



## HOW TO BE A PEACEMAKER IN A WORLD UGLY WITH VIOLENCE AND HATRED

*-- It is like crossing a fast moving creek on slippery rocks.*

A peacemaker is someone who is actively seeking to reconcile people with one another and to bring God's peace to mankind. This compound word is comprised of two very common words: "peace" and "maker." Peace must be made. Peace never happens by chance. A

peacemaker is never passive. He always takes the initiative.

That task, however, will not be easy. Peacemaking is not nice and can be a wrenching work. It takes time and emotional energy. It is like crossing a fast moving creek on slippery rocks. The journey is needed. The work is risky, sometimes you fall and get bruised. And sometimes you don't make it across the stream.

In Paul's letter to the Romans, he exhorted, "*If possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*" (Rom. 12:18) That is a pretty clear command. But Paul adds that all important phrase, "*If possible*". Sometimes peace isn't possible.

However, let's focus on the phrase "*as far as it depends on you.*" As believers, we have a God-given responsibility to pursue peace. Does that mean we agree with everything others say or do? No. Sometimes we agree to disagree, agreeably. But God wants His children to be bridge builders.

How can we be instruments of peace in every day life? Is it our instinct to give people a second chance, to give them the benefit of the doubt? Do we think, «Maybe there is a misunderstanding, maybe they had a good reason to do or say that, » or do we assume the worst about others, imagining that they had bad motives ?

Are we really listening to the other person, not just hearing what comes on the surface but the core of what they are saying, what they really want and care for ? Is our goal to listen and do our best to understand the other person or do we impatiently wait for our turn to talk? In order to be peacemakers, we need to strive to understand instead of seeking to be understood.

**Take the first step.** Jesus is real clear on this action. "If you are offering your gift on the altar, and there you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matt. 5:23-24). Notice the part, "*if your brother has something against you.*" It is clear that we are not supposed to have strife in our hearts toward others, but Jesus revealed our responsibility to others even when they have hard feelings toward us.

We are supposed to take the initiative in reconciliation and do all we can to end the strife, but it's important to realize that not everyone is going to reconcile with us, regardless of what we do. We must pursue peace, even when we are not at fault, but the other people do have a choice.

To do so, we must ask God to give us supernatural humility, as our pride pushes us to always want to be right and have the last word. Hard feelings have destroyed so many friendships and even marriages as it goes against human nature to humble ourselves, to forgive and to seek reconciliation. But the Lord will defend us if we choose the way of peace.

Peacemakers take the initiative and make the first move. Conflict is never resolved accidentally. That first step may be a letter, a phone call, or a visit. If someone has wronged you or you have wronged someone else, take action today.

*(To be followed)*