

Blessed Are the Peacemakers

Matthew 5:9

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus describes the minimum characteristics for all children of God. Each of us needs to take the Beatitudes to heart because each of these are what God EXPECTS of each of us. Jesus tells us to be these things for our own spiritual welfare and so that we can be a blessing to others.

During my lifetime our nation has been at war somewhere on this planet most of that time. Conflict, strife, fighting, division or disputes are the opposite of peace.

A Peacemaker is one who will go into the conflict with the purpose of bringing about reconciliation and peace. While this is the goal, the peacemaker understands that reconciliation is not brought about by tolerance or ignoring differences. Peace is the result of creating love between two differing parties. Peace transcends differences and allows reconciliation despite those differences.

I've worked with churches that pretend there is peace when there is division that is just being ignored. This is not peace, this is only the suppression of differences to avoid conflict. Avoiding conflict is not peace. Avoiding conflict creates a bomb that is ready to explode with the slightest provocation. This is what was done in the Middle East for decades and we now see where that is. We can claim that there is peace and pretend that there is peace, but just because there is not active aggression toward the other does not mean there is peace. Ignoring differences or avoiding difficult or controversial doctrines does not create peace.

This is where grasping what Jesus said is important. Jesus did not say, "Blessed are the peaceful." This is the direction most of us want to take. Just ignore our problems and differences and be peaceful. Jesus also did not say, "Blessed are the peacekeepers." This is another mistake, believing that we must keep peace at all costs, even if the tactics are wrong.

Being a peacemaker is completely different than being a peace lover or a peace keeper. Being a peacemaker means that we do not get to say, “It is none of my business.” Being a Peacemaker means that we are going to enable reconciliation and try to help end a conflict.

If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Rom 12:18. This command from Paul captures the essence of being a peacemaker. As much as depends upon me, I will be peacemaker with all, living peaceably with all. The apostle Paul also told the Christians in Ephesus: *I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* Ephesians 4:1–3

With all these commands and teachings about being peacemakers, why do we struggle with having this attitude? Why is it that brothers and sisters in Christ fight, quarrel, and dispute rather than have peace? Why is there strife, conflict, and trouble? Why is peace so difficult?

Why Is There So Little Peace?

What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. James 4:1–3.

This is God’s explanation for why we do not have peace and live our lives as peacemakers. **We fight, quarrel, and divide because we are listening to the desires of our heart rather than the desires of God.** There are things that we desire in our hearts that are causing the conflicts. When you think about what these desires are that cause the hatred, malice, arguing, bitterness, divisions, and strife, how often these desires are foolish, insignificant desires! (Belmont in IN)

We have strife because someone did not respect us. We are bitter because someone used hateful words. We are hateful in turn because someone hurt our feelings. We separate ourselves from others because someone was unthoughtful, uncaring, or something else like this. Obviously, the cause of our fractures and divisions is selfishness. These are the exact desires that James is talking about. I am thinking about myself and I do not like what you did to me or said to me, so now we are going to have a problem. **This is not being a peacemaker. This is being a troublemaker.** I'll tell you from experience, we have troublemakers in our fellowship! Being a troublemaker is easy. Just think about yourself.

Listen to how James say this in verse 1: *“What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?”* My desires are at war with other desires that I have. When I am double-minded I'm going to be at odds with others.

Jesus calls upon every person to step into a conflict and help bring about resolution and peace. Notice that we are not supposed to take sides. Oh, how often that happens! People take sides lining up with their families or with their longtime friends. Divisions and strife happen because no one will turn to their own family member or own friend and tell them that they were wrong. We just circle the wagons and defend our own rather than trying to create reconciliation and peace.

Therefore Jesus said that if your brother or sister sins against you, you go and tell him, between you and him alone Matthew 18:15. You do not bring in your friends or your family or the church. You and that person alone. You do not wait for them to come to you. You do not try to be a troublemaker. You are to be a peacemaker and you do that by going to that person with the purpose of creating peace.

Becoming Peacemakers

The Bible teaches us that we should seek peace with all others because God has first made peace with each of us!! This is what drives our hearts to be peacemakers. God could have immediately destroyed us for our sins. God could immediately judge us for our wrongdoing.

But God reconciled us to himself by making peace through the sacrifice of Jesus. *For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.* Col 1:19–20

Looking at the peace we enjoy because we have been justified by faith Romans 5:1 causes us to seek to bring peace to all the relationships that we have. Listen to Paul speak to the other churches regarding this truth:

So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. (Romans 14:19 ESV)

Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. 2 Cor 13:11

There are consequences for us not being peacemakers, especially regarding one another as the family of God. *Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.* (1 Corinthians 3:16–17 ESV)

We bring judgment on ourselves if we are destroy the body of Christ by our selfish desires and intentions. The wisdom that comes from above is peace loving (James 3:17-18), not troublemaking. *But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.* (James 3:17–18 ESV)

They Shall Be Called Sons of God

The result of our willingness to step into the fray and attempt to make of peace is amazing and truly satisfying. Jesus says that these will be called sons of God. This is one place where it is important to not translate this as gender inclusive “children of God” because being a son had meaning in the Jewish world. To say that you were the son of someone was used to connect a person with an attribute. We still even use this kind of idiomatic language today when we say, “He is his father’s son.”

By that we mean but that you have adopted the character of your father. Jesus said that Jews were not sons of Abraham but sons of the devil (cf. John 8:44). This is because they were not acting like their father Abraham.

This is exactly what it means for Christian men and women to be called “sons of God.” We are adopting the character of God because God’s character is one of reconciliation. God ended hostility between us and Him and between the Jews and the Gentiles through Jesus. Jesus did not come to the earth and make things worse. **Jesus brought peace.** So, being a peacemaker shows you are in the kingdom of Christ and are displaying the characteristics of God.

In all circumstances and difficulties let us be peacemakers. Let us not just try to **keep peace** but help to **create peace** in the relationships we are involved in and in the relationships of others. Do not sit back and say that it is not your problem. Peacemakers try to facilitate peace.

Apply spiritual wisdom, not selfish desires and ambitions, to create the peace that God desires us to create so that we may be called sons of God.