JM Jason Mayfield

SERMON OUTLINE FOR PASTORS

HOW TO HAVE PEACE IN THE HOME

Four Steps from Leviticus 14 for Family, Boundaries and the Holidays

> Peace in the home does not just happen; it takes effort. Leviticus 14 gives four steps: inspect the irritation, evaluate the environment, contain the contagion, and terminate the terminal. And where you cannot change your situation, God's grace is sufficient.

MAIN TEXT
Leviticus 14:33-45

SERIES
Stand-alone message

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BY
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AT A GLANCE

THE MESSAGE

1. Peace takes effort: Jesus blessed peacemakers, not peacekeepers, and Scripture tells you to labor to enter rest and to seek peace and pursue it.
2. Step one, inspect the irritation: you do not have to go looking for problems, but when something shows up you have to stop and identify what is actually causing it.
3. Some peace disruptors are obvious like sewage in the bathtub, and some are a toilet that runs a little too long and wears on you for months before you connect it.
4. Step two, evaluate the environment: many disruptions are surface level, things like schedules, meals, organization, electronics, and temperature, and they are easy to fix once named.
5. Do not merge incompatible environments: keep decompression time between work and home so what you cannot control at work does not dominate what you can control at home.
6. Step three, contain the contagion: an isolated issue can contaminate everything, and most isolated issues are solved with communication and boundaries.
7. Walls build a house, but boundaries build a home, and boundaries can be built around a thing, a topic, or a place.
8. People do not actually resent boundaries, they appreciate knowing where you stand, because clarity is kindness.
9. Step four, terminate the terminal: some relationships need boundaries and others need to be ended, and healing people lightly by only telling them breakthrough is coming is not honest help.
10. You do not owe every part of yourself to everybody, and blood is thicker than water does not override leaving and cleaving.
11. For a person who cannot change the situation, 2 Corinthians 12:8-9 is the answer: grace is sufficient, and God's power is made perfect in weakness.

WATCH IT PREACHED

youtu.be/vckp7jVx1FE

READ THE ARTICLE

jasonmayfield.com/messages/peace-in-the-home

PREACHING NOTES

Before You Preach

This message was preached about six weeks before Thanksgiving, with family gatherings in view. It focuses on family relationships, but the four steps apply to almost any area where peace is disrupted. Peace could easily be a whole series; here it is one message.

It is personal. Pastor Jason drew on his own upbringing, a hard family decision and his own home. Use your own stories where these appear, and handle the fourth step with care: say clearly that ending a relationship is not for everyone, and recommend a counselor.

Expect some people in the room to be living in situations they cannot change, including young people in unsafe homes. The closing is for them. Make sure they know how to reach the church for help.

Introduction

Today: **how to have peace in the home.** The holidays are a few short weeks away, and that person is going to be in your house soon.

A recent survey found that 88% of married Americans say they experience increased stress during the holiday season, and family dynamics are the top stressor. (Cite your source when you use the figure.)

This is a major value for Ashleigh and me. We were both raised in dysfunctional, at times potentially dangerous, environments. And we are not perfect. When I get home today, my daughters are going to say, “Who do you think you are, preaching that?” I’ve yelled at both of them this week.

But look at the generational leap. I was raised afraid to come out of my bedroom. Yesterday I had to ask one of my daughters to go hang out in her room for half an hour, because my kids feel safe all over the house. If you look at the generational improvements we’ve made, we may be some of the leading experts on this subject.

Jesus did not say, “Blessed are the peacekeepers.” He said, “Blessed are the peacemakers” (Matthew 5:9). **Peace takes effort.** We are told to “strive to enter that rest” (Hebrews 4:11) and to “seek peace and pursue it” (Psalm 34:14). Peace does not just happen. You have to work for it.

LEVITICUS 14:33-45 ESV

[33] The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, [34] "When you come into the land of Canaan, which I give you for a possession, and I put a case of leprous disease in a house in the land of your possession, [35] then he who owns the house shall come and tell the priest, 'There seems to me to be some case of disease in my house.' [36] Then the priest shall command that they empty the house before the priest goes to examine the disease, lest all that is in the house be declared unclean. And afterward the priest shall go in to see the house. [37] And he shall examine the disease. And if the disease is in the walls of the house with greenish or reddish spots, and if it appears to be deeper than the surface, [38] then the priest shall go out of the house to the door of the house and shut up the house seven days. [39] And the priest shall come again on the seventh day, and look. If the disease has spread in the walls of the house, [40] then the priest shall command that they take out the stones in which is the disease and throw them into an unclean place outside the city. [41] And he shall have the inside of the house scraped all around, and the plaster that they scrape off they shall pour out in an unclean place outside the city. [42] Then they shall take other stones and put them in the place of those stones, and he shall take other plaster and plaster the house. [43] "If the disease breaks out again in the house, after he has taken out the stones and scraped the house and plastered it, [44] then the priest shall go and look. And if the disease has spread in the house, it is a persistent leprous disease in the house; it is unclean. [45] And he shall break down the house, its stones and timber and all the plaster of the house, and he shall carry them out of the city to an unclean place.

WHAT IS GOING ON IN THIS PASSAGE?

This is a strange passage. Israel has come out of hundreds of years of slavery, and God has promised them a land that is move-in ready: houses built, fields tilled and sown. But for a land to be ready to possess, another people had to build it, and God would drive them out.

Pastor Jason's reading: as the inhabitants left, some may have hidden their household idols in the foundations and walls, and the Lord would allow or cause a disease to grow on the walls so Israel would know something unholy was in the house. (This is an interpretation, not something the text states. An old Jewish tradition reads the passage as revealing hidden treasure in the walls. Present it as one way of reading the passage.)

Whatever lay behind it, in this small passage the Holy Spirit has outlined a process for keeping peace in the home. Not everyone will need every step. I pray you don't. But I have personally had to take every step I'm going to talk about today.

1. Inspect the Irritation

> **LEVITICUS 14:35-36** ESV
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> [35] then he who owns the house shall come and tell the priest, 'There seems to me to be some case of disease in my house.' [36] Then the priest shall command that they empty the house before the priest goes to examine the disease, lest all that is in the house be declared unclean. And afterward the priest shall go in to see the house.

You don't have to go looking for problems. If they are there, they will show up. But when something seems off, you have to stop and examine it: "There seems to me to be some case of disease in my house."

Illustration: the gallbladder and the shoulder. A few weeks before we moved here, I lay awake one night, uncomfortable for hours. By about four in the morning I knew something was wrong. I woke Ashleigh up, and we went to the emergency room. By the end of the week my gallbladder was out. The pain was sudden and severe, so the problem was obvious.

A few months earlier I had my shoulder repaired. For about three years I had discomfort in that shoulder, but it was mild and not all the time, until it hurt all day, every day. The cartilage had been torn the whole time. It just wasn't torn badly enough to tell general discomfort from a serious problem.

Peace in the home can be like this.

- **Some disruptions are obvious.** If sewage is coming up your bathtub drain, you know why you're upset. If this is your first Thanksgiving after losing a spouse, everyone understands why your peace is disrupted.
- **Some are slow.** A toilet that runs a little too long can wear on you for months before you connect it to why you're on edge. If you've had three Christmas dinners in a row and walked away feeling like garbage every time, it's time to start asking questions. Maybe you've grown used to a grandmother commenting on your weight every time you walk in the door.

"There seems to be something going on." That is when you have to start identifying the problem.

2. Evaluate the Environment

> **LEVITICUS 14:37** ESV
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> [37] And he shall examine the disease. And if the disease is in the walls of the house with greenish or reddish spots, and if it appears to be deeper than the surface,

If some disruptions are deeper than the surface, then some are surface-level. It might not be leprosy in the wall. It might be spaghetti sauce. You have to deal with it either way, but the good news is: if it isn't deep, it isn't hard to get to.

Surface-level peace disruptors include:

- schedules (family schedules, your daily schedule);
- menus (figuring out what's for dinner);
- organization (everything has a place, and everything in its place);
- use of electronics (maybe you're tired because you're on your phone until 3 a.m.);
- the temperature in the house.

These can be easy to fix once you know what they are.

Illustration: moving the TV. When we moved into a house in Lakewood Ranch, Florida, we put the TV where the house said it should go. Before long I was irritated all the time. One day I realized why: I worked from home, my office was on one side of the TV and the kitchen on the other, and every trip took me through the noise and in front of everyone watching. As an introvert, that wore me down. We moved the TV to another wall, and I never had the problem again.

These things can be solved with relative ease **if** you figure out what they are, have some open communication, manage expectations, and adapt where necessary. My kids' school schedule disrupts my morning routine, and I can't change it. I can be mad about it, or I can manage my expectations.

BONUS: DECOMPRESSION TIME

Don't merge incompatible environments. Take an appropriate amount of time to "leave work" before you "come home." The things you can't control at work or school shouldn't have dominion over what you can control in your house. If you work for yourself, this is harder than you think.

3. Contain the Contagion

> **LEVITICUS 14:37** ESV
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> 37 And he shall examine the disease. And if the disease is in the walls of the house with greenish or reddish spots, and if it appears to be deeper than the surface,

> **LEVITICUS 14:40** ESV
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> 40 then the priest shall command that they take out the stones in which is the disease and throw them into an unclean place outside the city.

Now the issues grow in severity. This is not spaghetti sauce. It is below the surface. But sometimes it is one isolated issue that is contaminating everything.

- "This marriage isn't working." Maybe it's the communication.
- "I'm a terrible parent." Maybe your patience could use a tune-up.
- "We're running out of money." Maybe one particular debt is pressing on you.

Most isolated issues can be solved with communication and boundaries. Boundaries are healthy.

Walls build a house, but boundaries build a home. Boundaries are lines we neither cross nor allow to be crossed.

A BOUNDARY AROUND A THING

Sometimes you have to build a boundary around a **thing.**

- We don't say "shut up" to the kids. (I question this boundary sometimes.) When I told one of my daughters to shut up when she was about five, she looked at me like I had cussed her out.
- We don't say the D word: "divorce." It is off-limits in our home.
- Some boundaries don't fall on both sides of the fence. My kids can tell you about Ashleigh's ex-boyfriends, but not about my ex-girlfriends. That stone has leprosy, and it isn't worth the next 24 hours.

At some point the whole family will be together, one person voted for one candidate and another for someone else, and bringing it up will mean an explosion at the dinner table. That won't change. You are not changing the way your family members vote. So build a boundary around it, and find something you can agree on.

A BOUNDARY AROUND A PLACE

Other times you have to build a boundary around a **place.**

In Matthew 12, Jesus is out doing ministry and upsetting the status quo. His mother and brothers come to see Him, and word reaches Him that they are outside. Jesus knows why they've come: to tell Him to slow down (compare Mark 3:21, 31-35). And He says, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" (Matthew 12:48). In other words: we can talk about this at home, but we're not talking about it here.

- You don't show up at your spouse's workplace with a marriage conversation in the middle of the workday.
- We aren't getting to the root of our issues in Walmart.
- For the holidays, some of you need to say to family: "We love you. We want to spend the holidays with you. But some things that are fine for you in your house are not going to happen in this house." No wine bottle, no cigar, no political agenda in my house.

People don't actually resent boundaries. They appreciate knowing where you stand. As Brené Brown puts it, "Clear is kind. Unclear is unkind."

You don't have to put out a press release on your boundaries or make an issue where there isn't one. But if cousin Rodney keeps causing a problem every Thanksgiving, get on the phone with cousin Rodney and tell him to knock it off.

4. Terminate the Terminal

> **LEVITICUS 14:44-45 ESV**
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> 44 then the priest shall go and look. And if the disease has spread in the house, it is a persistent leprous disease in the house; it is unclean. 45 And he shall break down the house, its stones and timber and all the plaster of the house, and he shall carry them out of the city to an unclean place.

There is a kind of leprosy the Bible calls "a persistent leprous disease" (Leviticus 14:44). It is not going away.

This is hard to preach. It would be easy to tell you only, "Go pray. Breakthrough is coming." Pray, and breakthrough can come. But Jeremiah rebuked the prophets who "have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace" (Jeremiah 6:14). You can only sacrifice your peace for so long. The gospel, your family, your job and your church are all best served by you being a person who operates with peace.

Some relationships need strict boundaries, while others need to be terminated entirely.

Illustration: Hueytown. Several years ago I had to do this with some family members, and I should have done it sooner.

- I had known for years that I was sacrificing the peace in my home for these relationships. It shouldn't take 24 hours to recover from a 30-minute phone call. That math doesn't work.
- It wasn't only my peace. After those calls my wife and kids could tell: "You've been on the phone with Hueytown." (My daughter later texted me from a band competition, in all caps, "HUEYTOWN IS A REAL PLACE.")
- About four years ago I was hospitalized with COVID, and for about three days the doctors did not expect me to live. My family found out, and a nurse came in to say my mother was on the phone. I knew that if I took the call, my heart would not handle it. I said I would call when I was out of the hospital.
- About a week after I got home, my grandmother sent Ashleigh a sympathy card with an ugly note in it. That was the moment I made the final decision to cut off the relationship.

You do not owe every part of yourself to everybody.

It's hard, especially in the South, where we're raised to hear "blood is thicker than water," and some families expect you to be more loyal to them than to your spouse. Man of God, hear me: the Bible says to leave and to cleave. "A man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife" (Genesis 2:24). Your wife is more important than your mama.

There's a recipe of issues you have to work out for yourself before you cut a relationship off. I recommend seeing a counselor. When this happened, I called mine right away. A friend who knows my family asked, "How are you going to feel if you do this and she dies tomorrow?" I said I wouldn't be in a good place for a while. But if she lived to 135 and I didn't deal with it, I would be dealing with it forever.

Like my shoulder, it had gone from uncomfortable to unbearable. God can turn anything around, but my peace is my responsibility today.

Every person I've ever talked to who had to do this says the same thing: "I waited too long." Immediately, the peace in my life went up.

Review the four steps: inspect the irritation, evaluate the environment, contain the contagion, terminate the terminal.

Conclusion: When You Can't Change It

Now a word to anyone in a situation they cannot change. (Most of us can change more than we think. But not everyone can.)

As I mentioned, I grew up in a very volatile home. Both of my parents were out-of-control alcoholics, and there was physical abuse. At 13, I couldn't do anything about it. I was stuck.

I got saved around 12 years old, and frankly it bothered me that God saved me so early in life while my family never seemed to get it together. Others had miracle testimonies; mine was that I got saved and everything got worse. From the time I got saved to the time I moved out, my home life got progressively more difficult.

But over the years the Lord showed me the power of "the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding" (Philippians 4:7). **While my home life was getting worse, I was getting better.** That is the anointing. That is the cross. That is the Holy Spirit.

If you're in a situation like that, especially if you're a young person, listen to me: God will give you supernatural grace for every area that is outside of your control. And if you are in an unsafe or unhealthy environment, let us know. We will do anything we can to help.

> **2 CORINTHIANS 12:8-9** ESV
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> [8] Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. [9] But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

You may not see it this year. You may not see it in five years or ten. But if you will seek the Lord, trust Him, and commit yourself to His way and His Word, there will come a day when you look back and say, "He who began a good work in me was faithful to complete it" (compare Philippians 1:6).

He's good. He's faithful. He will rescue you.

- "The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe" (Proverbs 18:10).
- He will draw you "up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog," and set your feet "upon a rock" (Psalm 40:2).
- "The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places" (Psalm 16:6).

- And one day you will say of your own home what God said of His: “The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former” (Haggai 2:9).

He’s the God of joy, the God of hope, the God of **peace.** If you receive that today, give the Lord praise.



ABOUT

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Pastor Jason Mayfield is the Senior Pastor of Citylight Church in Saraland, Alabama, an author, and the creator of POWER 27. He has given more than 20 years to the local church and helps pastors and ministry leaders lead BIG.

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