

Blessed Are the Peacemakers

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. (Matthew 5:9)

In Jewish culture the highest compliment one can pay to a young boy is to tell him he is like his father. Jesus could have very well had that in mind that when he said that people are like God when they make peace where before there was enmity; and they will be God-blessed if they do so. There's not one of us who doesn't desire peace in a general sense and also in our own relationships, but this promise of Jesus is not for peace lovers, but peacemakers; and there is a big difference.

Peacemaking is more than an event. It begins with an attitude of desiring peace and unity. There will be times when one seeking to make peace will be unable to do so because of the willfulness of others. A pure motive is inherent in Jesus' words. When that is the heart of a person God gives his blessing, though it may not result in external peace. Jesus is not only talking about peace between us and someone else, although that is a part of his teaching. He was also talking about being a catalyst to bring peace between others.

Jesus is very clear about initiating peace when we know there is someone who has something against us (See Matthew 5:21-26), but I want to mention another kind of peacemaking. When we see others in our circle of influence who are embittered against each other we are called to act. The truth is most of us would like to stay out the conflict reasoning, "*It's none of my business.*" What could very well happen is, if we get involved, both parties could become angry with us.

True peacemakers cannot avoid such conflict. Their spirit is to do what they can to bring understanding and peace where there is misunderstanding and disharmony. The best biblical model I know, outside of Jesus, is Paul. Throughout his letters he encourages unity in the church, but the clearest example is found in his letter to *Philemon*. Paul writes to ask Philemon if he will forgive his runaway slave, Onesimus and tells him why he ought to do so. Because of Paul's relationship with both men, he chooses to get involved and do what he can to bring about a peaceful resolution.

Ultimately, Christ-followers will seek to be peacemakers because that is their character. We are most identified as God's children when we act like him (Ephesians 2:11-22). The theme of John 17 is unity among his people. God values it more than we can understand. No wonder he desires for us to be peacemakers. If we are to help others experience peace, it will be because we are at peace with others (See Romans 12:14-21).

Take a few moments to think about your students and friends. How many of them have conflicts with others in their lives? Do they see you as a peacemaker? What can your students and your children learn from you?

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