

## *Being a* **PEACEMAKER**

“For it is God who works in you to will and to act on behalf of His good purpose. Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may be blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and perverse generation, in which **you shine as lights in the world**” (Philippians 2:14-15).

Despite the suffering that is part of following Christ, the rewards promised by God will outweigh all pain, every moment of frustration, every irritation, all injustice and every long awaited second to be with our Father in heaven. “For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ **not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him**, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, now hear that I still have” (Philippians 1:29-30).

One hundred and forty-four thousand people from each of the twelve tribes of Israel in the last days, will be following Christ wherever he goes (Revelation 14:4b). They will suffer persecution, yet they will remain blameless and pure from false religion because they know their God and they have learned to trust and lean on Him—the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In fact, the Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, “Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (II Timothy 3:12). Like many before them, during times of deception and distress, they will grow into being the loving and precious peacemakers that God holds dear to His heart.

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

**Growing into a peacemaker begins with a self-check.** So often, when conflicts arise, the immediate reaction is to blame the other person. Rarely is the self-check done. It is wise to begin every encounter with a self-check. Ask yourself:

- Do you feel a spirit of opposition or hatred?
- Do you feel negative emotions?
- Stop! Analyze why you feel the way you do?
- What is driving the negative emotions?
- Are you hearing something that you don't like or disagree with, or not interested in?
- Are you dealing with behaviour that offends you?
- Ask yourself whether you have triggered that behaviour or contributed to the behaviour of your opponent?
- Have you frustrated the other person by your responses?

This is a time of being honest with yourself before your God. Sort through all of the negative emotions that you feel. Cleanse yourself and stop all provocations.

If the attack continues, identify whether the person you are dealing with is a God-fearing and God-serving person or not. In either case, God has provided ways for us to follow that bring a peaceful resolution.

- **Do not harbor toxic hatred; it will eventually cause you to sin.**  
"You must not harbor hatred against your brother in your heart. **Directly rebuke your neighbor**, so that **you will not incur guilt on account of him**" (Leviticus 19:17).
- **Reconcile quickly.**  
"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there **remember that your brother has something against you**, leave your gift there before the altar. **First go and be reconciled to your brother**; then come and offer your gift. **Reconcile quickly with your adversary**, while you are still on the way to court" (Matthew 5:23-25a).
- **Go privately, one on one to resolve offenses.**  
"If another believer sins against you, **go privately and point out the offense**. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back" (Matthew 18:15).

You are **not in a position to expand your case to include others if you have not first gone privately and humbly to meet with your opponent on a one on one basis.**

- **Defend your case without building it up to include other people and their issues.**  
"**Argue your case** with your neighbor, but do not reveal another person's secret" (Proverbs 25:9).

This scripture is better understood through Proverbs 20:19, "A gossip goes around telling secrets, so don't hang around with chatterers" and Proverbs 11:13, "A gossip goes around telling secrets, but those who are trustworthy can keep a confidence."

Argue your case, but do not include gossip from other people. People who disclose the "secrets" of other people are intentionally spreading hatred and discord. They cannot be trusted; their motive is destructive.

- **Resolve conflicts in a state of weakness.** This means that you go to the person without a position of power, without having brought together other people with their grievances—whether those grievances are true or not, for this leads to gang building and bullying. Walk humbly with your brothers and sisters and apply the wisdom from God.

James recognized the characteristics of God's wisdom. "But **the wisdom from above** is first of all **pure**, then **peaceable, gentle, accommodating, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial, and sincere**" (James 3:17).

The Apostle Paul urged Christians to “join with others in following my example, brothers and sisters, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you ... Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—**put it into practice**. And the God of peace will be with you” (Philippians 3:17, 4:9).

- **Resolve conflicts with the end result of peace firmly placed in your heart.** It isn't about winning the battle; it is about standing by truth in gentleness, working to preserve the dignity of your fellow brothers and sisters and ignite a passion for the word of God. Keep negative emotions in check and logic at play.

The Apostle Paul urged Christians to keep the bond of peace. “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. **Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.** There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” (Ephesians 4:16).

- **There may even be times when you simply agree to disagree. Do so maintaining respect for each other.**  
“And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And **the contention was so sharp between them**, that **they departed asunder one from the other**: and so, Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus: And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God” (Acts 15:37-40).
- **Apologize where your mistakes were made and forgive each other every time, all the time. Apologies heal.** “Watch yourselves. If your brother sins, rebuke him; and **if he repents, forgive him**. Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying 'I repent,' you must forgive them” (Luke 17:3-4).

**It takes time for people to realize that they have sinned against their brother or sister. So, when they apologize, do not put a number on how many times your brothers and sisters ask for forgiveness. Accept their apology in love, jubilant that they came to see their mistakes for now, they are less likely to make the same mistakes again.** “Then, Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother who sins against me? Up to seven times? Jesus answered, “**I tell you, not just seven times, but seventy-seven times!**” (Matthew 18:21-22).

At times, peacemakers have to deal with the non-God fearing and non-God serving people who attack them. **Wickedness uses many offensive tactics.** They are easily identified.

- Angry and hating people love spreading hatred.
- Liars often twist the truth from good to evil for their gain.
- Mockers allow negative emotions to control them.

- Gossipers do not respect the private issues of others.
- Accusers seek to bring a charge, whether or not one is present.
- Name callers have purchased the doctrine of the wicked. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, labels are splashed over nearly every form of communication. Common labels include:
  - Conspiracy theorist
  - White supremacist, racist, and every other form of “ist”.
- Gangsters bully building a strong position before attacking.
- Bribers intimate using favours for favours.
- Tricksters weave arguments to entrap their opponent.
- Defamers cut into their opponent’s character.

These people are the ultimate conspirators. They are outlaws operating outside of God’s law.

During these difficult times where reason is unreachable, it is better to politely agree to disagree and walk away with the hope that a future time will bring humble unity. In the meantime, the book of Proverbs 12 contrasts evil actions from the righteous.

“The words of the wicked are like a murderous ambush, but the words of the godly save lives” (Proverbs 12:6).

“A fool’s anger is known at once, but a prudent man overlooks an insult” (Proverbs 12:16).

“Speaking rashly is like a piercing sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing” (Proverbs 12:18).

“Deceit is in the heart of those who devise evil, but those who plan peace have joy” (Proverbs 12:20).

“The wise don’t make a show of their knowledge, but fools broadcast their foolishness” (Proverbs 12:23).

Peacemakers are the people who when they are pulled into a confrontation and attacked, will take the time to learn from it. They will analyze how and why it happened. They will remain honest to truth and from the incident, they will grow spiritually identifying the ways that lead to a peaceful resolution.

Peacemakers will take the punches while waiting for the right time to address the issues. Ideally, issues should be dealt with immediately, however, when dealing with the “babes in Christ” or the non-Believers, a resolution may not be possible for a long time.

The “babes in Christ” have not matured spiritually to be able to distinguish between right and wrong (Hebrews 5:13-14). It will take time educating them along the way before they will see the distinction between God’s way and their own way, which will seem right to them.

“There is a **way that appears to be right**, but in the end, **it leads to death**” (Proverbs 14:12).

Many Christians still rely on their own ways to resolve issues, but the end result will be a fractured relationship. These Christians are still the “babes in Christ”. The danger of leaning on your own understanding is the perpetual working outside of God’s law.

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and **do not lean on your own understanding**” (Proverbs 3:5).

People who do not lean on Christ and follow his example will be horrified when Christ returns and says, “I never knew you. **Get away from me, you who break God’s laws**” (Matthew 7:23). They will say, “We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets” (Luke 13:26). These are Christians who know Christ and feel that they have a relationship with him, yet Christ will respond, “there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but **you yourselves are thrown out**” (Luke 13:28).

The importance of following Christ, keeping God’s commandments—living His way is a matter of life and death. God’s eternal structure is founded on His laws. He keeps His own laws and His creation both in heaven and on earth are required to do them too.

King David knew that evildoers are those who do not live God’s way. “Depart from me, you evildoers, that **I may obey the commandments of my God**” (Psalm 119:115). Those who do not keep the commandments of God and teach others to break them even if it appears to be an insignificant law, will be the least in the kingdom. These people are foreseen to repent because they are in God’s kingdom, but they will not hold a significant position. To the bottom, they will go.

“Therefore, anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called **least in the kingdom of heaven**, but whoever **practices** and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:19).

The key to greatness in the kingdom is the keeping of all of God’s laws, every one of them whether it is seen as important or a very small and trivial rule.

Many Christians have forgotten that it is not the hearers of the word of God who are righteous but the doers, those who practice God’s commands. “For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God’s sight, but **it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous**” (Romans 2:13).

James added, “Be doers of the word, and **not hearers only. Otherwise, you are deceiving yourselves**” (James 1:22).

The Pharisees during Jesus' time on earth were examples of the hearers only. Their actions were self-righteous and though Jesus tried to direct them back to the way of God, they refused because they had elevated themselves to positions of theological authority equal to Jesus, our only Teacher.

Peacemakers understand the importance of being doers of the word. Knowing this, they are working out their salvation in fear and trembling. They understand that all on earth sin and the need to daily overcome wrong ways and misguided understandings is critical to their salvation. Like the Apostle Paul, they press on overcoming, learning and spiritually maturing toward the goal to reach the end of the race—becoming blameless and pure children of God without fault to receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us (Philippians 3:14).

Peacemakers work with God to build His kingdom through peace not war. They wear the armour of God: truth, righteousness and readiness to teach **the gospel of peace** (Ephesians 6:14). God's kingdom will not be built through war and forcing people to their knees. It will be won through God's Holy Spirit (Zechariah 4:6). All of mankind who accept Christ's sacrifice will be offered God's Holy Spirit that opens their mind to His truth. They want to help those who have opposed them to reach that goal, too. They will sacrifice for them to bring a resolution that preserves dignity and ignites a love for the word of God.

**These peacemakers will shine like the stars** as they hold fast to the word of life (Philippians 2:15) and consider the great joy of boasting it will give the Apostle Paul for his tireless hours of preaching to the ten tribes of Israel; prove to him that it was not in vain.

Into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, now is the time for all of the western nations of Europe and all of the nations of the English-speaking West to return to their God—the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God has called us to be the peacemakers during this evil generation. Distress, Jacob's trouble, will awaken the wayward among us. Be ready to help them and guide them back to our Great Creator. Be the bright light in the very dark times that are looming on our near horizon.

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