Research Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences
(An Open Access International Peer Reviewed Journal)
ISSN: 2945-3968

The Relevance of the Beatitude "Blessed are the Peacemakers" To Nigeria Today: A Biblical, Theological and Ethical Analysis of Peace building in a Conflict-Affected Society

Polycarp Chibueze Nworie
Department of Philosophy, Religion and Peace Studies, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Nigeria;
Bishop Michael Okoro College of Health Technology, Ndubia, Ebonyi State, Nigeria;
St. John the Baptist Parish, Ndubia, Catholic Diocese of Abakaliki, Nigeria.

ABSTRACT
Peace remains one of the most urgent moral, political, and religious challenges confronting contemporary Nigeria. Persistent insecurity, insurgency, communal violence, farmer–herder conflicts, separatist-related violence, kidnapping, electoral insecurity, and distrust among communities threaten human dignity and national cohesion. This paper examines the relevance of Jesus' declaration, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9), as a biblical and ethical framework for peacebuilding in Nigeria. It adopts a qualitative documentary methodology, combining contextual biblical interpretation with theological literature and documented analyses of Nigerian conflict. The paper argues that biblical peacemaking is an active commitment to reconciliation, justice, truth, nonviolence, and the restoration of relationships rather than merely the absence of open confrontation. The Nigerian context demonstrates that security interventions, while sometimes necessary to protect civilians, are insufficient when disconnected from accountable governance, impartial justice, social inclusion, livelihood restoration, and community participation. The study considers the responsibilities of religious leaders, political institutions, traditional authorities, women, young people, educational institutions, the media, and civil society. It also distinguishes forgiveness from impunity and reconciliation from the silencing of victims, arguing that sustainable peace requires truth-telling, accountability, and protection of human dignity. The paper concludes that Matthew 5:9 offers both a theological vision and a practical moral imperative for Nigeria. Its application requires translating religious conviction into concrete practices of conflict prevention, interreligious cooperation, responsible public communication, justice, and inclusive peacebuilding.
Keywords: Beatitudes; conflict resolution; interreligious dialogue; Nigeria; peacebuilding.

How to cite this article: Nworie PC. The Relevance of the Beatitude "Blessed are the Peacemakers" To Nigeria Today: A Biblical, Theological and Ethical Analysis of Peace building in a Conflict-Affected Society. **Research Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences. 2026 Nov 17, 5(5): 117-131**
Source of support: Nil.
Conflict of interest: None
DOI: doi.org/10.58924/rjhss.v5.iss5.p12

Received: 10-10-2026
Revised: 12-10-2026
Accepted 05-11-2026
Published: 17-11-2026

Copyright:© 2026 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Peace is a fundamental condition for human flourishing, social development, political stability, and the realization of human dignity. Where peace is absent, communities experience fear, insecurity, displacement, economic hardship, disrupted education, trauma, and declining confidence in institutions responsible for protecting life. Peace is therefore more than a desirable political slogan; it is a moral and social condition that enables individuals and communities to live and develop together.

Nigeria's religious, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and regional diversity can enrich national life, but differences can become sources of tension when manipulated for political advantage, combined with exclusion, or intensified by competition over resources. The country has faced insurgency in the northeast, farmer–herder and communal violence, kidnapping and banditry, separatist-related violence in the southeast, and violence associated with political competition. These forms of conflict differ in their histories and immediate causes, yet their consequences often include loss of life, destruction of property, displacement, trauma, and weakened trust in public institutions (Chiluwa &

Chiluwa, 2022; Human Rights Watch, 2023, 2024; International Crisis Group, 2017; United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2023).

For Christians, the teachings of Jesus Christ provide a significant foundation for reflecting on these challenges. Among them is the seventh Beatitude: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9). The statement is not merely a general wish for harmony. It identifies peacemaking as an active moral vocation and connects it to the character of God. It calls believers to do more than avoid conflict: they must help prevent violence, resolve disputes, restore damaged relationships, and confront conditions that undermine peaceful coexistence.

This paper examines Matthew 5:9 as a biblical, theological, and ethical resource for responding to contemporary Nigerian peace challenges. It does not claim that theology alone can resolve complex political and security crises. Rather, it argues that theological reflection can clarify the moral purposes that should guide practical responses, including security, justice, dialogue, reconciliation, and public accountability.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the prominence of peace in religious teaching and public discourse, Nigeria continues to experience insecurity, communal hostility, and violent competition. Religious institutions preach forgiveness and love of neighbour, political leaders promise security and national unity, and community leaders appeal for calm when violence occurs. Yet these declarations do not always translate into durable changes in relationships or institutions.

One problem is the tendency to define peace as the mere absence of open confrontation. This can overlook structural injustice, exclusion, impunity, economic deprivation, and unresolved grievances. A second problem is the gap between religious profession and practical conduct: people may claim religious commitment while spreading inflammatory messages, tolerating prejudice, or celebrating the suffering of those outside their group. A third problem is the manipulation of religious and ethnic identities for political or violent purposes. A fourth is the insufficient integration of moral reflection with institutional and community-based peacebuilding.

The central problem addressed here is how Matthew 5:9 can provide a coherent biblical and ethical framework for responding to these challenges. The paper argues that its relevance lies not only in encouraging peaceful attitudes but also in demanding practical action against violence, injustice, hatred, and conditions that threaten human dignity.

1.3 Aim and Objectives

The aim of this paper is to examine the relevance of the Beatitude "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God" to contemporary Nigeria. Specifically, it seeks to: (i) interpret Matthew 5:9 in its biblical and theological context; (ii) distinguish active peacemaking from passive non-confrontation; (iii) relate the Beatitude to major patterns of conflict in Nigeria; (iv) analyse the roles of religious, political, traditional, educational, media, and civil-society actors; and (v) propose practical measures for applying the Beatitude to conflict prevention, resolution, and sustainable peacebuilding.

1.4 Research Questions

The paper is guided by five questions: What is the biblical and theological meaning of Matthew 5:9? How does peacemaking differ from the mere absence of violence? What lessons does the Beatitude offer for understanding Nigerian conflicts? What roles can

religious institutions and other social actors play in peacebuilding? How can justice, truth, forgiveness, and reconciliation be integrated into practical responses to insecurity?

1.5 Significance, Scope and Delimitation

The study contributes to biblical theology, Christian ethics, peace studies, religious education, and public leadership. It encourages religious leaders to connect preaching with mediation, dialogue, conflict prevention, and support for affected communities. It also offers a moral framework for evaluating public leadership according to its contribution to justice, human dignity, and social cohesion. The paper focuses on selected contemporary conflict patterns in Nigeria and their implications for peacemaking. It is not an exhaustive history of Nigerian conflicts, nor does it assume that all conflicts have the same causes or that religious teaching can replace effective public institutions.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

Peacemaking refers to deliberate efforts to prevent violence, resolve conflict, rebuild relationships, and establish conditions conducive to sustainable peace. Peacebuilding is the longer-term process of strengthening institutions, relationships, and social conditions that reduce the risk of recurring violence. Reconciliation is the rebuilding of relationships damaged by hostility or wrongdoing and may require truth, accountability, restitution, and time. Social justice concerns fair treatment, rights, opportunities, and access to remedies. Interreligious dialogue is constructive engagement among people of different faith traditions to improve understanding and address shared concerns.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount

The Beatitudes in Matthew 5:1–12 introduce the Sermon on the Mount and describe dispositions associated with life under God's reign. They emphasize humility, mercy, righteousness, purity of heart, perseverance, and peace. Read together, they present a coherent moral vision rather than a collection of disconnected sayings. The seventh Beatitude is distinctive because it links the activity of making peace with the identity of being called children of God.

The Sermon on the Mount develops related themes through teachings on reconciliation (Matthew 5:21–26), love of enemies (Matthew 5:43–48), truthfulness, mercy, and the rejection of hypocrisy. These teachings challenge retaliation and dehumanization without requiring passivity in the face of danger or injustice. They invite believers to seek responses that protect life and restore relationships rather than perpetuating cycles of hostility.

2.2 The Meaning of Peacemaking and Shalom

The Greek expression translated "peacemakers" in Matthew 5:9 is eirēnopoioi, referring to those who make or establish peace. Its active character matters: Jesus blesses those who contribute to peace, not merely those who wish that conflict would disappear. Avoiding an argument may sometimes be prudent, but silence does not necessarily resolve a grievance or protect a vulnerable person.

The biblical concept of shalom provides a complementary background. Peace in the Hebrew Scriptures includes well-being, wholeness, security, harmonious relationships, and conditions for human flourishing. It is therefore broader than the absence of warfare. A community may experience a pause in violence yet remain divided by fear, discrimination, exploitation, or unresolved injustice. This understanding makes peace and justice closely related: durable peace is difficult to sustain where injustice is entrenched or wrongdoing is tolerated.

2.3 The Kingdom of God and Christian Ethics

Wright argues that Jesus' life and ministry should be understood within the larger biblical story of God's kingdom rather than separated from the public and social implications of the Gospel (Wright, 2012). This perspective helps situate Matthew 5:9 within Jesus' broader proclamation. Christian peacemaking cannot be confined to private spirituality; it also concerns relationships with neighbours, treatment of opponents, exercise of leadership, and participation in public life.

Hauerwas' account of Christian ethics emphasizes the formation of moral character and the practices of a community shaped by its convictions (Hauerwas, 1983). This is relevant because peacemaking requires habits of truthful speech, self-restraint, listening, compassion, and refusal to dehumanize opponents. Churches can become schools of peace when worship, preaching, pastoral care, leadership, and community practice consistently promote reconciliation. Their credibility is weakened, however, when they tolerate inflammatory rhetoric or selectively value the lives of people according to group identity.

2.4 Religion, Dialogue and Conflict in Nigeria

Religion can inspire compassion, service, reconciliation, and solidarity, but it can also be manipulated to legitimize hostility. It should therefore be treated neither as inherently violent nor as automatically peace-producing. In Nigeria, religious identity can overlap with ethnicity, geography, political affiliation, and competition over resources, making conflicts appear exclusively religious even when their causes are more complex (Ajibola, 2024; Ossai, 2024; Ojedokun, 2026).

Ogbuehi's analysis of dialogue as a strategy for religious conflict resolution in Nigeria cautions that dialogue cannot thrive where one group seeks domination or refuses to tolerate difference (Ogbuehi, 2016). This is an important qualification: dialogue requires sincerity, reciprocal respect, and attention to power imbalances. Recent theological work by Udoekpo likewise presents interreligious and ecumenical dialogue as a resource for conflict transformation, emphasizing listening, mutual understanding, and respect for basic rights (Udoekpo, 2026). Such engagement is most meaningful when it extends beyond ceremonial meetings to joint work on community safety, education, humanitarian needs, and the prevention of incitement. Related Nigerian scholarship likewise emphasizes that religious dialogue must be supported by credible community-level engagement, mediation, and a practical commitment to justice (Ejikemeuwa, 2014; Ekpenyong & Okoi, 2020; Nwoba, 2023; Ogbuehi, 2016).

2.5 Farmer–Herder Conflict, Insurgency and Political Violence

The International Crisis Group documented the expansion and severity of farmer–herder conflict in Nigeria, noting the need for security, improved conflict-resolution mechanisms, and longer-term responses to livestock management and environmental pressures (International Crisis Group, 2017). These conflicts should not be explained through stereotypes about ethnic or religious groups. They involve different combinations of land use, livelihood pressures, criminality, governance weaknesses, and local grievances. Effective peacebuilding must establish facts, protect civilians, and develop context-specific mechanisms for resolving disputes (Babatunde & Ibnouf, 2024; Chiluwa & Chiluwa, 2022; Efobi et al., 2025; Idachaba, 2024; Muhammed et al., 2024).

The United Nations Development Programme's regional analysis of screening, prosecution, rehabilitation, and reintegration in the Lake Chad Basin illustrates that responses to Boko Haram and ISWAP-related violence extend beyond immediate military operations (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2023). Recovery requires

attention to public safety, accountability, rehabilitation, community acceptance, and the rebuilding of social and economic life. Human Rights Watch has also documented insecurity and accountability concerns surrounding Nigerian elections, including violence and intimidation (Human Rights Watch, 2023). These sources support the argument that durable peace requires both protection from violence and credible institutions that address wrongdoing. Research on religious education and interreligious learning also supports sustained, inclusive approaches rather than relying on security measures alone (Blackmer & Athanasius Akila, 2025; United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2023).

2.6 Research Gap

The literature establishes the theological importance of the Beatitudes and documents the complexity of Nigerian conflict. Recent research also shows that public attitudes to farmer–herder relations can be shaped by how climate-related mobility and vulnerability are explained (Efobi et al., 2025). This paper brings these discussions together by examining the practical implications of Matthew 5:9 across interpersonal relationships, religious cooperation, political accountability, social justice, and community-based peacebuilding. Its contribution is an integrated theological and ethical framework that treats peacemaking as both a spiritual vocation and a practical public responsibility. The analysis also draws on peace research distinguishing direct violence from broader conditions that undermine human flourishing, as well as scholarship on interreligious peacebuilding (Abu-Nimer, 2001; Galtung, 1969; Udoekpo, 2026).

3. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Biblical-Theological Framework

The paper is grounded first in Matthew 5:9. Three principles follow. First, peacemaking reflects God's reconciling character. Second, peacemaking is active and requires deliberate engagement with conflict. Third, peacemaking has communal and institutional implications because social arrangements can either protect human dignity or intensify hostility. This framework asks whether religious practices, political decisions, public communication, and community relationships contribute to reconciliation or deepen division.

3.2 Peacebuilding as a Process

Peacebuilding is understood here as an ongoing process rather than a single agreement or public ceremony. It includes prevention of violence, fair management of disputes, protection of civilians, restoration of trust, and the strengthening of institutions capable of resolving grievances peacefully. Four dimensions are relevant: preventive action; conflict management and resolution; reconciliation and recovery; and structural reform. These dimensions are interdependent. Personal goodwill is insufficient where institutions permit injustice, while institutional reform may fail if communities remain deeply hostile. This understanding is consistent with peace research that distinguishes the absence of direct violence from the wider social conditions needed for durable peace (Galtung, 1969), and with interreligious peacebuilding models that emphasize context-sensitive engagement (Abu-Nimer, 2001).

3.3 Integrated Analytical Framework

The biblical and peacebuilding perspectives are integrated through five dimensions: moral transformation; relational reconciliation; institutional justice; social inclusion; and sustained accountability. Moral transformation concerns truthfulness, compassion, and self-restraint. Relational reconciliation includes dialogue and the rebuilding of trust. Institutional justice involves protection, investigation, and impartial remedies. Social inclusion ensures that vulnerable groups participate meaningfully. Accountability

requires religious, political, and community leaders to answer for words and actions that affect public safety. The framework assumes that these dimensions reinforce one another.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design and Sources

The study adopts a qualitative documentary design appropriate to the interpretation of a biblical text and its application to documented social realities. Sources include biblical passages; theological and ethical literature; peer-reviewed work on religious dialogue; and reports by institutions such as the International Crisis Group, Human Rights Watch, and the United Nations Development Programme. The paper does not claim to have conducted interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, or original field observations.

4.2 Method of Analysis

The materials are examined thematically. First, Matthew 5:9 is interpreted in its biblical and theological context. Second, its implications are considered alongside documented patterns of conflict and peacebuilding in Nigeria. Third, practical recommendations are developed by integrating theological principles with institutional and social requirements for sustainable peace. The analysis is interpretive rather than statistical and does not claim to establish numerical causal relationships.

4.3 Ethical Considerations and Limitations

The paper recognizes the dignity of victims and survivors and avoids assigning collective responsibility to entire religious, ethnic, or regional communities for the actions of individuals or armed organizations. It also recognizes that forgiveness should not be used to silence victims or excuse wrongdoing. As a documentary study, it cannot establish the effectiveness of particular interventions through field evaluation. Future research could include interviews with religious leaders, peacebuilding practitioners, community members, and affected populations.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Ethno-Religious Tensions and Communal Violence

Ethnic and religious identities can create belonging and solidarity, but they can also be mobilized to portray other communities as threats. Disputes over land, political representation, local authority, and historical grievances may acquire an ethnic or religious framing and expand beyond the original parties. Retaliation, collective suspicion, and displacement can then transmit hostility across generations. Matthew 5:9 challenges Christians to reject the idea that people become less deserving of protection because of religious affiliation, ethnicity, or political identity. Peacemaking requires impartial fact-finding, protection of threatened communities, and opportunities to address grievances without violence. Nigerian studies of religious dialogue and community dispute resolution similarly underscore the importance of practical mediation and attention to local grievances (Ekpenyong & Okoi, 2020; Nwoba, 2023; Ogbuehi, 2016).

5.2 Insurgency and Terrorism

Insurgency and terrorism involve violence and intimidation that deliberately create fear. The Boko Haram and ISWAP crisis has produced serious humanitarian and security consequences. The Beatitude should not be interpreted as requiring communities to remain passive while civilians are attacked. Peacemaking includes lawful protection of life, investigation of offences, support for survivors, rehabilitation where appropriate, and rebuilding education and livelihoods. Security measures and reconciliation are complementary: without security, communities cannot participate freely in peacebuilding; without justice and recovery, security gains may remain fragile (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2023). The role of education in addressing

mistrust and preventing the reproduction of religious stereotypes is also emphasized in recent research on Nigeria (Blackmer & Athanasius Akila, 2025).

5.3 Farmer–Herder Conflict

Farmer–herder conflict illustrates the interaction of resource competition and wider social tensions. Disputes may involve crop damage, water access, grazing routes, land claims, cattle theft, and criminal attacks. Environmental pressures and weaknesses in local dispute-resolution mechanisms may compound these problems. Each conflict requires its own fact-based assessment. Local peace committees, traditional authorities, agricultural and livestock institutions, and government agencies can help develop procedures for reporting incidents, verifying claims, assessing damage, preventing retaliation, and referring serious crimes to the proper authorities (International Crisis Group, 2017). Recent comparative research also cautions that state and local actors can intensify conflict when resource governance is unequal or peace processes exclude affected groups (Babatunde & Ibnouf, 2024; Idachaba, 2024; Muhammed et al., 2023). Comparative and empirical studies identify the importance of resource governance, political context, and state responses in shaping these conflicts and the prospects for peacebuilding (Babatunde & Ibnouf, 2024; Efobi et al., 2025; Idachaba, 2024; Muhammed et al., 2024).

5.4 Separatist-Related Violence and Insecurity in the Southeast

Political grievances and advocacy for constitutional change must be distinguished from violence and intimidation. Peaceful political expression is part of public life, while attacks on civilians and coercive restrictions on movement undermine the rights of others. The Beatitude calls for protection of life alongside lawful political engagement. Government should address legitimate grievances through credible constitutional processes, while political movements and their supporters should reject intimidation. Neither the suppression of peaceful dissent nor violence against civilians offers a reliable foundation for sustainable peace.

5.5 Electoral Violence, Corruption and Accountability

Electoral violence weakens confidence in democratic institutions and can persuade citizens that power is acquired through intimidation rather than legitimate competition. Human Rights Watch has documented concerns about insecurity and impunity related to elections (Human Rights Watch, 2023). Peacemaking requires protection of electoral participation, fair procedures for resolving disputes, and investigation of violence. Citizens and political actors should reject incitement and treat opponents as fellow citizens rather than enemies to be destroyed. Peaceful political opposition is compatible with demanding accountability; violence and dehumanization are not. Recent analysis of Nigeria's 2023 election also illustrates how political representation and religious identity can influence interreligious relations and peacebuilding (Human Rights Watch, 2023; Owonikoko, 2025).

5.6 Kidnapping, Banditry and Criminal Violence

Kidnapping and banditry create fear beyond their immediate victims. Families face distress, livelihoods are disrupted, and communities may become reluctant to travel, trade, farm, or attend public gatherings. Peacemaking in such contexts requires protection of victims, lawful intervention, investigation, and accountability. Community engagement can assist prevention and early warning, but informal dialogue must not replace the duty of public institutions to protect citizens and address criminal offences.

6. THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL DIMENSIONS OF PEACEMAKING

6.1 Peacemaking as a Reflection of God's Character

The promise that peacemakers "shall be called children of God" connects peacemaking with divine identity. It gives peace a spiritual and ethical meaning: believers are called to reflect God's reconciling character in their relationships and public conduct. A person who knowingly spreads rumours to provoke communal hostility contradicts the moral direction of the Beatitude. Religious leaders who exploit fear of other communities likewise undermine the credibility of their message. Peacemaking becomes a practical test of the consistency between religious profession and moral conduct.

6.2 Peace and Justice

Peace and justice are closely related but not identical. A society may suppress open disagreement without addressing injustice, creating only temporary quiet. Likewise, reconciliation that ignores victims' legitimate demands for truth and accountability may produce resentment rather than durable peace. Applying Matthew 5:9 requires attention to both relationship repair and fair treatment. Victims should be able to report offences, seek protection, and pursue lawful remedies; allegations should be investigated fairly rather than judged by ethnicity, religion, or political influence.

6.3 Forgiveness and Reconciliation

Forgiveness is an important Christian virtue, but it does not require victims to deny harm, abandon lawful rights, or immediately trust those who harmed them. Reconciliation is the rebuilding of damaged relationships and may require acknowledgement of wrongdoing, apology, restitution, changed behaviour, and safeguards against renewed harm. In communities affected by killings, displacement, or destruction, reconciliation may be gradual. Religious leaders should encourage forgiveness without pressuring victims and should insist that wrongdoing be acknowledged rather than concealed.

6.4 Truth-Telling, Accountability and Nonviolence

Truth is indispensable to sustainable peace. False allegations, rumours, denial, and competing narratives can deepen suspicion. Peacemakers should support careful investigation and honest acknowledgement of wrongdoing while avoiding language intended to provoke revenge. Accountability is also necessary: individuals and institutions should answer for actions that harm others. The Sermon on the Mount's teachings on reconciliation and love of enemies challenge retaliation and dehumanization. Nonviolence is not passivity; it requires disciplined resistance to revenge, incitement, political thuggery, and collective punishment.

6.5 Human Dignity and the Common Good

Every person possesses dignity that should not be denied because of religion, ethnicity, political affiliation, social status, or geographical origin. When a community regards the suffering of another as unimportant, the moral foundations of peace deteriorate. The Beatitude challenges Christians to reject selective concern for human life. In Nigeria, the common good requires protection of vulnerable populations, access to justice, educational opportunities, safe livelihoods, and meaningful participation in public affairs.

7. THE ROLE OF PEACEMAKERS IN NIGERIA

7.1 Religious Leaders and Interreligious Cooperation

Christian and Muslim leaders can establish regular channels of communication, issue joint appeals against violence, support mediation, and cooperate in humanitarian

responses. Dialogue should move beyond ceremonial meetings to practical work on community security, youth opportunities, education, displaced families, and the prevention of incitement. Religious leaders should ensure that sermons, broadcasts, and social-media messages do not stigmatize entire communities. Their contribution complements but does not replace government responsibility for security and justice (International Crisis Group, 2017; United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2023). This approach accords with scholarship advocating dialogical ethics, reciprocal respect, and practical interreligious engagement in Nigeria (Ajibola, 2024; Ojedokun, 2026; Ossai, 2024; Udoekpo, 2026).

7.2 Youth Empowerment and Civic Education

Young people are important agents of peace through education, entrepreneurship, volunteerism, civic participation, and community service. Peacebuilding should therefore provide practical opportunities for vocational training, mentorship, employment, and meaningful participation in local decision-making. Schools, universities, religious institutions, and civil society organizations can teach conflict resolution, critical thinking, responsible digital communication, and respect for human rights. Youth should be recognized as potential peacebuilders rather than viewed only as possible sources of disorder.

7.3 Justice, Governance and Political Leadership

Government institutions have a primary responsibility to protect life, uphold the law, and provide fair mechanisms for resolving grievances. Governance contributes to peace when public resources are managed responsibly, institutions operate transparently, and citizens can participate without intimidation. Leaders should avoid language that dehumanizes opponents, discourage violence by supporters, and investigate allegations of misconduct. Peacemaking treats political power as a responsibility for the common good rather than an opportunity for domination.

7.4 Traditional and Community Leaders Community-based cultural and religious activities may also create opportunities for social cohesion when designed inclusively (Onuorah, 2025).

Traditional rulers, elders, and community leaders often possess detailed knowledge of local histories and relationships. They can facilitate dialogue, mediate disputes, and help restore relationships. Such authority must be exercised fairly and should not silence vulnerable people or deny access to lawful remedies. Women, young people, and marginalized groups should participate meaningfully in peace processes. Transparent procedures are especially important in disputes involving land, family relations, local authority, and communal resources.

7.5 Women and Inclusive Peacebuilding

Women are often affected by displacement, economic hardship, caregiving burdens, and violence, yet they also contribute to peace through family mediation, community networks, education, advocacy, and humanitarian assistance. Their participation should extend to peace committees, negotiations, and reconstruction planning. Programmes should address women's particular safety and livelihood needs and support women's organizations in developing local initiatives. Excluding women risks overlooking important dimensions of community security and recovery.

7.6 Educational Institutions and Peace Education

Schools and universities shape attitudes towards disagreement, justice, and social responsibility. Peace education should include critical examination of stereotypes, responsible communication, nonviolent dispute resolution, civic responsibility, and

respect for human dignity. Students should learn to distinguish criticism of an idea from hostility toward the person who holds it, and to verify information before sharing claims that may inflame tensions. Matthew 5:9 can thereby become a principle for evaluating everyday conduct, not merely a passage to memorize.

7.7 Media and Digital Communication

The media can support peace through accurate reporting, investigation, contextual explanation, and attention to affected communities. Sensational reporting, unverified allegations, and misleading digital content can intensify fear and hostility. Journalists and social-media users should distinguish verified facts from allegations, avoid language that stigmatizes whole communities, and verify information before forwarding it. Conflict-sensitive communication is a practical form of peacemaking because it reduces the risk that misinformation will trigger retaliation. Research on Nigerian press representations finds that sensational and divisive framing can deepen conflict narratives rather than support public understanding (Chiluwa & Chiluwa, 2022). Research on media representations of farmer–herder conflict shows why framing and language matter in shaping public understanding (Chiluwa & Chiluwa, 2022).

7.8 Civil Society and the Family

Civil society organizations can support peace through research, mediation, advocacy, humanitarian assistance, early-warning networks, and community development. Effective programmes should be designed with affected communities and evaluated against clear objectives. The family is also an early school of peace: children learn how to handle disagreement, authority, anger, and apology through everyday relationships. Families that model respectful communication, fair discipline, and nonviolent problem-solving help cultivate habits that support peaceful public life.

8. SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS

8.1 From Passive Peace to Active Peacemaking

The analysis shows that Matthew 5:9 demands more than avoidance of confrontation. Silence may conceal fear or unresolved injustice, and temporary calm may leave the causes of conflict untouched. Active peacemaking identifies problems, supports truthful communication, establishes fair procedures, and restores relationships. The Beatitude is relevant not simply because Nigeria needs peace, but because it clarifies the moral character of the work required to build it.

8.2 Integrating Security and Reconciliation

Security measures may be necessary to protect citizens from armed attacks, kidnapping, terrorism, and other criminal violence. They should operate within the law and be accompanied by efforts to address the consequences of conflict. Recovery requires credible protection, investigation, survivor support, livelihood restoration, and community trust. Security and reconciliation are complementary: without security, people cannot participate freely in peacebuilding; without justice and recovery, security gains may remain fragile.

8.3 Religious Identity, Citizenship and the Church's Credibility

Religious diversity need not prevent cooperation on shared concerns. Christians and Muslims can retain their convictions while working together on security, education, health, poverty, and humanitarian assistance. Public institutions should protect freedom of religion and ensure that citizenship rights do not depend on religious or ethnic identity. The church's credibility depends on condemning violence consistently, supporting victims impartially, promoting dialogue, and refusing to use forgiveness to conceal injustice.

8.4 The Limits of a Theological Approach

The Beatitude cannot by itself resolve every political, economic, or security problem. Organized criminal networks, ideological extremism, competition over resources, and institutional weakness require specialized knowledge, resources, effective institutions, and context-specific policies. Theology should not substitute prayer for investigation, forgiveness for justice, or dialogue for competent administration. Its contribution is to clarify the moral principles that should guide these efforts: the protection of life, truth, justice, accountability, and the dignity of every person.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

First, Christian and Muslim leaders should strengthen regular interreligious peacebuilding platforms at national, state, local-government, and community levels. These platforms should include early-warning arrangements, mediation, joint community projects, and rapid responses to rumours and communal tensions.

Second, schools and universities should integrate age-appropriate peace education into civic education, religious studies, ethics, and related subjects. The curriculum should address conflict resolution, critical thinking, responsible communication, human rights, and rejection of collective blame.

Third, public institutions should strengthen impartial investigation of violence, protection of witnesses, prosecution of offences, and access to remedies for victims. Accountability is necessary to restore public confidence and prevent recurrence.

Fourth, local governments and community institutions should establish transparent dispute-resolution mechanisms involving traditional authorities, religious leaders, women, young people, and affected groups. These mechanisms should complement rather than replace the formal justice system.

Fifth, government agencies should address the specific causes of farmer–herder disputes through fair resource governance, accessible mediation, early warning, and evidence-based responses to criminal violence. Communities should not be assigned collective guilt on ethnic or religious grounds.

Sixth, peacebuilding programmes should expand opportunities for youth education, vocational training, mentorship, employment, entrepreneurship, and participation in local decision-making. Women should also be included meaningfully in mediation, conflict prevention, reconstruction, and peace negotiations.

Seventh, media organizations and digital communicators should strengthen fact-checking and conflict-sensitive reporting. Public officials and religious leaders should avoid inflammatory rhetoric, and citizens should verify information before sharing it, especially during periods of tension.

Eighth, peacebuilding programmes should provide practical support to victims and survivors, including psychosocial care, education, livelihood assistance, legal support, and help rebuilding homes and community facilities. Victims should be consulted in decisions concerning reconciliation.

Ninth, religious and community leaders should promote reconciliation processes that acknowledge truth and accountability. Depending on the circumstances, these may include acknowledgement of wrongdoing, apology, restitution, and safeguards against

renewed harm. Forgiveness should not be imposed on victims or used to excuse criminal conduct.

Tenth, parishes and dioceses should translate Matthew 5:9 into action through peace committees, youth peace clubs, interreligious service projects, mediation training, counselling, support for displaced families, and education on responsible communication. Preaching should be connected to everyday conduct and the rejection of communal prejudice.

Finally, peacebuilding initiatives should be monitored against clear indicators, including recurring disputes, participation in dialogue, perceived safety, resolution of grievances, inclusion of women and young people, and public confidence in local institutions. Evaluation can identify effective practices and guide adaptation to local circumstances.

10. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This is a documentary and interpretive study and does not include interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, or original field observations. It therefore cannot represent the views of all Nigerian communities or measure the effectiveness of specific interventions. The conflicts discussed differ in their histories, locations, and causes, and the paper offers a thematic analysis rather than a comprehensive account of every conflict. The framework is primarily Christian theological, although it recognizes the importance of interreligious cooperation. Future research could use interviews and comparative case studies to investigate how biblical teaching, interreligious dialogue, and institutional reform contribute to peacebuilding in selected Nigerian communities.

11. CONCLUSION

The Beatitude "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9) remains profoundly relevant to contemporary Nigeria. In a society confronting insecurity, communal violence, insurgency, political tension, and distrust among communities, it provides a moral framework for understanding the responsibilities of individuals and institutions in the pursuit of peace.

The central argument of this paper is that biblical peacemaking is an active commitment to reconciliation, justice, truth, nonviolence, and the restoration of relationships. It is not simply the absence of open conflict. It requires deliberate efforts to establish conditions in which people can live with dignity, resolve disagreements constructively, and participate in society without fear of violence or discrimination.

Nigeria's experience demonstrates that security operations, though sometimes necessary, are insufficient when disconnected from credible justice, accountable governance, inclusive participation, responsible communication, and reconstruction of damaged relationships. Religious institutions can contribute through interreligious dialogue, moral education, mediation, and humanitarian service, provided they reject prejudice and connect teaching with practice. Political leaders, traditional authorities, educators, women, young people, the media, and civil society also share responsibility.

Forgiveness must not be separated from truth, reconciliation must not be imposed upon victims, and peace must not become a justification for concealing injustice. Sustainable peacemaking requires a responsible balance between reconciliation, accountability, public safety, and human rights. Ultimately, Matthew 5:9 challenges Nigerians to move from speaking about peace to becoming active participants in its realization. For Christians, the Beatitude is both a spiritual promise and a practical imperative: those who seek to reflect

God's reconciling love must build peace through their words, relationships, decisions, and public responsibilities.

DECLARATIONS

Funding: No external funding was received for this study.
Conflict of interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.
Ethics statement: This documentary and interpretive study used published sources and did not involve human participants or identifiable personal data.
Data availability: No original datasets were generated; the analysis is based on the sources listed in the references.

References

1. Abu-Nimer, M. (2001). Conflict resolution, culture, and religion: Toward a training model of interreligious peacebuilding. Journal of Peace Research, 38(6), 685–704. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343301038006003
2. Ajibola, I. G. (2024). Beyond conversational dialogue: Constructing a Catholic dialogical ethical model for multi-religious Nigeria. Religions, 15(7), Article 823. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15070823
3. Babatunde, A. O., & Ibnouf, F. O. (2024). The dynamics of herder-farmer conflicts in Plateau State, Nigeria, and Central Darfur State, Sudan. African Studies Review, 67(2), 321–350. https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2024.45
4. Blackmer, G., & Athanasius Akila, Y. (2025). Conflicts in Northern Nigeria and the role of (inter-)religious education in peacebuilding. African Journal of Religious and Theological Studies, 2(1), 187–212. https://doi.org/10.62154/ajrts.2024.02.010545
5. Chiluwa, I., & Chiluwa, I. M. (2022). "Deadlier than Boko Haram": Representations of the Nigerian herder–farmer conflict in the local and foreign press. Media, War & Conflict, 15(1), 3–24. https://doi.org/10.1177/1750635220902490
6. Efobi, U., Adejumo, O., & Kim, J. (2025). Climate change and the farmer-pastoralist's violent conflict: Experimental evidence from Nigeria. Ecological Economics, 228, Article 108449. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2024.108449
7. Ejikemeuwa, J. (2014). Religious dialogue in Nigeria: The way forward. AFRREV IJAH: An International Journal of Arts and Humanities, 1(4), 167–175. https://www.ajol.info/index.php/ijah/article/view/106415
8. Ekpenyong, E. O., & Okoi, I. O. (2020). The role of the church in conflicts management, peace building and development in Nigeria. Sophia: An African Journal of Philosophy, 18(2), 84–94. https://www.ajol.info/index.php/sophia/article/view/194279
9. Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, peace, and peace research. Journal of Peace Research, 6(3), 167–191. https://doi.org/10.1177/002234336900600301
10. Hauerwas, S. (1983). The peaceable kingdom: A primer in Christian ethics. University of Notre Dame Press.
11. Human Rights Watch. (2023, February 6). Nigeria: Impunity, insecurity threaten elections. https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/02/06/nigeria-impunity-insecurity-threaten-elections
12. Human Rights Watch. (2024). World report 2024: Nigeria. https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/nigeria
13. Idachaba, P. A. (2024). Farmer-herder conflicts as a clash of ontologies in North-Central Nigeria. Contemporary Journal of African Studies, 11(2), 40–74. https://doi.org/10.4314/contjas.v11i2.2
14. International Crisis Group. (2017, September 19). Herders against farmers: Nigeria's expanding deadly conflict (Africa Report No. 252). https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/nigeria/252-herders-against-farmers-nigerias-expanding-deadly-conflict
15. Muhammed, A. Y., Adisa, W. B., Ayodele, J., Gbadeyan, O. J., & Garba, E. (2024). State responses to herder–farmers conflict and peace-building in rural grazing areas of Nigeria. Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research, 16(2), 128–146. https://doi.org/10.1108/JACPR-02-2023-0775
16. National Council of Churches. (1989). The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version. Thomas Nelson Publishers.
17. Nwoba, C. (2023). Religion and alternative dispute resolution: A critical assessment of land dispute resolution in Akataka-Ekpa-Omaka and Omege-Echara Ikwo, Ebonyi State, Nigeria. African Journal of Politics and Administrative Studies, 16(2), 568–589. https://doi.org/10.4314/ajpas.v16i2.29

18. Ogbuehi, F. I. (2016). Critical appraisal of dialogue as a strategy for religious conflict resolution in Nigeria. UNIZIK Journal of Religion and Human Relations, 8(2), 158–174. https://doi.org/10.4314/jrhr.v8i2
19. Ojedokun, A. (2026). From tension to tolerance: A peacebuilding approach for Yoruba religious conflicts in Nigeria. Peace & Change, 51(3), 172–182. https://doi.org/10.1111/pech.70036
20. Onuorah, C. P. (2025). From ritual to renewal: Religious festivals as catalysts for national unity in Nigeria. HTS Theological Studies, 81(1), Article a10860. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v81i1.10860
21. Ossai, E. C. (2024). The social dynamics of peaceful Christian–Muslim relations in Nigeria. Religion Compass, 18(9), Article e70001. https://doi.org/10.1111/rec3.70001
22. Owonikoko, S. B. (2025). "Muslim–Muslim ticket," Christian–Muslim relations and peacebuilding and development in Nigeria: A reflection on Nigeria's 2023 presidential elections. Journal of Peacebuilding & Development, 20(2), 171–187. https://doi.org/10.1177/15423166241304805
23. Udoekpo, M. U. (2026). Reinforcing interfaith dialogues among religions in Nigeria: Recipes for conflict transformation in communities. Religions, 17(4), Article 439. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel17040439
24. United Nations Development Programme. (2023, March 21). The state of play: Process and procedures for screening, prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration in the Lake Chad Basin. https://www.undp.org/africa/publications/state-play-process-and-procedures-screening-prosecution-rehabilitation-and-reintegration-lake-chad-basin
25. Wright, N. T. (2012). How God became king: The forgotten story of the Gospels. HarperOne.

***