

The Ultimate Key to Peaceful Relationships

Relationships are an important part of life. Healthy relationships have the ability to bring us great joy and satisfaction; however, *unhealthy* ones have the power to make life miserable!

Throughout my life, God's Word has taught me so many great lessons about how to get along with people—something I wasn't very good at. But I think the greatest lesson was this: Choose to live in peace with others.

Simply put, it's God's will for us to live in peace and harmony with one another, and His Word offers clear instructions on how to get along with people in our daily lives.

First Peter 3:11 (AMPC) says, "Let him search for peace (harmony; undisturbedness from fears, agitating passions and moral conflicts) and seek it eagerly. [Do not merely desire peaceful relations with God, with your fellowmen, and with yourself, but pursue, go after them!]"

Notice how this verse says we can't merely *desire* peaceful relationships—we have to *pursue* them. Now, this doesn't mean we won't ever disagree. People are naturally going to have disagreements, and it's okay to disagree if we can do it respectfully. But we must avoid *strife*!

The dictionary defines strife as "bickering, arguing, a heated disagreement or an angry undercurrent." Strife is one of the greatest threats to the body of Christ; it has the ability to destroy marriages, personal relationships and even churches. Like a seed, strife can get planted through something we say or do, then eventually grow to become a major problem.

God's Word tells us that it's the "little foxes" that sneak into the vineyard and spoil all the grapes (Song 2:15). I believe this is true when it comes to strife. Left unchecked, even minor disagreements or frustrations can eventually destroy a relationship.

So, how do we keep strife out of our relationships? Here are a couple practical tips:

Maintain a Humble Heart

Where there is contention and strife, there is also pride. That's why it is so important for us to practice humility. We all like to be right—whether it's an argument about a major issue or something trivial. However, humility insists that we give up our "right to be right."

I can't tell you how many times my husband, Dave, and I went round after round, arguing about the same thing. But even when I "won," I still really lost, because I damaged our relationship and gave up my peace in the process.

I challenge you to adopt an attitude of humility. If you're having an argument, be the first to make peace or if you know you are right! It may be painful in the moment, but you will reap the rewards long after it's all over.

Let Love Be Your Guide

Strife isn't just a 21st century problem. In fact, the apostle Paul wrote to the early church, encouraging them to avoid strife and stay away from petty arguments.

In Philippians 2:2 (AMPC), he writes, "Fill up and complete my joy by living in harmony and being of the same mind and one in purpose, having the same love, being in full accord and of one harmonious mind and intention."

Where there is unity, God gives His blessing (Ps. 133). And Matthew 18:19 tells us there is power in agreement. However,

we can't truly agree and walk in unity if there is bitterness, offense or unforgiveness in our hearts.

I can put a big smile on my face and say all the right things, but if I'm still choosing to focus on negative thoughts and feelings about someone, I'm not really walking in love or unity. It's not just my outward appearance that matters—even more important is what's going on *inside*.

First Corinthians 13:5 (AMPC) tells us that love "is not touchy or fretful or resentful; it takes no account of the evil done to it." Verse 7 goes on to tell us that love believes the best of every person.

Can you imagine what would happen in our relationships if we simply followed these two verses?

I encourage you to truly love the people in your life. Make a decision to be peaceful and unified no matter what tries to get between you and others. And remember that "love never fails" (1 Cor. 13:8).

Seek the Prince of Peace

The very best relationship advice I can give you is to develop a personal, intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, *the Prince of Peace*. I encourage you to spend regular time with Him through prayer and by reading and studying His Word.

As you do, He will literally change you from the inside out, causing you to think differently and act differently. It is only when we receive *His* peace and *His* love that we can truly give it away to others!

I am so grateful for the peace of God in my life. The Lord has not only changed my relationships, but *He has changed me*. And He will do the same for you. *It all begins with a simple decision to pursue peace.*

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