
Lessons on the Need for Peacemaking for Mission in Ethiopia from Matthew 5:9 and 2 Corinthians 5:17–21

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Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
(Matt 5:9)

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; look, new things have come into being! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ: be reconciled to God. For our sake God made the one who knew no sin to be sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Cor 5:17–21)

For mission to be successful in Ethiopia, peacemaking must be prioritized. Conflicts raging in various parts of the country demonstrate that the need for peace is paramount. This need becomes even more significant when we realize that peace is both the means and the outcome of mission.

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The Bible demonstrates the concept of peacemaking in various ways through a significant number of biblical texts. This essay will focus on just two of those texts as primary sources—Matthew 5:9 and 2 Corinthians 5:17–21—because the discourse by Jesus Christ and Paul in these passages seems to provide a clear indication of how the New Testament teaches about the significant relationship between peacemaking and mission in the Christian community in a way that can be applicable in Ethiopia.

In Matthew 5:9, Jesus says, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” This verse reminds us that as Christians we are called to be peacemakers in the world. When it comes to mission work in Ethiopia, this means striving to build bridges of understanding and promoting peace between different groups of people by following the example of Jesus and working toward peace and justice to better reflect God’s love and bring hope to those in need.

Second Corinthians 5:17–21 talks about how we are new creations in Christ, and that God has entrusted us with the ministry of reconciliation. We are a new creation called to leave behind our old ways and embrace a new life in Christ that can be manifested by demonstrating a transformed way of living. In addition, we are ambassadors of Christ and have been entrusted with the message of reconciliation focused on bringing people closer to God and helping them experience his love, mercy, and grace. Further, we are called to be reconcilers ourselves: we have been given the ministry of reconciliation characterized by efforts to build bridges between people and God, as well as between different communities and groups. Finally, we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to fulfill our mission. Overall, the lessons from 2 Corinthians 5:17–21 remind us that our mission in Ethiopia should be focused on bringing people closer to God—that building bridges between different groups can be both the means and the output of the mission.

Therefore, this essay argues that the lessons in these two scripture texts—Matthew 5:9 and 2 Corinthians 5:17–21—show us that those involved in mission work in Ethiopia must understand the need for peacemaking and reconciliation because the message of the gospel can be more effectively communicated and received when peace and reconciliation are promoted. As peacemakers, we can help break down barriers and bring people together, creating a more unified and peaceful society to be an alternative community through the mission work. And, in turn, this can also be a means for effective mission ministry.

This essay also delves into practical ways in which Christians can engage in peacemaking efforts. Toward this end, the paper is organized into three parts:

1. A literature review on the relation between peacemaking and mission in general and, in particular, on Matthew 5:9 and 2 Corinthians 5:17–21 to show the academic gap that this paper tries to fill.
2. An exegetical analysis of Matthew 5:9 and 2 Corinthians 5:17–21 focused on the historical and literary context of the time to show how

peacemaking and mission can be tied together in these specific biblical texts.

3. The practical application of peacemaking and mission in Ethiopia. This paper uses critical discourse analysis because this method focuses on the communication and use of the text among different communities.¹

1. Literature Review

The relationship between peacemaking and mission is not well researched in the broader academic world, nor, in particular, in the Ethiopian context where the presence of conflict is ubiquitous and the need for mission work is paramount. With the aim of showing the history of research in this area, I will focus on the important issues related to peacemaking and its place in the mission of the church. In addition, I will review diverse interpretations of Matthew 5:9 and 2 Corinthians 5:17–21 to establish how the relation between peacemaking and mission is tied together in the ministry of the New Testament. Finally, I will review a history of research in the Ethiopian context about the role of peacemaking in mission in order to show the gap the current paper aims to fill.

Matthew's presentation of peacemaking in chapter 5, verse 9 is the seventh beatitude and is demonstrated as an important manifestation of those who have special relationships with God. This beatitude is controversial, however, because it is not clear whether it addresses a theological, historical, or ethical issue.² Hans Dieter Betz and Adela Yarbro Collins have pointed out that Matthean communication in this verse indicates that the sons of God following his example are called to make peace with everyone because God is the peacemaker who invites people to come to his relationship.³ In addition, these scholars argue, Jesus interpreted the whole of the Torah through the lens of God as peacemaker, thus affirming that his followers should imitate God the Father in ethical matters.⁴

1 Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*, 2nd ed., [Nachdr.] (London: Routledge, 2013), 4; Norman Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research* (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), 16; Norman Fairclough, *Media Discourse*, repr. (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), 18–19. Note that I do not indulge in analyzing the critical discourse method itself.

2 Hans Dieter Betz and Adela Yarbro Collins, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, Including the Sermon on the Plain Matthew 5:3 to 7:27 and Luke 6:20–49*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 137.

3 Betz and Collins, *Sermon on the Mount*, 141.

4 Betz and Collins, *Sermon on the Mount*, 141.

Choosing a different focus, Alfred Plummer argues that Jesus as the Messiah has come as Prince of Peace to establish the kingdom of peace, and therefore all peacemakers are agents that spread his rule and sovereignty to those who are in need.⁵ Plummer differs from the above scholars by connecting the activity of peacemaking with the activity of mission. Practically, this means proclaiming the Messiah as the Prince of Peace, indicating that peacemaking begins at home in the human heart, thereby addressing the whole family of God.⁶

Lisa Sowle Cahill argues that peacemaking is an important ingredient in the salvation of humanity because the members in a community are united by love of God as well as love for neighborhoods, manifested by forgiveness, reconciliation and hospitality.⁷ Cahill further argues that “church members should confine their peacemaking activities to that sphere and stay away from the sphere of violence.”⁸ Peacemaking, she points out, is a Christian activity that naturally follows conversation and enables a social coexistence and cooperation, avoiding enmity between persons and within communities.⁹ In this interpretation, the issue of peacemaking is connected with the activity of social cohesion.

Although the above three scholars interpret Matthew 5:9 in different ways, each of their views on the relation of peace and mission support our exegetical analysis of the text in connecting peacemaking with the mission activity of the church at large and, in particular, in the Ethiopian context where we hear of conflict throughout the country. In this paper, I argue that Christian peacemaking is strongly tied to Christian mission because peace can be both the means of gospel ministry and the result of gospel ministry. This is because peace paves the way for mission, and mission in turn can bring peace.

The interpretation of 2 Corinthians 5:17–21 is also important because, as this text states, Christians have been entrusted with the message of reconciliation learned from God, who reconciles people through Jesus Christ. However, the text is not uniformly interpreted in the same way. In addition, scholars in general have given great emphasis to reconciliation between humanity and God and have tended not to strongly tie together peacemaking and mission, thereby potentially weakening the activity of peacemaking.¹⁰

5 Alfred Plummer, *Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to S. Matthew* (Piscataway: Gorgias, 2010), 68.

6 Plummer, *Matthew*, 69.

7 Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Blessed Are the Peacemakers: Pacifism, Just War, and Peacebuilding* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2019), 4.

8 Cahill, *Blessed Are the Peacemakers*, 23.

9 Cahill, *Blessed Are the Peacemakers*, 63.

10 R. Kent Hughes, *2 Corinthians: Power in Weakness* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 124–25.

For instance, Craig S. Keener understands the passage as a reconciliation of humanity with God, intending to indicate that the apostles have the authority and the ministry of reconciliation of humanity with God.¹¹ Keener further argues that the ministry of reconciliation is the new covenant's life-giving ministry manifested through the making of peace among enemies, and that Paul uses the term reconciliation as bringing humanity into a relationship with God.¹² R. Kent Hughes argues that Paul's usage in the context indicates God's activity of reconciling humanity with himself through Jesus Christ and that this ministry has been given to the Christian community to proclaim the good news that God has accomplished the work of reconciliation through the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. His emphasis is on reconciliation through the gospel as the activity of restoring relationship with God rather than reconciling with oneself and with others. In doing this, he emphasizes that the mission of the gospel is the activity of bringing reconciliation between humanity and God.

In addition to the lack of scholarly works tying peacebuilding and mission together, there is no academic work that considers the current Ethiopian context, where conflict exists in almost every part of the country, devastating the lives and the social fabric of the Ethiopian community.

2. Biblical Explanation of Integrating Peace and Mission

This essay envisions filling the above academic gaps by employing an exegetical analysis of the Matthew 5:9 and 2 Corinthians 5:17–21 texts. These passages, beyond their textual significance, can clearly show (1) the tradition of Jesus in terms of peacebuilding and the mission of the gospel and (2) Paul's use of reconciliation both with God and humanity as part of the gospel ministry. Through this analysis, this paper derives a lesson for the mission activity of the Ethiopian church by tying the activity of peacebuilding and mission together. The church of Ethiopia needs peacebuilding and the gospel because peacebuilding is the means for spreading the gospel, and, on the other side of the coin, gospel preaching can bring peacebuilding, reconciling humanity with God and bringing reconciliation of people with people and community with community.

A. Exegetical Analysis of Matthew 5:9 in Context

In this section, I analyze Matthew 5:9 by addressing three important issues: (1) exploring the context and the background of the text to better understand the issue; (2) showing the meaning of the phrase "blessed are the peacemakers" to draw the lesson of what contemporary Ethiopians shall do; and (3) pointing

¹¹ Craig S. Keener, *1–2 Corinthians: New Cambridge Bible Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 185.

¹² Keener, *1–2 Corinthians*, 186.

out some important ways that peacemaking can be connected to the current situation in Ethiopia.

1. Context and Background

Knowing the context and the background of Matthew 5:9 is important for understanding the relationship between peacebuilding and the gospel. Therefore, I will sketch both the literary context and the historical context (background of the text) to better understand the issue at hand.

The presence of five discourses in the Gospel of Matthew is argued by different scholars, and David R. Bauer has pointed out these five discourses, found in chapters 5—7, 10, 13, 18, and 23—25.¹³ Robert H. Gundry has also pointed out the presence of the above discourses and draws a similarity with the five books of Moses.¹⁴ Since these discourses are directed at the Jewish community, Matthew seems to use a contextual approach, presenting Jesus in the form of Moses. Our focus here is on the first discourse, Matthew 5—7, which is traditionally called the Sermon on the Mount and contains the Lord's Prayer, the Beatitudes, and the central tenets of Christian discipleship. The Sermon on the Mount contains many teachings, especially the norm of the kingdom demonstrated in different ways by the teaching of Jesus about love, humility, and forgiveness, among others.¹⁵ The text teaches on issues such as divorce, lust, and worldliness; issues about persecution; further instruction on how to pray; and words about false prophets.

In Matthew 5:9, Jesus focuses on the seventh beatitude, saying, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” Within this literary context, three important background contexts need to be considered—biblical, political, and religious:

1. *Biblically*, 5:9 is part of the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus teaches about how to live a righteous life, using the Old Testament as reference with a reinterpretation of the law of God in the forthcoming verses, especially 5:17–48. In this particular verse, Jesus emphasizes the importance of being a peacemaker—someone who works to resolve conflict and promote harmony. This verse speaks to the concept of shalom, a Hebrew word that means peace, harmony, and wholeness.
2. *Politically*, this verse can be interpreted as a call for leaders to prioritize peace in their context as against the way of peace in the Greco-Roman

13 David R. Bauer, *The Structure of Matthew's Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Sheffield: Almond, 1989).

14 Robert Horton Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art*, repr. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1983).

15 Carl G. Vaught, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Theological Investigation*, rev. ed. (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2001).

world. It can also be seen as a reminder to individuals to strive for peace in their relationships and communities.

3. *Religiously*, in the Jewish tradition, shalom is a state of being that encompasses physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. In the Christian tradition, peace is seen as a gift from God that comes through faith and obedience to his will. There might be something in common with the Jewish and Christian tradition because the teaching of Jesus emerged from the Jewish context.

2. The Meaning of “Blessed Are the Peacemakers”

To understand what Jesus meant when he said “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God,” it’s important to look at the context in which it was spoken. In the preceding verses, Jesus is speaking about the need for mercy, purity of heart, and meekness. He then goes on to say that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be filled and those who show mercy will receive mercy. When Jesus says “Blessed are the peacemakers,” he is referring to those who work to bring about peace between individuals and communities. This involves not only resolving conflicts but also working to prevent them from occurring in the first place. Jesus then goes on to say that those who are peacemakers will be called “children of God.” This is significant because it shows that peacemaking is a characteristic of those who belong to God’s family. It also suggests that those who are peacemakers have a special relationship with God and are called to reflect his nature in the world.

The broader context of Matthew’s Gospel suggests that verse 5:9 pertains to peace between persons and communities and not simply between persons and God. For example, in the Sermon on the Mount itself, one might highlight 5:9 in the context of 5:23–24 because there the call for reconciliation with a brother or sister attests to the strong need for reconciliation before offering a gift in front of God. The teaching of Jesus about non-retaliation and the love of enemies in 5:38–48 is also a clear call for peace between people and people. Furthermore, the teaching on the Lord’s Prayer in 6:9–15 indicates the importance of reconciliation with people where forgiveness from God and between humans are part of the same process.

Beyond the Sermon on the Mount, in 18:15–20, Matthew also includes the process of reconciliation between members of the community. This is further illustrated by the parable of the unforgiving servant in 18:21–35, which hearkens back to the concept of forgiveness in the Lord’s prayer and clearly illustrates the relationship between vertical and horizontal forgiveness—that God’s forgiveness of us is the basis for our forgiveness of others.

Finally, the commission to “make disciples of all nations” (28:16–20) includes baptizing and “teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded

you”—an “everything” that includes what Jesus taught his disciples earlier in the Gospel, in chapters 5—7, 18, and elsewhere! In this light, the call to “peacemaking” (5:9) is one with the call to “evangelism” (28:19), or “making disciples.”

In general, the word peacemaker in Matthew 5:9 refers to someone who actively promotes peace, not just someone who avoids conflict. This can be understood in the immediate context of the Sermon on the Mount and the broader context of the Gospel of Matthew. Being a peacemaker means reconciling people who are estranged, promoting justice and fairness, and seeking to resolve disputes peacefully. Jesus is calling on his followers to be active agents of peace in the world, to work toward resolving conflicts and promoting understanding between people.

B. Exegetical Analysis of 2 Corinthians 5:17–21 in Context

The main aim of this section is to analyze the concept of the ministry of reconciliation communicated by the apostle Paul in the context of 2 Corinthians 5:17–21. The first section below focuses on articulating the context and the background of the text in a brief and precise way to better understand the issue we are going to analyze. The second section focuses on the concept of the ministry of reconciliation. Third, as we have articulated in the above, I will connect the relationship of peacemaking with the mission activity of the church of Ethiopia, considering the current situation of the country.

1. Context and Background of 2 Corinthians 5:17–21

Second Corinthians 5:17–21 was written within the context of the broader Pauline theology of reconciling humanity with God and within humanity (Eph 2:14–15). The importance of peace to Paul is well articulated by Edward M. Keazirian, who points out that “peace is not something one does, but a state one seeks to establish (Rom 12:18; cf. Col 1:20) or, having established it, a condition one seeks either to preserve or to recover should it may (sic) be lost (2 Cor 13:11; 1 Thess 5:13).”¹⁶ In addition to this, he argues that even though it is common to include the wish of peace at the opening of the Greco-Roman world letter, Paul is using the Christian element indicating that peace emanates from God framing God’s reconciling work through Jesus Christ, and it is not originating simply from Paul but from his understanding of the Old Testament.¹⁷

In general, Paul in his letters indicated that peace and peacemaking are important elements. Paul used the concept of peacemaking extensively in his letters to the early Christian communities. He emphasized the importance of unity and harmony among believers and urged them to resolve conflicts and

16 Edward M. Keazirian, *Peace and Peacemaking in Paul and the Greco-Roman World*, Studies in Biblical Literature, Vol. 145 (New York: Peter Lang, 2013), 85.

17 Keazirian, *Peace and Peacemaking in Paul*, 88.

disagreements peacefully. Paul believed that peacemaking was crucial for maintaining a strong and healthy community of believers and emphasized the need for forgiveness, reconciliation, and love in his writings. He also stressed the role of Jesus Christ as the ultimate peacemaker and encouraged his followers to emulate Jesus's example in their interactions with one another.

2. *The Ministry of Reconciliation*

In 2 Corinthians 5:17–21, the ministry of reconciliation refers to the work of bringing people back into a right relationship with God. This ministry is carried out by those who have been reconciled to God through faith in Jesus Christ and who then share the message of reconciliation with others. The passage explains that God has made it possible for us to be reconciled to him through Christ and that we are called to be ambassadors of this message to others. As we share the message of reconciliation with others, we are inviting them to experience the same forgiveness, restoration, and new life that we have received through faith in Christ.

Paul attests that his ministry of reconciliation is mainly bringing people into relation to God through the preaching of the gospel. However, this preaching also brings people-to-people reconciliation and society-to-society reconciliation. Keener has pointed out that the opening of 2 Corinthians 5:17 serves as an opening in Paul's argument indicating the newness that rejects the "appearance in favor of heart (5:12); therefore, he was not interested in a fleshly perspective on Christ or Christians (5:16), but the hidden, eschatological reality of resurrection life that had begun in Christ's resurrection."¹⁸ That Christ's resurrection is the foundation for the ministry of reconciliation can be applied to reconcile humanity with God and humanity with itself. Keener is correct on his argument that reconciliation with God can summarize the message of the ambassadors' entry to the world for the activity of reconciliation (5:19–20).¹⁹

As verse 19 indicates, the ministry of reconciliation is that "in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them." This does not limit the vertical dimension of reconciliation; the horizontal aspect of reconciliation is also there because reconciliation with God enables humanity to be reconciled with self.²⁰ It seems clear that verse 19 highlights a powerful truth about the ministry of reconciliation—it involves not only reconciling with God but also with oneself and others. The vertical dimension of reconciliation frees humanity from the burden of their sins and allows them to find inner peace. But the horizontal dimension is equally important because it reminds us of the interconnectedness of our relationships and the importance of seeking reconciliation in all aspects of our lives. It encourages us to embrace the ministry of

¹⁸ Keener, *1–2 Corinthians*, 185.

¹⁹ Keener, *1–2 Corinthians*, 186.

²⁰ Hughes, *2 Corinthians*, 124.

reconciliation and work toward healing our relationships with God, ourselves, and others.

The interpretation of 2 Corinthians 5:17–21 is best understood in the context of Paul’s strained relationship with the Corinthian church. In this letter, when Paul urges the Corinthians to “be reconciled to God,” he is not only calling for a vertical relationship with God but also speaking out of his own desire to be reconciled with the Corinthian church. We can see this in how Paul’s experience of being reconciled to God through Christ on the Damascus Road has motivated him to pursue reconciliation with all.

Along with 2 Corinthians 5:17–21, Ephesians 2:11–22 is also considered a key text pointing to Paul’s view of reconciliation and its contribution to mission. It’s worth noting that there may be many other relevant texts on this topic.

3. Integrating Peace and Mission Work in Ethiopia

Ethiopians currently need peace because of conflict in different parts of the country. Between 2020 and 2022, Ethiopia engaged in a devastating conflict with militants from the Tigray region, with consequences that tore apart the social fabric of a society that had lived peaceably together for decades.²¹ Further conflict in 2023 between the Ethiopian National Defense Force and the Amhara Fano resulted in a significant loss of lives.²² The continued conflict in the Oromia region is a clear indication of prevalent conflicts in Ethiopia.

Today, these conflicts are affecting the whole country. From the Christian point of view, this has hindered the mission of the church because now ministers do not go from place to place. The need for peacemaking is clear, where mediation between the conflicting bodies takes place, transforming one-sided attitudes.

The disciples of Jesus have been advised to be peacemakers, which then enables them to identify themselves with God. Peacemaking is very important because it paves the way for mission, creating a peaceful community. On the other hand, the activity of mission is also the means for peace because the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ is reconciliation, which is peace with God and peace with people.

The ministry of reconciliation in the Ethiopian context has a two-fold importance: (1) first is the urgent need for peaceful resolution of devastating conflicts—people to people and citizens with the state; (2) the second is to help people understand that absence of war does not show the existence of peace; the former understanding minimizes the concept of peace that goes beyond the absence of war.

21 “Conflict in Ethiopia,” Global Conflict Tracker, December 19, 2023, <https://cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/conflict-ethiopia>.

22 “Conflict in Ethiopia.”

Megersa Tolera Abdi points out the need for “fostering coexistence between the different groups [in Ethiopia] . . . as a crucial step and even a precondition for the continuation of the process of improving inter-group relations leading to reconciliation.”²³ He also acknowledges the problem of identifying peace education and that educating for peace has a great impact on bringing peace and reconciliation in Ethiopia as the nation is passing through various conflicts and challenges. In the midst of this situation, it is difficult to fulfill the mission of Jesus without peacebuilding. Peacebuilding in Ethiopia needs to be considered a crucial element of every Christian community in order to transform the situation of our beloved historical country. The centrality of the biblical norm of peace, reconciliation, and forgiveness might be the priority in the current situation in Ethiopia.

C. Lessons Learned from Matthew 5:9 and 2 Corinthians 5:17–21

This section focuses on important lessons that we can draw from Matthew 5:9 and 2 Corinthians 5:17–21. First is to understand the importance of peacemaking in mission work in general and in the Ethiopian context in particular. Second is the importance of identifying the biblical basis for peacemaking that is derived from the above analysis of the texts. Finally, this section wraps up by attesting to the practical applications for the activity of mission work in Ethiopia.

1. Importance of Peacemaking in Mission Work

The importance of peacemaking within the mission activity of the church can be conceptualized via three important issues. First, mission work often takes place in areas with high levels of conflict. Given the lack of peace in Ethiopia, this point is clearly applicable within the Ethiopian context. The MKC is working to bring peace in all of the areas where there is conflict in the country. The church’s peace department, for instance, is working to bring peace to the Shewa of the Amhara region. As a result, the community has testified about how the church is working among them. And the prison ministry department of MKC is working diligently to address the root cause of conflict and engage with those who are imprisoned because devastating conflicts. This approach has led to many individuals coming to Christ, and, as a result, churches have been planted through the department’s work for peace and prison ministry.

Secondly, the Meserete Kristos Seminary provides training and education on the theology of peace, intending to use peace as a means to proclaim the gospel. It is impossible to carry out mission successfully without peacemaking. Peacemaking helps to create an environment where people can live and

²³ Megersa Tolera Abdi, “The Role of Peace-Education as a Coexistence, Reconciliation and Peace-Building Device in Ethiopia,” SSRN Scholarly Paper (Rochester, NY, 2019), <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=3670334>, 61–74; 63.

work together in harmony, regardless of their differences. Furthermore, it helps to address the root causes of conflict instead of just treating the symptoms. Ultimately, peacemaking is essential for achieving long-term sustainable development, which is often a goal of mission work.

Thirdly, mission activity is the way for peacebuilding because the message of the gospel is making peace people-to-God and people-to-people. The gospel message is centered on promoting peace with both God and people, and mission work can be a valuable means of spreading this message and promoting peacebuilding. Both the church as an organization and individuals have the potential to make a significant impact in conflict-ridden areas by fostering peace and reconciliation through their mission work. By spreading the message of love and peace, the Christian community can help create an atmosphere where individuals can learn to live together harmoniously and appreciate one another's unique attributes in the Ethiopian context.

The Meserete Kristos Church in Ethiopia has set practical examples of how the mission activity of the church can lead to the promotion of peace. The role of churches in promoting peace is not limited to simply proclaiming the gospel but also includes participating in practical peacebuilding. The Meserete Kristos Church in Ethiopia has worked to accept the challenges and opportunities that churches face in promoting peace, including addressing the role of religion in conflict resolution. Recently, for example, the MCK prepared a peace dialogue with the main religions in Ethiopia, even though putting it into practice has been challenging.

2. Biblical Basis for Peacemaking

Peacemaking can be effectively performed by proper interpretation of the biblical texts that lead to a strong foundation for peacemaking. The biblical basis for mission can be found in various passages throughout the Bible. In the Great Commission, Jesus commands his followers to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19–20). This passage emphasizes the importance of sharing the message of salvation with people from all backgrounds and cultures. Additionally, throughout the Old and New Testaments there are numerous examples of God's heart for the nations and his desire to see all people come to know him and live in peace. In Isaiah 49:6, for example, God says, “I will make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.” Overall, the biblical basis for mission is grounded in God's love for all people and his desire to see them reconciled to him through faith in Jesus Christ. This is the basis for reconciliation among different groups in Ethiopia that are under the turmoil of conflict between people-to-people and state-to-citizens.

The Ethiopian Meserete Kristos Church strongly believes in following biblical teachings to promote peace in the country's current situation. This belief is

demonstrated through two actions: (1) the church has established the Department of Peace and the Department of Prison Ministry at its head office, and (2) the church carries out practical activities in various parts of the country to promote peace based on its convictions regarding the biblical principles of peace and the importance of peace to the church's mission.

3. Practical Applications for Mission Work in Ethiopia

The MKC is a growing church with vibrant mission activity and charismatic Christian living. However, as it is within a majority world country, and because of unresolved historical conflicts birthed from painful experiences, it needs strong conflict resolution and peacemaking guided by the biblical principles taught by Jesus and communicated by his apostles, like Paul. The Meserete Kristos Church, as an Anabaptist church, can make significant contributions to peacebuilding by utilizing these biblical principles and building upon the church's past activities.

The teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount anchors Christians' identity to peacemaking since the text indicates that peacemakers are called the children of God. Our relationship with God demonstrates God's love and forgiveness that enables humanity to have reconciliation with God and people. The practical application we can draw from Matthew 5:9 is to use our identity as children of God for peacemaking, knowing that this is part of our mission in this world.

This has two important implications. The first is that we can bring people into fellowship with God, which also becomes a means of reconciliation with each other. The flip side of this is also true; when we reconcile people through our peacemaking message, we pave the way for our mission work to draw people to God. Secondly, it is possible to use the proclamation of the gospel in conflicted areas as a means of conflict resolution. The gospel can bring peace with God and peace between people, making it an effective tool for resolving conflicts. In the Benishangul-Gumuz region, where conflict is common, the MK Church Department of Peace has brought practical change to the community, especially in Metekel Zone.²⁴

²⁴ Conversation with Mekonnen Gameda, head of the peace department of the Meserete Kristos Church, 2023. MK Church is working in Metekel Zone to promote peacebuilding. As a result of their efforts, some fighters who were hiding in the jungle have come forward and reconciled with the community. This success is not limited to Metekel Zone only; other parts of Ethiopia such as Northern Shewa and the Southern region are also benefiting from the peace department's work to bring peace within their communities. The church's practical experience in peacemaking has earned it a positive reputation for being a peaceful church in the community. This reputation has opened up an opportunity for the church to preach the gospel in both Metekel Zone and Northern Shewa, as the image of the church in the community has greatly improved.

Paul's presentation of the ministry of reconciliation in 2 Corinthians 5:17–21 is another important text from which we can draw practical implications for the mission of the church in Ethiopia. This passage emphasizes the transformative power of Christ's sacrifice and the role of believers in sharing this message of reconciliation with others. The church needs to understand how to effectively communicate the message of reconciliation to the people of Ethiopia in a way that resonates with the cultural context and experiences of Ethiopia. In such activity, the Ethiopian Evangelical Churches can help to promote peace, unity, and understanding in the country, which brings two important things: (1) unity among the Christian community that enables them to preach the good news of Christ throughout the country, and (2) a clear vision for and shape of the mission of the church, which is addressing the whole person and, in this case, reconciling humanity with God and reconciling humanity with each other.

A Call for Active Peacemaking in Mission Work by the Ethiopian Church

As we have seen in the above literature review, not many scholars have addressed how the activity of peacemaking can be connected with the mission of the church. By focusing on two biblical texts—Matthew 5:9 and 2 Corinthians 5:17–21—I have shown that the relationship between peacemaking and mission has been understood in different ways by various scholars. I have also shown that even though peacebuilding can be both the means for mission and the outcome of mission, scholars have not emphasized the tie between mission and peacebuilding, which becomes very significant in Ethiopia. Neither is there any scholarly work that considers the existing Ethiopian context in terms of connecting peacebuilding and mission in Ethiopia. In a country where conflict exists in almost every region, the mission activity of the church needs to be tied together with peacebuilding to rescue the country from the devastation of its people's lives and the social fabric of its communities.

Therefore, the current paper calls for active peacemaking in the mission work of the Ethiopian church. Since peacemaking and the mission of the church are strongly tied together in the Bible, as we have witnessed in the Matthew 5:9 and 2 Corinthians 5:17–21 texts, we need to bring these two elements together in our day-to-day context in Ethiopia, where conflict is rampant throughout the country and the need for mission is urgent. We need to articulate a theology of mission that incorporates peacebuilding at different levels. And mission organizations need to articulate peacemaking education and the mechanisms of reconciliation to serve our people in need.