the Federal Government of Nigeria to stop the war.
4. Food items, clothing, and money were gathered from among members of TEKAN to help war victims in the Eastern Region.

—*Musa A. Mambula*

respond Do you think that peacemaking is implicitly embedded in the gospel message of Jesus Christ? Why, or why not?

pray Let peace become real for those receiving the ministry of your church,

read Luke 1:26-38

Deconstructing fear

Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word (Luke 1:38a).

When I visit a war zone I try to build a favorable context by reading all I can find about the place. I pray while working in the garden. I dream scenarios of possible situations and my responses. I go by invitation so I know that there are others to walk with me and teammates with whom to work.

I have practiced fear management in other places while working with Christian Peacemaker Teams. When suicide bombers came to our house in Baghdad or when the armed robbers raided our compound in the Democratic Republic of the Congo we spent hours debriefing the experiences. Deconstructing the experiences helps me to understand the pieces and also deal with the trauma.

Yes, trauma does affect most of us in these and other types of situations. Trauma healing works to frame the experience in ways other than terror. Trauma is our body's safety fuse that blows when fear is about to overwhelm our body's capacity to cope. But then trauma comes back to haunt us because the normal emotional circuits have been broken and need to be rebuilt through long, patient work. Forgiveness is one way that can change the dynamics and understanding of an event. Or if I can understand violence and fear in a way that allows me to envision a positive future then I regain control of my responses in both energizing and life-giving ways. So dealing with fear both before it happens and after it happens, and doing it many times, allows me to understand the construction and deconstruction of fear.

—Cliff Kindy

respond Do some research to find out what trauma healing is, and why it is important that those who have had a fearful experience receive such help.

pray Thank you, God, for the tools you give us to counteract fear, and work toward healing: love, prayer, compassion, service, courage, faith.

read Jeremiah 31:1-6

Grace extended

[Those] who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness (Jer. 31:2b).

Concern for the sick and the helpless extended also beyond their own fellowship. During the Revolutionary War, after the battle of Brandywine (1777), for example, members of the Ephrata Cloister, the earliest of the Brethren splinter groups, cared for wounded American soldiers at great risk to themselves. An improvised field hospital, set up within the cloister buildings, aided more than 500 American soldiers. Epidemics of camp fever and other diseases took the lives of nearly 150 of those soldiers, many of whom were buried in a common grave on the cloister grounds. . . .

The Civil War presented the Brethren with unique opportunities for witnessing, both to their doctrine of peace and to their calling to help the needy. The story of Elder B. F. Moomaw and his wife of Roanoke, Virginia, serves as an illustration.

The gracious hospitality which they extended to the 800 men of the Fifty-first Regiment of the Confederate Army during the summer of 1861 earned the respect and gratitude of the soldiers. Neighbors had directed the army to Brother Moomaw's farm hoping to embarrass the peace-loving Dunkers. Instead, the Moomaws made generous provision of food and supplies for the soldiers and officers, cared for those stricken in an epidemic of measles and, upon invitation, preached Christ, "a peaceable Savior, a needed Savior, a suitable Savior, an efficient Savior, the Prince of Peace." A written note of gratitude, signed by many of the officers, was left with Brother and Sister Moomaw when the Fifty-first Regiment moved on.

—Mary Sue H. Rosenberger

respond Go online and learn more about the Ephrata Cloister.

pray You are many things to me, Jesus: peaceable Savior, needed Savior, suitable Savior, efficient Savior, Prince of Peace.

read Job 5:8-27

Passing on the gift

In famine he will redeem you from death, and in war from the power of the sword (Job 5:20).

In January 1938, at Murcia, Spain . . . [Dan West] saw another long line of young and old waiting for bottles of milk. Their gaunt faces and the hopeless look in their eyes haunted him. The dying baby, the long, long lines with some sent away still hungry—what could be done to relieve the suffering of these helpless victims of a terrible war?

Sitting along under an almond tree, Dan looked out over the grassy slopes and thought of northern Indiana where he attended college. There the people ate well and had plenty of milk. Couldn't the milk of northern Indiana be fed to the hungry in Europe? The cows could eat the green grass, produce milk for the family, and the Spanish people could then feed their own children. In that way the dependence upon relief would be overcome while all its advantages were still retained. People would have milk for their babies, but they would also have work to do—caring for the cows and milking them, and providing future offspring. In that way more would be done than just keeping babies alive. . . .

Dan had the simple belief that a heifer is not aware of any iron or bamboo curtain and cannot distinguish between the hungry cries of communist or capitalist babies.

Returning to the United States and still dreaming, Dan brought his idea before the Committee on Spain—a group made up of representatives of the Brethren, Friends, and Mennonites—and to the Federal Council of Churches. Cows, Dan told them, would help feed families, provide fertilizer for crops, and proliferate into herds. The groups were interested, but the idea did not result in any concrete plans.

He spoke cautiously to friends back home about his dream of sending cows to places where milk was needed for children. They raised questions he couldn't fully answer; they posed problems of which he was already aware. . . .

Some of Dan's Goshen neighbors who caught a glimpse of the possibilities in such a dream formed a committee, including Dan, to see what could be done. This was the first "Heifers for Relief" committee, and Dan served on it until he was incapacitated by poor health. His work was primarily that of inspiring, probing, asking why not and, in general, serving as a stimulator while others took care of the organizational procedures that have provided the successes of the project to date.

One pessimistic friend who said the "cows would never amount to anything 'over there'" agreed to take Dan to the superintendent of animal husbandry at an agricultural college nearby. While talking about the project, the professor suggested sending bred heifers. It was then that Dan envisioned another dimension to his dream, a very important one! That calf, soon to be born, could be given to another needy family, a neighbor, and soon there would be two needy families helped. By passing on the gift—on and on the gift could go. Dan believed that relief is degrading, but if you pass on what you receive it is ennobling. He was also aware that in giving we are blessed even more than in receiving. All who receive the gift of a heifer should, in turn, be givers and pass on the gift.

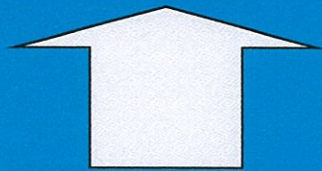
—Glee Yoder

respond Research the work of Heifer International—the descendant of the Church of the Brethren's Heifer Project. How might you help them pass on the gift?

pray Dear God, the church grows as people care enough about their friends and neighbors to share Christ's love with them. Help me to be a link in that chain of faith.

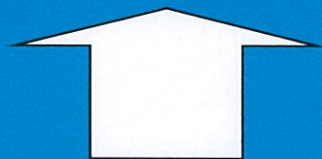
Fear-Based Behaviors

Lying, stealing, hoarding, gorging,
aggression, defiance, arguing,
revenge, screaming, violence



Fear-Based Feelings

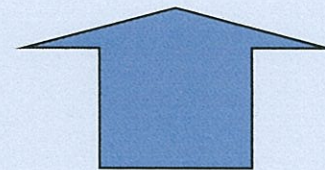
Angry, hostile, hate, shame,
frustrated, envious, jealous, scared



FEAR

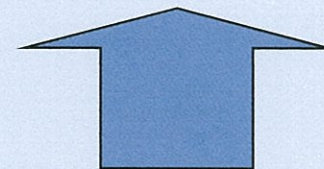
Love-Based Behaviors

Smiling, conscience, empathy,
reciprocity, obedience, motivation,
compliance, helpful



Love-Based Feelings

Happy, joyful, glad, excited,
proud, confident



LOVE

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