

Should We Be Peacemakers?

<u>James 3:18</u>: (NASB) And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.



The world is not a peaceful place. It seems to have become especially hostile in the arena of thoughts and perspectives. For some reason, we can no longer tolerate a dissenting opinion; rather than respectfully listening to disagreement, we instead resoundingly lash out with personal attacks, sarcasm and self-righteous indignation. Pretty sad, huh? We as Christians are guilty of this, even in light of Jesus teaching us that peacemakers are blessed! What does it mean to be a peaceMAKER? Is it different than being a peaceKEEPER? How far are we

supposed to be reaching out to make peace, and does it ever involve compromising our Christian principles to do so?

Merriam-Webster online dictionary:

<u>Peacekeeping</u>: The preserving of peace; especially international enforcement and supervision of a truce between hostile states or communities.

Peacemaker: One who makes peace, especially by reconciling parties at variance.



• We confuse peacemaking with peacekeeping. And I'm in the hall of fame of peacekeeping. I am a charter member of the hall of fame - I can do some peacekeeping, brother! "Let's not talk about that. Let's just deny it, let's squash it, let's put it in the corner. Let's just keep the peace. Right now it's quiet, nobody's yelling, nobody's talking, nobody's voices are raised. There's no awkwardness. Let's just keep the TV rolling, keep the in-laws in here, let's just keep the peace." See, peacekeeping requires no initiative. It requires no awkwardness. It requires no barriers. Peacemaking is different. Jesus says it clearly: Blessed are the peacemakers.

Jesus was the ultimate peacemaker for all time:

<u>Romans 5:1</u>: (NASB) Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

There would be no stronger peace than making it with God on behalf of others. He is a great example for us to look at.



Perhaps a good way to remember peacekeeper is "pieces-keeper." If something is broken into pieces, you gather the pieces and keep them safe, even though the item never gets fixed. Sometimes peacekeeping ends up being a pieces-keeping.

First, we need to WANT godly, righteous and lasting peace. To want such peace around us, we need to first make peace within ourselves before trying to help others.



(Source: Wikipedia) Aqeela Sherrills is a campaigner against gang violence and the death penalty who lives in Watts, Los Angeles, California. In 1992, Sherrills brokered a peace agreement between the Bloods and the Crips (two rival gangs). His son, Terrell Sherrills, was shot to death in 2004 in an apparently random killing.

(1)) The incident, How a Family Tragedy Inspired a Peacemaker in Newark, Wall Street Journal

- (Aqeela Sherrills) ...and the kid walked up and shot my son five times in the back.
- (Narrator) In 2004, Aqeela Sherrills lost his son Terrell to a fatal shooting in South Central Los Angeles. Terrell could have become another number in what is perhaps one of America's most complex issues gun violence but his father refused to let that happen.
- (Aqeela Sherrills) Terrell was my mini-me. We looked so much alike. We were super close.
- (Narrator) Aqeela never retaliated. Since even before Terrell was killed, his life's work has been training residents, ex-convicts and former gang members to intervene to help keep crimes or confrontations from erupting on the streets. Now, he does the same work in Newark. They're called the Newark Community Street Team.

<u>2 Corinthians 5:16-21</u>: (NASB) ¹⁶Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know him in this way no longer.

Known Christ according to the flesh - as Saul of Tarsus, he was NOT a peacemaker, but a peacekeeper for the Jewish political hierarchy of his time. The Christianity movement was creating a disruption among society's leaders. Saul was determined to keep the peace by eliminating the disruption.

He saw the elimination of Christianity as a way to keep the peace and religious order of his time intact:

¹⁷Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

Saul became Paul and was begotten with the Holy Spirit. Now he literally had a new lease on life, a new mission - to enlighten any to a higher way of living.

¹⁸Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation,

Paul's personal reconciliation to God was the first step in his transformation to a true peacemaker.

Who reconciled us to Himself through Christ - Jesus first reconciles his true followers to God, allowing a relationship with God through Jesus.

And gave us the ministry of reconciliation - his true followers then became an aid in reconciling the whole world in the kingdom in the Day of Judgment and beyond. This mission of Jesus disproves the theory of hellfire because no one would be left to reconcile back to God!

¹⁹namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.



Notice the use of *them* (the rest of the world) and *us* (the true followers of Christ) - two separate groups:

Not counting their trespasses against <u>them</u> - The world of mankind will not have their sins counted (permanently) against them because Jesus died for them. They will eventually have the opportunity to be reconciled back to God, to have peace with God.

He has committed to <u>us</u> the word of reconciliation - we will help in the work of reconciliation.

Embracing the worldwide purpose of God's plan of reconciliation is our next step to peacemaking:

²⁰Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹He made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

In other words, "I am begging you, keep your personal reconciliation with God intact, because you are given the mission of reconciliation with the world of mankind in the future." We are supposed to represent the righteousness of God. That is one of the tools of spiritual peacemaking.



I am a Christian and I want to be a peacemaker. What does it take? What do I need to work on?

Having seen the example of the Apostle Paul's transformation to a true Christian peacemaker gives us a hint of what it takes for us to do the same, so now we need to get specific. As usual, Jesus gives us ample food for thought and learning in both his example and in his words.

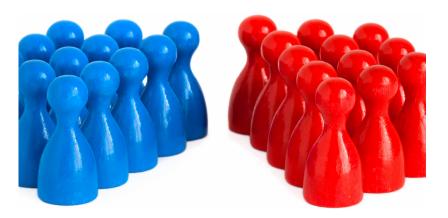
You have heard the expression, "I just want some peace and guiet."

A peaceMAKER wants and works for peace. A peaceKEEPER wants and works for quiet.



Treating the problem, How a Family Tragedy Inspired a Peacemaker in Newark, Wall Street Journal

- (Aqeela Sherrills) It's been a total eye-opening experience for many of the young men and women who serve as outreach workers on the street team, because a lot of them have had run-ins with the law. Most of the folks here have been shot. Something like three-fourths have been to prison.
- (Street team members) I've been to jail to like close to half my life. I've been shot, I've been in prison.
- (Narrator) Last year, over 300 shootings were reported according to the Newark Police Department.
- (Street team member) I believe most of the victims of homicides are either gang-related or drug-related or it's personal.
- (Narrator) How do organizations like the Newark Community Street Team help?
- (Street team member) We'll ask them, can they go in there and see what they can do to assist and keep the peace in a certain location. They can be able to pull the parties together and calm the situation down.



One detailed aspect of Jesus' peacemaking work in this age for his followers:

<u>Ephesians 2:14</u>: (NASB) For he himself is our peace, who made both groups (the Jews and the Gentiles who were at odds) into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall.

How do WE take two groups at odds and bring them together? We look to the Beatitudes as a "character ladder" for successful peacemaking.

A peaceMAKER will boldly and passionately climb this ladder while a peaceKEEPER will truly appreciate it, want it and cherish it but not REALLY climb it.

We will look at the Beatitudes as rungs on a ladder noticing that when we get to the seventh rung, that is where Jesus said, *Blessed are the peacemakers*. That is essentially the highest level of the development ladder, and each rung before is a step towards becoming a peacemaker. Why is the peacemaker the ultimate? Because we already established that Jesus himself was the ultimate peacemaker. He tells us in the Beatitudes this is how to be like him.



The first rung of successful peacemaking is humility:

<u>Matthew 5:3-12</u>: (NASB) ³Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Poor in spirit - poor in self spirit; not full of themselves. The arrogant have no place here.

The second rung of successful peacemaking is the willingness and ability to feel hurt - having a heart: ⁴Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

The idea of mourning and being comforted means you have feelings. Think of Jesus in those terms. Remember him at the grave of Lazarus when he was so moved he cried because of the whole experience of sin and death? He stopped to experience the sadness with Lazarus' family.

The third rung of successful peacemaking is commanding a gentle, meek spirit in daily experiences:

⁵Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.

The fourth rung of successful peacemaking is an insatiable appetite for godliness and righteousness:

⁶Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Gentleness does not mean being a doormat. It is passion and zeal for God. This is what Jesus learned and, we are to follow him in these character traits. This is a key factor in being a peacemaker.

The fifth rung of successful peacemaking is a character that knows and embraces mercy:

⁷Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

The mercy of Jesus was in everything he did, even when he was angry with the Pharisees. He was trying to show them the great responsibility they had and the grave error of their ways.

The sixth rung of successful peacemaking is godly intentions behind all of one's actions:

⁸Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

This sixth rung means having your heart and mind totally focused on THE most important thing.

FINALLY! After all that preparation, the seventh rung is being a peacemaker:

⁹Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

This is the top rung on the ladder to being a peacemaker! With all of the previous steps of development we can now see clearly, think righteously and act appropriately. Most of us do not climb this high, even though we may hang out on different rungs for a while. Being at this level enables us to get a view of what Jesus came to do as well as the privilege of stepping up to the next rung. This is an uncommon place to be.



The first seven rungs are things we are working on to become a peacemaker. The remaining rungs are the results of becoming that peacemaker.

The eighth rung of successful peacemaking is suffering harshness because we stood for and pointed to something higher than most ever consider:

10 Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The eighth rung is what happens when we are being bold enough to be a peacemaker. This was Jesus during his ministry! The result of being a peacemaker is we are going to suffer for it. That is part of the process and is what it means to be like Jesus.

What else will we need to experience?

The ninth rung of successful peacemaking is being persecuted with evil intentions:

¹¹Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.

This is what brought Jesus to his death, and yet he joyfully accepted that fate for the sake of bringing peace to the world. We are supposed to be peacemakers like him. What makes us think being a peacemaker will not have a cost?

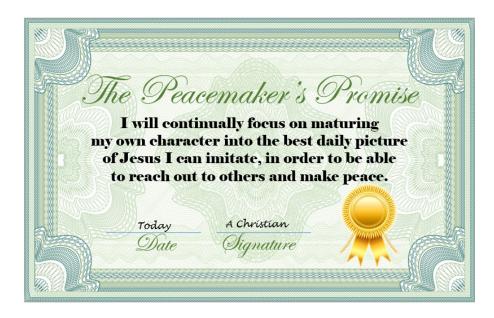
He frames the cost as being *blessed* because we are on God's side!

The tenth rung of successful peacemaking for true Christians is the ultimate reward - being with Jesus:

¹²Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

We are blessed in such trials as the last three rungs.

For they shall be called sons of God - do we hear that? Do we see that privilege laid out before us IF we achieve that standard?





How can you tell if you are a true peacemaker or just a peacekeeper with high hopes?

Now we get down to the uncomfortable part of the conversation. Most of us are certainly peace *lovers*, and that more often than not drives us towards *keeping* peace and not *making* it. Why? As we shall see, being a peacemaker is a much harder task. It is easier to "crisis manage" than it is to proactively lead.

What keeps us from peacemaking? Cowardice, fear, laziness, lack of caring, thinking it is not worth my time. Is there no way out? Not at all. We need to reach for a higher standard. We want to be mature and a true follower of Jesus. This will help us be motivated to change from where we were to where we want to be.

Sometimes we are not even realizing what it is we are not doing until we see it with different eyes and realize we have to change.

(1))Owning the problem, How a Family Tragedy Inspired a Peacemaker in Newark, Wall Street Journal

- (Street team member) When I come out here with this NCST jacket, and I engage with my community, I see people responding. We are talking to them and a lot of people are talking back to us.
- (Aqeela Sherrills) They own this work. It's their neighborhood, it's their community, they own it. Now, we're not police. We don't share intelligence with law enforcement like who, this, that and the third, because you can get killed out here in the streets. So, our goal is to reduce the incidents of violence through mediating these personal disputes.
- (Narrator) Aqeela understands the way street conflicts can explode into violence. In his teenage years, he was a gang member in South Central Los Angeles.
- (Aqeela Sherrills) But I've always worked with survivors of gun violence, because I grew up in the Jordan Downs Housing Projects in Watts, a very violent community. In 1988, one of my brothers was shot, and I had this transformative experience in college. I really became awakened to a lot of the violence I saw happening in the neighborhood.



It is a matter of pacifying versus problem solving. Even the best of us can fall into a pacifying pattern. We should not be giving out adult pacifiers!

Even the best of us can fall into just pacifying others:

<u>Galatians 2:11-14</u>: (NASB) ¹¹But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. ¹²For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision.



This is a dramatic lesson in peacekeeping versus peacemaking. When the Jewish Christians arrived, the Apostle Peter (who opened the way for the Gentiles) hypocritically stopped associating with the Gentile Christians. He had an opportunity to make serious progress on solving a problem but instead pacified those of Jewish heritage.

¹³The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy.

Peter's massive influence carried others away down this path of hypocrisy. He was peacekeeping with the Jewish Christians. Were the Jewish Christians better Christians? That is how it came across.

What is our influence doing to those around us?



We need to take emotion out of the situation and desire what is right and honest. Ask, "What would Jesus do?" We need to be mature to stand up and find what is right in the sight of God instead of avoiding the issues. The Beatitudes help us put the most important thing in front of our hearts and minds.

The Apostle Paul was good about taking the emotion out of a problem:

¹⁴But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?

The Apostle Paul was saying, "You are acting hypocritical. I am going to say it to your face in front of everybody, because you need to hear the truth of the matter."



PEACEMAKING PRINCIPLE

Always act and lead based upon the truth of the Cospel in all of its liberty, and you will be naturally set up to be a peacemaker.



What it requires, The Difference Between Peacekeepers and Peacemakers, hpumc.org

• Blessed are the peacemakers. Those of us, those of you, then and now that are willing to move forward and make the peace. And making peace often requires awkwardness, often requires discomfort, often requires tough conversations, often requires you writing a big check, often requires things you might not want to do, but blessed are the peacemakers. Do you know what the arch-enemy of the peacemaking is? Pride. That's it. The only thing that prevents us from peacemaking is our pride. Well, Paul, I would apologize but they're going to have to apologize first.

Paul called Peter out *in the presence of all*. How does this keep the peace? It was living the truth.

<u>Ephesians 2:13-16, 19-22</u>: (NASB) ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall.

Jesus himself broke down the ages-long barrier between the Jews - who were God's chosen people for thousands of years - and the pagan Gentiles. He did it through Peter's vision of eating meat previously considered unclean under the Law.

Peter was the one to open this amazing door of opportunity. He was a peacemaker between the Jews and Gentiles. But then he reduced himself to peacekeeper by giving in to emotions and intimidation. There are a lot of times we have to choose between being one or the other.

¹⁵by abolishing in his flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in himself he might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, ¹⁶and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.

Not only did Jesus break down the partition wall between the two sides, but he was making the two sides into *one new man*. When we can get two sides who are at odds to become one, that is peacemaking. The power that comes from such reconciling can accomplish unimaginable things.



Our ONLY pattern for peacemaking is the instruction and example of Jesus.



Jesus created the bridge. He was the peacemaker. We need to be the bridge of opposing sides, not just a pacifier of opposing sides.

¹⁹So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, ²⁰having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the corner stone, ²¹in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, ²²in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

The language here is inspiring! You also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit - Jesus has made us one. Our peacemaking among the brotherhood takes work. It needs attention and focus but it can be done.



Within the body there is NO difference between members. Make peace by adhering to the core equality we ALL find in Christ and give God's spirit a place to dwell.

God's Spirit is not only supposed to dwell in us individually, but also collectively. When we are together, we should be witnessing the power of God's Spirit compounded because it is with you, me, that brother and that sister. But if we are at odds, how can God's spirit be compounded?

What about peacemaking with people of the world? Should we do it and if so, how?

The Bible is all about coming apart from the world and building a life in the service of God, and as a result, there are few examples of actual peacemaking with the world. That does not mean we should avoid peacemaking with them. On the contrary, we are taught to pursue peace with them.

Peacemaking never means compromising Christian principles. Our example to those around us should create a positive effect. We are not going to change the world now, but we can be an example and a witness people will remember later.

(1))Objective of the work, How a Family Tragedy Inspired a Peacemaker in Newark, Wall Street Journal

• (Narrator) In 1992, around the time of the L.A. riots, Aqeela helped organize a historic gang truce between the Bloods and the Crips, two of the city's largest gangs at the time. Over the next few decades, Aqeela worked as a



- community activist against gang violence. Newark Mayor Ras Baraka hired Ageela after seeing his work in gang prevention.
- (Ras Baraka) Aqeela is to me a godsend. Me getting him is like, look, all I want you to do is come over here and train the people over here to do what you did there.
- (Narrator) Every month, Aqeela travels from L.A. to Newark's South Ward to check in with the team. He offers them guidance and hears concerns.
- (Aqeela Sherrills) My charge from the mayor was to come in to work, to build our infrastructure, put systems in place and turn this program over to you.



Do we focus on reducing conflict or refocusing conscience? There is a huge difference between the two. Refocusing conscience is a critical matter in peacemaking when dealing with people in the world.

For us, godly righteousness rules. This helps us rise above merely trying to reduce conflict:

<u>Proverbs 16:7-8</u>: (NASB) ⁷When a man's ways are pleasing to the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him. ⁸Better is a little with righteousness than great income with injustice.

One of the secrets of peacemaking is to learn to be above the fray. Be the righteousness of God through Christ. When we go to work, school or are in a social setting, there are a lot of things that are unsettled. We can be peacemakers when the opportunity is right.

Remember the Apostle Paul from the first segment? Be the righteousness of God through Christ:

Hebrews 12:14-15: (NASB) ¹⁴Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. ¹⁵See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled.

Pursue being set apart even while we are communicating with others.



Our peacemaking opportunities, by definition, MUST spill over into the world around us.

If we are true to our calling, we can bring out the best in others.



Rick's

God puts timing to things. I was working on my personal study for this podcast and my sister called me. She is a dedicated Christian and had an issue. I was literally typing "Peacemaking Experience, versus Peacekeeping."

Her issue had to do with the perspective of her business partners being different from hers. We talked about being a peacemaker verses being a peacekeeper. Her reaction was, "I know what I feel like doing versus what I have to do." The bottom line is she had to face that, and it was scary and difficult. But she spoke up with grace and godliness and the issue worked out. They respected her perspective because it was so well-stated in terms of kindness and grace. That kept the peace. She could have been a peacekeeper and gone along with things, but her conscience would have been miserable. It is was perfect example of us stepping up and stepping out.

For us, having our own conscience spiritually refocused enables us to represent God's principles:

Romans 12:14-19: (NASB) ¹⁴Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. ¹⁶Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.

We want to be like Jesus. Think about how Jesus fulfilled these verses. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. We saw him doing this with the healing of Lazarus, by entering into the family's mourning experience. Do not be haughty in mind - he taught his disciples servitude. He washed their feet. Do not be wise in your own estimation - when he was tempted of Satan, he did not go toe-to-toe with Satan; he quoted Scripture. He put God's word as his words and direction. That put Satan away from him. This made peace with God.

And aren't these things EXACTLY what Jesus did?

¹⁷Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. ¹⁸If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. ¹⁹Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.

Do you see how Jesus was able to fulfill what the Apostle Paul was telling us?

If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men - it is not going to always work, but make sure if it is not working it is not because you did not put in your effort to being a peacemaking Christian. Peacemaking might not meet with success, but we must be successful in God's eyes for trying.



our own personal conscience.



If our conscience is willing to compromise on the things not spirituallydirected, we are in trouble. The state of our conscience will dictate the state of our ability to be true peacemakers.



We should not say it is too hard. Following in Jesus' footsteps does take work. But what if peacekeeping does not violate principle? Can we in some cases be both a peacemaker AND a peacekeeper?

Yes, it is not always one or the other. Sometimes you cannot join sides together who are too far apart, but you can keep peace by being reasonable, kind and loving to one another. Let's not use the excuse that peacekeeping is good enough when peacemaking is available. We know when the opportunity is there, but we can rationalize it away.

Peacemaking is wanting to make it right without being emotional. Jesus was not emotional when he was a peacemaker. He was driven and focused with righteousness.

For us, discipline with our anger is critical. This gives us opportunity to refocus people's consciences:

<u>Proverbs 15:1</u>: (NASB) A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

Firm words spoken with grace are not harsh words, and they can turn away wrath. They should be spoken with grace and peace.

<u>Ephesians 4:25-27</u>: (NASB) ²⁵Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. ²⁶Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷and do not give the devil an opportunity.



Our responses to the dilemmas around us will define whether we are merely peaceKEEPERS or actual peaceMAKERS. Do we try to cover over the issue or feed those around us with higher thinking to actually move towards solving it?



What is the one thing that makes us lean towards peacekeeping and not pursue peacemaking?

Perhaps the biggest deterrent to becoming actual peacemakers is good oldfashioned fear. Our fear may actually have two parts. First, we are not sure what to do; and second, we are simply afraid to try, afraid of reactions, afraid to fail...maybe even afraid to succeed. Fear can get in the way of a well-lived Christian life.



))) Peacemaking legacy, How a Family Tragedy Inspired a Peacemaker in Newark, Wall Street Journal

- (Street Team member) Everybody is in this room right now because they love this type of work - it's natural. You don't need a Harvard degree to do this work. All you need is your past experience of what you have been through.
- (Narrator) The challenge now is funding.
- (Newark Mayor) We want to make it part of the state and the county's budget to be able to have trauma informed care interrupters, street team folks, as a part of the whole law enforcement strategy.
- (Narrator) The team is hopeful the trauma informed work they are doing will expand across Newark. For Ageela, that means using Terrell as his motivation to keep going.
- (Ageela) My son was murdered, and I can blame a lot of people for that, and at the same time I believe my son gave his life for me and the work that I do. This is his legacy.



Are we operating from a stance of fear or a stance of focus?

We already have the ingredients to battle the "what to do" part of our fear. Let's remind ourselves about the focus needed:

Mark 9:50: (NASB) Salt is good; but if the salt becomes unsalty, with what will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.

Just because you say be at peace with one another does not mean it will happen.

Having a developing Christlike character will NATURALLY (in a spiritual sense) bring out peacemaking ability. Now we are more capable of listening, understanding and communicating. This is a Beatitude-based character.



A Live Chat question: Can you please give us a practical example of making peace within our fellowship with other Christians?



I have had several experiences within the brotherhood of those who saw something one way and interpreted it and others who saw it a completely different way. The opportunity was to see both sides and be able to discuss with each side what the other saw. For me, the practical application was taking two or more diverse sides and trying to bring them together. The first thing was, I went to each individual asking, "What did you see?" Once I figured out what each one meant, I went back to the others and said, "Did you realize



that so-and-so actually meant this instead?" One of the big problems is email and texting, because both can be misunderstood. "I know because I asked them." Then I went back to the first person, "Do you realize when you wrote that, the other person actually saw this?" By dealing with each one individually, you can be the bridge. But it takes the discipline to deal with the pieces one at a time, repeating and sharing factual information. The results can be amazing.



If someone is gossiping about you in the church, what do you do? Do you keep quiet or share your concerns according to the steps laid out in Matthew 18:15-17? If going to that person privately does not resolve the matter, it should be brought to the

congregation and hopefully they will see the error of their way and stop the action. Bring it to the surface instead of evading the issue and letting it fester.

"Maybe I am making too big an issue of this; I will let it be," is peacekeeping, but at what expense? Just peacekeeping in this example could cause your reputation to suffer when you have the responsibility to fix it.

How do we know if we are afraid? Are we willing to settle for temporary quiet in hopes the issue dissolves, or are we focused on striving to work through it? Most hopes are merely wishes on steroids! It is wasted time and effort. We must have a basis for the hope, because nothing will change unless we are a peacemaker and change it.



<u>2 Timothy 1:6-8</u>: (ASV) ⁶For which cause I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee through the laying on of my hands. ⁷For God gave us not a spirit of **fearfulness <1167>**; but of <u>power and love and discipline</u>. ⁸Be not ashamed therefore of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but suffer hardship with the gospel according to the power of God.

The answer to fear is in these verses. We have been given godly **power** and **love** and **discipline** as tools of resetting our focus.

Fearfulness: Strongs #1167, timidity

Do your part, The Difference Between Peacekeepers and Peacemakers, hpumc.org

"I would make the peace, but you don't know. They're not going to listen to me anyway." That's pride. Hey, look, if you're only responsible for one percent of the problem, own up to your one percent. That's what Jesus is saying. Own up to your one percent, and guess what, all of your excuses might be totally valid. It might really have been a long time ago. They really might not listen. They might not change. They might not appreciate your apology. You might not get what you want...Granted, granted, granted, granted, all of your excuses might be valid, nonetheless, Jesus says before you come and do all your religious acting ooey-gooey stuff, own up to your one percent, if that's all it is, and deal with that loose end.







Power: Strongs #1411, force (literally or figuratively) specifically miraculous power

When it comes to our fears, we are given POWER, the spiritual strength to be able to overcome them.



Love: Strongs #26, agape, love - affection or benevolence

When it comes to our fears, we are given agape love, the highest reason to WANT to overcome them.



Discipline: Strongs #4995, discipline, self-control

When it comes to our fears, we are given discipline, the self-control to apply ourselves to overcoming them.

With fear in better perspective, we now go to the context of our theme text and apply godly wisdom to our peacemaking efforts:

James 3:13-18: (NASB) ¹³Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. ¹⁴But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. ¹⁵This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. ¹⁶For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. ¹⁷But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. ¹⁸And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.



Any peacemaking effort we embark upon must always be done in accordance with God's wisdom and in accordance with the example of the "author and finisher of our faith."



Fear happens. So what? Let's be peacemakers like Jesus. Do what he did by following the example he gave us in the Beatitudes to build our characters.

So, should we be peacemakers? For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions... Think about it...!



Join us next week for our podcast on June 18, 2018: Are Some Sins Worse than Others?

Bonus Material

Discourage litigation. Persuade your neighbors to compromise whenever you can. As a peacemaker the lawyer has superior opportunity of being a good man. There will still be business enough. — Abraham Lincoln

The following is a scriptural example of dealing with the major issue of the role of circumcision in the early church. To have left the opposing parties to their own thinking and circles of influence would have been peacekeeping. The elders chose to put the issue on the table, talk it out and find a resolution, which shows us peacemaking.

The following notes were taken from CQ Episode 1003: "How Do I Provoke in a GOOD Way"?

What should we provoke and why, to whom should we direct it and how should we do it? A brief observation on provoking that could have gone badly, but turned into positive provoking.

Often, we provoke by proclaiming our stance as absolute truth:

Acts 15:1-2: (NASB) ¹Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.

They could not understand how something that was with them for thousands of years could suddenly go away. They had a legitimate position.

This immovable stance is often met with a similarly immovable and opposing stance:

²And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them....



We usually leave it here and fight, but that never solves anything! Not so in this case:

...the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.

They decided to discuss the matter and figure it out together.

All sides were allowed to engage in the provocative conflict:

Acts 15:6-8: (NASB) ⁶The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter.

⁷After there had been much debate...

Once all are heard, and presumably once all are exercised by listening, apostleship speaks:

...Peter stood up and said to them, Brethren...the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe. ⁸And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us;

Peter goes back to the basic principle that the Gentiles have God's Spirit which means they are saved and are a part of things.

Apostleship was followed up with more apostleship and lots of evidence:

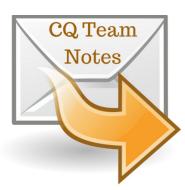
Acts 15:12: (NASB) All the people kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.

There was progress! Opposing sides found common ground and moved forward:

Acts 15:22-23: (NASB) ²²Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas... ²³and they sent this letter by them... (proclaiming what they had concluded and compromised.)

They were at odds in the beginning, drawing lines in the sand, but at the end they were able to come together because they were willing to listen to the other side. The key is *they heard the facts* of the matter.

Upon arriving, the letter was read and accepted with rejoicing. Provoking worked positively!



If our enemies or anyone we have a conflict with are willing to discuss with us, we can build communication in small steps by acting kindly to them. When the opportunity arises and they feel comfortable with us, we can try to build bridges of communication, building peace. We should try to make peace with legitimate enemies because we are learning to bless them now so we can assist the world in the future. Jesus is the Prince of Peace, and his goal is that the world be at peace by the end of the Millennium. We cannot compromise our principles, and we cannot sacrifice peace to subjugate people (Czechoslovakia in 1938) to become a totalitarian government. Peace must be made upon fixed principles.

(Source: https://countingmyblessings.com/peacemaker)
10 Things You Need to Know About Being a Peacemaker

A peacemaker has God's peace.

Take time to grow in your relationship with God, and ask Him to remove your fear and fill you with His impossible-to-understand-and-explain peace.



I pray that the God who gives hope will fill you with much joy and peace while you trust in Him. Then your hope will overflow by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13)

A peacemaker has genuine love for others.

Make love your goal. Encourage and build each other up that way when conflict and confrontation become necessary your relationship is built on a strong and healthy foundation.

You were cleansed from your sins when you obeyed the truth, so now you must show sincere love to each other as brothers and sisters. Love each other deeply with all your heart. (1 Peter 1:22)

A peacemaker prays.

Ask God to help you to know if confrontation is needed. Pray for His wisdom, direction, and peace. Ask Him to help you listen with compassion. And to give you words that will help not hurt.

Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long. He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them His way. (Psalm 25:4-5, 9)

A peacemaker builds trust in every relationship.

Be truthful and trustworthy. Live with integrity. Reconciliation and peace are more likely when there is trust and honesty in the relationship. If you believe a person cares about you and wants what is best for you . . . you are more likely to work together toward peace.

Brothers and sisters, think about the things that are good and worthy of praise. Think about the things that are true and honorable and right and pure and beautiful and respected. Do what you learned and received from me, what I told you, and what you saw me do. And the God who gives peace will be with you. (Philippians 4:8-9)

A peacemaker identifies and addresses conflict.

Know when it's important to confront and when it's better to keep silent. That's not easy. Here are three questions to ask yourself:

1. Does this behavior or situation dishonor God?

So you do not belong to yourselves because you were bought by God for a price. So honor God with your bodies. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

2. Does it hurt the individual?

Respect for the Lord gives life. It is like a fountain that can save people from death. (Proverbs 14:27)

3. Does it hurt our relationship?

Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. (Ephesians 4:3)

A peacemaker wants to understand.

Listen! Approach every conversation with a desire to understand not to respond and stay compassionate. This isn't about being right or winning . . . it's about loving and helping.

The mind of a person with understanding gets knowledge; the wise person listens to learn more. (Proverbs 18:15)

A peacemaker controls his/her anger.

Watch your tone and body language as well as your words. This is hard, isn't it? When emotions are high it's hard to stay calm. You can do it! Practice and pray!



Do not be bitter or angry or mad. Never shout angrily or say things to hurt others. Never do anything evil. Be kind and loving to each other, and forgive each other just as God forgave you in Christ. (Ephesians 4:31-32)

A peacemaker speaks the truth with love.

Choose your words carefully. Make every effort to communicate how much you value the person and the relationship as you talk about the problem.

When you talk, do not say harmful things, but say what people need—words that will help others become stronger. Then what you say will do good to those who listen to you. (Ephesians 4:29)

A peacemaker works toward resolution.

Do what you can. Do your best. Then trust God with the outcome. Continue to pray. And keep an open heart and mind.

The whole body depends on Christ, and all the parts of the body are joined and held together. Each part does its own work to make the whole body grow and be strong with love. (Ephesians 4:16)

A peacemaker is not overcome by fear.

You will have conversations that make your stomach do flip-flops. I know I do. But start at the top of the list and begin again. Don't give in to fear.

God did not give us a spirit that makes us afraid but a spirit of power and love and self-control. (2 Timothy 1:7)

