

Seeking Peace with One Another

Here is a scene that you could witness on almost any playground in the world. Two boys are playing together in a sandbox or at the base of a slide. Suddenly, a fight breaks out and the two young children are embroiled in a heated exchange with fists flying. Their peaceful playtime has come to a violent end. Where did these children learn to act like this? Apparently, human beings are not programmed for peace. Too often, a person's initial response to displeasure or stress is to strike out violently against the source of her frustration. The basic nature of a sinful person is to protect oneself first and foremost.

The New Testament contains no less than eight direct commands for peace among believers. This clearly reveals that God's will is for men and women to live in peace with one another. Knowing that God demands His people to live in peace may seem too much to ask. Yet, if peace is God's will—and it is—then He must have made it possible to achieve. Sometimes, peace may not be one's natural reaction, but according to God's Word, it is possible.

Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. (Psalm 34)

You will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace. (Luke 1)

Have you ever encountered a person who would not allow you to be kind to them? Despite your

loving comments or gestures, perhaps they insulted you or accused you of having some ulterior motive. How should Christians respond to those who will not accept another's attempt at peace?

If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. (Romans 12)

While the New Testament contains several passages instructing believers to practice peace, Romans 12:18 does so with the understanding that some people will not accept your peace offerings. As such, the apostle Paul added two qualifications to the command to be peaceful. First is the condition, ***"If (it is) possible."*** This indicates that there are times when peace with another person is not possible. These people may not be interested in a peaceful environment, or they may even enjoy causing other people harm. Second is the phrase, ***"so far as it depends on you."*** This should only be taken to mean as far as you can go without sacrificing your God-given principles. When one's conditions for peace demand something against God's rules for living, then this peace is unacceptable.

Despite the occasions when peace may be impossible, it is still the Christian's responsibility to seek peace. Do not use the above qualifications as an excuse to give up. You will only be excused when you have made every effort for peace.

When a person's ways are pleasing to the LORD, he makes even his enemies live at peace with him. (Proverbs 16:7)

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. When is it difficult for me to operate in peace?
2. What's an example of turning from evil, doing good and seeking peace?
3. What's an example of doing what was right and even my enemy coming to be at peace with me?