

The Journey of Transformation Raymond L. Fox

Something to reflect on, comment on, and even practice on your journey.



Peace that Depends on You

In his premier sermon describing life in the Father's kingdom, Jesus promised, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God" (Matthew 5:9). The challenging work of resolving conflicts and pursuing peace in our relationships requires complete faith in this promise. Here are some practical steps for resolving conflicts that reflect the high value the Father places on peace:

Listen. Listen with your heart, desiring to understand the conflict from the perspective of the person who disagrees with you. Listen with your mouth closed and your mind open, without thinking ahead to decide how you will answer. Listen with body language that demonstrates you are attentive. Listen and then repeat back what you heard to check for understanding.

Ask. Ask questions to clarify the issue without questioning the person's feelings or motives in the conflict. Say, "I am sorry I didn't understand something you said. Could you please explain what you meant when you said..." Give the person time to answer and give yourself time to consider their response. Avoid sarcasm and negativity: "What? You can't possibly think that..."

Determine. Determine exactly what you agree and disagree about. Express agreement whenever you can. Separate the issue of disagreement from the person who disagrees so that the person does not become the issue. We are seeking peace not just about issues but peace with people. Even if a person has offended you, separate the offensive behavior from the person and address the behavior.

Decide. Decide if the issue is important. Remember that some issues involve moral convictions about right and wrong and are therefore non-negotiable. Other issues involve personal preferences that call for flexibility

whenever possible. Is the matter just an opinion without sufficient grounds for accepting it as a truth? Paul counseled believers to accept one another without quarreling over opinions of disputable value (Romans 14:1). Does the issue involve behavior that could injure or offend others? Paul wrote, “No one should seek their own good, but the good of others” (1 Corinthians 10:24).

Earn. Earn the credibility of the people involved in the conflict. To have credibility means that others trust in our sincere desire to resolve the conflict in ways that satisfy everyone involved. Credibility is earned by consistently practicing the compassion and patience necessary for healthy relationships. Demonstrate to the other people involved in the conflict that you care about them and not about winning an argument.

React. React with words that are “full of grace” (Colossians 4:6) and that are “helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen” (Ephesians 4:29). Refuse to use any language that is demeaning, disrespectful, or arrogant, always considering the welfare of those who are listening to what you say. Instead, use language that is merciful, calm, and gentle that leads to constructive resolution of the conflict.

Solve. Solve the conflict with patience and wisdom. Prepare yourself to resolve the problem through sincere prayer to the Father, asking for wisdom. Select the right time to discuss solutions when there is calm and freedom from distractions. Carefully define the problem to focus on it and not on another problem or a mountain of other problems. Admit your contribution to any misunderstandings and humbly ask for forgiveness. Determine the needs and desires of each person involved. Raise possible solutions based on the those needs, negotiating when possible. Decide what is the correct or most appropriate and fair solution.

Rushing out the door to work or school and arguing along the way is not the appropriate time or manner to solve conflicts. Being a peacemaker requires the same patience, compassion, and mercy the Father has had in his loving efforts to make us feel at peace in his presence.

About Raymond

Raymond L. Fox has been teaching about transformation in the image of Jesus for forty-five years, in the U.S. and abroad. He has written two books, *Fruit of the Spirit* and *Love Your Neighbor as Yourself*. His work also includes character counseling and mentoring in juvenile detention facilities. He has degrees in philosophy and education.



Connect: Raymondleefox222@gmail.com