

Pursuing Peace When Relationships Are Difficult

Can you think of a time when you had an ongoing issue with someone in your life? Then, just when you thought you couldn't take another minute, God asked you to hang in there one more time and not give up?

Maybe you've thought, "God, I have held my tongue and kept a good attitude with this person so many times, and now You want me to play the peacemaker again? This is just too much to ask!"

God calls each one of us to be an instrument of His peace. Many times this means being the first to ask forgiveness or sticking with someone who has tried our patience over and over again. And these situations are perfect opportunities God can use to build our character, causing other people to be the "sandpaper" that smooths down the rough edges in our personality.

This makes me think of Matthew 18, when Peter asked Jesus how many times he had to forgive someone who sinned against him. I'm sure he thought he was being generous when he said, "Up to seven times?" But Jesus answered Peter by saying, "Not seven times, but seventy-seven times" (vv. 21-22 NIV).

You see, God is asking us to be longsuffering with the people in our lives. He wants us to go the extra mile and stay determined to do the right thing, even when other people do the wrong thing to us. And I have found that it's almost impossible to stay in conflict with someone if you refuse to argue!

When Dave Was Sandpaper in My Life

Over the years, the Lord has used my marriage to teach me

important lessons in this area. I can vividly remember one occasion when my husband, Dave, and I had been arguing, and afterward, the Lord spoke to my heart and said, "I want you to go apologize and ask for his forgiveness."

I said, "But God, he started it! *Dave* should be the first one to say he's sorry!"

The Lord wanted me to be a peacemaker regardless of what Dave did or didn't do. He wanted me to see how taking this action brings unity and allows Him to bring healing in our relationships.

Conversely, if we always wait for the other person to apologize or be the peacemaker, we actually harm ourselves by losing our peace.

Give Up Strife to Get Greater Peace

The Lord instructs us to *pursue* peace with others and "seek it eagerly" (1 Pet. 3:11b, AMPC). It's not always easy, but as we take steps to follow God's Word in this area, it opens the door for Him to bless us in so many ways.

One of my favorite examples is the story of Abraham and his nephew Lot. Genesis 13 tells us how they each had a tremendous number of livestock. In fact, their possessions were so great that there wasn't enough land for both of them, and it inevitably led to strife. But look at how Abraham handled the situation:

"Abram said to Lot, Let there be no strife, I beg of you, between you and me, or between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, for we are relatives. Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself, I beg of you, from me. If you take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if you choose the right hand, then I will go to the left" (Gen. 13:8-9).

Because of Abraham's eager desire to keep peace in the family,

the Lord blessed him abundantly. We see this in verses 14-17 (NIV):

“The Lord said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, ‘Look around from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you.’”

I encourage you to apply this lesson to your own life. Maybe somebody’s trying to stir up strife and you find yourself in a situation like Abraham’s. If so, let peace begin with you, *even if you know you’re right.*

The truth is no person or relationship is perfect, and there will always be things to work through. But when you make a firm decision to *pursue peace*, you can conquer the spirit of strife, and many times, put a stop to conflicts before they ever begin.

Joyce Meyer is a New York Times bestselling author and founder of Joyce Meyer Ministries, Inc. She has authored more than 140 books, including “Battlefield of the Mind” and “The Answer to Anxiety” (FaithWords). She hosts the “Enjoying Everyday Life” radio and TV programs, which air on hundreds of stations worldwide. For more information, visit .

Please note: The views and opinions expressed throughout this publication and/or website are those of the respective authors and do not necessarily reflect those of Joyce Meyer Ministries.