

Peacemaker or Peacekeeper?

Air Dates: August 7- 11, 2023

Day One

We hear a lot about peace, don't we? From the proclamation of the angels to the shepherds at the birth of Jesus—"Peace on earth, good will to men"—to our daily news broadcasts, peace is a frequent topic, and there's no doubt that most people want to have peace on earth.

But you know, peace is not something that can be declared or legislated. True peace is a heart condition, and each individual has the choice to be at peace with others or not. Just think, if every individual decided to be a peaceful person, to never harm anyone else, to do everything he or she could to promote peace, well, we would have peace on earth.

Obviously, you and I have little influence on world peace. But we have great influence on our own environments, whether they are peaceful or not. So, I thought we should talk about peace in our individual worlds. How can we promote peace?

Let me begin by asking: Are you a peacemaker or a peacekeeper? There is a difference, you know. Peacemaking is something every Christian should be very good at doing. We are called to be peacemakers. Jesus said that people who make peace are blessed, and will be called "children of God."

Peacekeepers, on the other hand, often just want peace at any price. That can lead to compromising and lowering standards and going along to get along, just to keep the peace. So, we need to know the difference between being a peacemaker and a peacekeeper.

A peacemaker is one who makes peace where there is none. I'm sure you have many opportunities to make peace if you recognize them and take advantage of them.

Day Two

Are you a peacemaker or a peacekeeper? A peacemaker is one who strives to make peace in situations that are in turmoil. A peacekeeper, on the other hand, often just tries to keep the status quo and do anything to avoid conflict. In the Beatitudes, Jesus calls us to be peacemakers; therefore, that is what we should strive to be.

Parents know that making peace between children is a part of their job description. From their earliest days, our children manage to disrupt the peace—get into arguments, cause discord, aggravate each other. And we find ourselves in the role of peacemaker. Sometimes that role is a stern role, sometimes it is the role of negotiating, sometimes we have to separate the parties involved. In other words, being a peacemaker is not always a peaceful job! We may have to be assertive and proactive, but whatever we can do to promote peace, that is our calling as children of God.

Maybe you work in a situation where a peacemaker is needed. Some of the things that typically cause discord in the workplace are gossip, job insecurity, out-of-control ambition, poor communication—and the list goes on. It could be a company-wide morale problem, producing tumult and disharmony among

employees; or it could be little feuds between individuals, where one refuses to speak to another. I'm often amazed at how petty and vindictive adults can be—but there you have it.

What can we do in these kinds of environments to be peacemakers? It's not enough just to keep pushing it under the covers, so to speak, and trying to keep a lid on things. That is peacekeeping, just opting for peace at any price. But we want to be peacemakers.

Day Three

We seem to be in a time when there is little peace between people. And this contentious cultural atmosphere can easily seep into our everyday lives—into our families and our workplaces, even our churches.

In Matthew 5:9 we read where Jesus said, *“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”* It is a blessing to be a peacemaker; there is a special reward for those who make peace, not just keep peace. Peacemakers are proactive, confronting situations of discord to promote peace.

Well, if we're supposed to be peacemakers, how can we make peace? Proverbs 17:9 says, *“Whoever would foster love covers over an offense, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends.”* One thing you can do to be a peacemaker is not to spread the bad things you hear or see. Cover up the offense, don't keep telling everybody else about someone's mistake or bad behavior. In other words, stop gossiping.

Proverbs 15:1 tells us that *“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”* A peacemaker is a person with gentle words. When someone starts telling you how angry they are at you or someone else, find those gentle words to turn away their wrath. If you throw in a few harsh words of your own, you add to the conflict. Often a tone of voice can make a big difference.

If you know there is strife between two people, what could you do to bring them together, let them air their grievances, and restore peace into that relationship? Don't be afraid to make that effort; often it just takes one person to make a move and these petty differences can be resolved.

What we need in our world of strife are many peacemakers—people who are willing to make peace in the many small conflicts that surround our daily lives. Ask God to give you that skill, that kind of servant heart, so that you are the peacemaker in your world. When you do, Jesus promises that you will be blessed.

Day Four

It is so important to develop peacemaking skills, because Jesus said that peacemakers are blessed.

I just want to remind you that Jesus Christ is our peace. He condescended to take on human flesh, even as a baby in a humble setting, so that he could bring peace to our troubled lives. The Apostle Paul in Ephesians wrote:

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit (Ephesians 2:13-18).

Jesus was born—to bring us peace. He came to reconcile us to God through the cross, and for those who have accepted his freely-offered redemption, we now have peace because we have Jesus, who is our peace. We who were far away, who had no peace in our lives, who were in bondage to sin, have been brought near, so near that we can enter into his throne room and have fellowship with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Remember to thank God for the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ, and if you don't yet know the peace he offers, you can do so by repenting of your sins and accepting his peace as your own.

Day Five

It may seem counterintuitive, but “nice” isn't necessarily the goal of a peacemaker. Jesus was the perfect peacemaker, and he is our peace, but as you study his life on earth, you will see that as a peacemaker he was not always what we would call “nice.”

There were times he said difficult things that others did not want to hear. There were times when he actually disrupted situations that were wrong—like people selling things in the Temple. But he always was doing what was good for others. We are called to be peacemakers, which means that if you always choose what you say or do based on the idea that it has to be “nice,” you probably will avoid hard but essential conversations. You will become a peacekeeper not a peacemaker.

But being truthful does not give us a license to be harsh. Gentleness is the key word when we are trying to make peace. You remember that Jesus described himself as gentle and humble in heart. And Paul wrote to the Philippian church that they should let their gentleness be evident to all.

Gentleness is required if you want to be a peacemaker in difficult situations. After all, gentleness is a fruit of God's Spirit and it should be always evident in our lives. It's a trait that helps bring peace and calm even in contentious situations. It's a clear-headed way of dealing with others that creates safe spaces to address difficult topics.

Jesus declared that he came to give us peace—his peace, not like the world gives. It's a different kind of peace, one that keeps on keeping on even in tough places. What we as Christ-followers must do is on a daily basis, receive the peace he gives for our own lives, and then share that peace with whoever God brings across our path that day. What a testimony we could have to our worlds if we showed them the peace of Christ by the way we live, and then we followed our Lord's directive to be peacemakers by helping to make peace where we live, where we work, with close friends and strangers.

Christ has come to give us peace; he is our peace. We need to be sure we're demonstrating it daily in our lives, and that we are peacemakers, people who bring peace to turbulent situations.