

Peacekeeper or Peacemaker?

Your Spirit-Empowered Choice

What's the point of praying for peace when your adversary is dead-set (no pun intended) on war?

As the weeks of December move us toward Christmas, many Christians recognize Advent themes that traditionally include hope, peace, joy and love. Last week, I wrote about hope. Hope is easy to write about. After all, the bleaker things look, the more we need and pursue hope.

But peace? Peace can be difficult to pursue, especially if the other person in the broken relationship wants nothing to do with it—or us.

We see it in the news. Nation against nation. Tribe against tribe. Ethnic cleansings. Arab groups striving to eliminate Israel. Shiites killing Sunnis. Sunnis killing Sufis.

We see it in our personal relationships. Brother against brother. Sister against sister. Children against parents.

Peace is elusive. We hope for it. We pray for it. Isn't that what the Bible tells us to do? Yet we need the other person—or group—to want it, too.

Or do we?

As Far as It Depends on You

There's an interesting verse in the Bible that speaks of it doesn't speak of the other person. In Romans 12:18 (NIV) the apostle Paul wrote, "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."

"As far as it depends on you." The state of my heart is not dependent on the other person. It *is* dependent on intimacy

with the Prince of Peace. Only by His Spirit can I remove bitterness, unforgiveness and resentment toward the one who refuses peace.

So does that mean I become a doormat, begging that individual for a restored relationship? No, living at peace means I do not desire their harm. It means they know I want peace, even if they don't. And it means I pray for it.

But what kind of peace am I praying for? Am I trying to *keep* the peace or *make* peace?

Peacekeeper or Peacemaker?

Peacekeepers avoid conflict at all costs. Their motto is, "Don't rock the boat." *Peacemakers* focus on reconciliation, and they recognize that healthy conflict may be necessary for reconciliation to occur.

Jesus was a peacemaker. He was more concerned with making peace than He was with keeping peace. His earthly life—and His death—centered on making peace between God and humans. Yet some of the things He said did not sound peaceable at all.

Jesus understood that real peace does not ignore conflict. True peace addresses the cause of the problem to remove it permanently. For us to have peace with God, Jesus dealt with the problem of our sin with finality and in the most violent way possible.

Being a disciple of Jesus Christ means we are to say what people *need* to hear rather than what they *want* to hear. Of course, we do so gently and lovingly. Avoiding conflict may be easier, but *Yahweh Shalom* (The Lord is Peace) doesn't call us to take the easy way. He calls us to be peacemakers.

We celebrate Christmas because God sent His Son to make peace with us. He told us what we needed to hear, not what we wanted to hear. He didn't ignore our problem of sin, He dealt with it

once and for all. And before we can hope for peace with other people, we must first accept the peace God offers us.

Then, especially in this season of Advent, continue praying for peace with others. Be ready to make peace when God gives the opportunity. Until then, as far as it depends on you, live at peace. {eo}

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