



“Calming The Storm Of Conflict” - November 17, 2019

OPEN

What is a peacemaker? If you live in Canada, you might think of Canadian soldiers on peacekeeping missions. “As a result of Lester Pearson's leadership in the 1956 Suez Crisis and Canada's role in the UN Emergency Force he helped create, many Canadians consider peacekeeping part of the country's identity.” [Canadian Encyclopedia](#)

Is peacemaking the identity of every Christian? Matthew 5:9 teaches us it is a characteristic of God's Kingdom that we be peacemakers - “Blessed [are] the peacemakers for they, sons of God shall be called.” (*literal* Matthew 5:9)

The question before us is: How do we live in the present reality of God's Kingdom? We must be “kingdomized”!

Dallas Willard wrote, “The aim of the popular teacher in Jesus time was not to impart information, but to make a significant change in the lives of the hearers...it is a peculiarly modern notion that the aim of teaching is to bring people to know things that may have no effect at all on their lives.” (*Divine Conspiracy*, HarperOne, 1997, 112)

DIG

If we are going actively respond to the call to peacemaking, we must understand three things. What is the **essence** of peace? How does it **exist** in a broken world? And how can peace **extend** out through the followers of Jesus?

- **The essence of peace**

In Judges 6:24 we read “Jehovah Shalom” – God is peace. In Hebrew, “peace” is not just the absence of conflict but conveys completeness, welfare, wholeness. It was an important OT term, used 250 times. Shalom implies prosperous relationship between two parties and health or wellbeing in a wider sense. When we read in Isaiah 9:6 that Jesus will come as Prince of Peace it is an exciting expectation! In Romans 15:33 Paul refers to “the God of Peace.” The NT term for peace conveys unity and reconciliation. Twelve times it is paired with grace as a greeting. “Peacemakers” is only in Matthew 5:9. With all of this in mind, note that peace, essentially, is who God is and how He acts.

- **The existence of peace**

If peace is rooted in who God is, how then can it exist in a world that is marred

by sin? In Ephesians 2 we have a passage with an important backstory – the cultural and religious divide between Jew and Gentile. But in Jesus is the breaking down of barriers, allowing true peace to operate in this world! **First**, peace with God is provided **by** Jesus (Ephesians 2:11-14). **Second**, peace with others is provided **in** Jesus (Ephesians 2:15-18). In His closing message to His disciples Jesus promised them His peace – see John 14:27; 16:33. Thus peace is a marker of the followers of God; sons of God...“...that's when you discover who you really are, and your place in God's family.” [MESSAGE].

- **The extending of peace**

How then do we “make peace”? How do we extend peace to others?

First, we must be in a state of peace with God, through Christ. Remember, peace is a fruit of the Spirit – it must ultimately be a Holy Spirit fueled reality. “But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, **peace**, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things! Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there.” (Galatians 5:22-24).

Second, extending peace to others requires courageous obedience. In Romans 12:17-19, 21 we are taught, “Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. Do all that you can to live in **peace** with everyone. Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God... Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

An example from the Old Testament will help us - **Joseph**. At one time a celebrated son, his brothers sold him into slavery. Then he was falsely accused and thrown into prison. Later, he had a meteoric rise to power and was used powerfully to spare many from starvation. And that was the reason his brothers came from Caanan to Egypt. But they did not know it was their brother before whom they stood.

The reveal came in Genesis 45:4-8. Read carefully the perspective of Joseph. What was thought to be a personal offense was, in the bigger picture, a sovereign act of God to preserve life. Joseph acted with obedience and courage to submit himself to God's plan...and Kingdom. As he walked in step with God, he was ready for reconciliation and peace with others.



The Colt Single Action Army revolver comes in thirty different calibers and various barrel lengths, but looks much the same since 1873. Popular with ranchers, lawmen, and outlaws it is the state firearm of Arizona. It is called the **peacemaker**. But mere force does not achieve God's peace.

Peacemaking will require us to see our situation from God's perspective and seek His Kingdom first. Peace may not be fully established if the other party is unresponsive. But our duty is to seek first God's Kingdom in pursuit of peace – by doing all that we can (Romans 12:18).

REFLECT

After Hitler entered Austria, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain returned from Munich in 1938 with a pledge from Hitler that Germany would occupy no more of Europe after the Sudetenland region of Czechoslovakia. Chamberlain famously said, “*peace for our time.*” But eleven months later Hitler invaded Poland launching WW II.

Acting as a peacemaker is complex. Yes, there are obvious interpersonal ways to live at peace. But in times of national crisis and conflict, how should we respond? On another occasion it would be good to dive into this idea of peace and non-resistance. The “just-war” theory is followed by most believers since the Fifth Century when first expressed by Augustine. However, it is not the only way to reconcile conflict and the command to be peacemakers.

So...do we have peace in our time? Are we being kingdomized in regards to this matter of peacemaking? Consider carefully the promise – we will be called sons of God – we will be known as God's own when we act with peacemaking intentions toward one another! Here are three realms of response to consider.

- **Global intercession**

A friend is North American director of the Peace and Reconciliation Network (ministry of [World Evangelical Alliance](#) which “names five areas of conflict...Cultural/Religious Tensions, Angry Politics, Injustice, Power Struggles, Exclusion of Faith. The PRN awakens, unites, and empowers the global Evangelical communion to grow as a transformative movement of God's Shalom.”

II Corinthians 5:18 states every follower of Jesus has been given “the ministry of reconciliation.” Yet, how do we respond globally? On our knees! Subscribe to the [Joshua Project](#) or download [Prayer Force Alert](#) from Open Doors. Brother Andrew who founded Open Doors said, “Prayer is not preparation for the battle; prayer is the battle.”

- **Local participation**

What can be done about peacemaking in Canada? We might bemoan the alienation between East and West or conservative and liberal values. However, we have enough peacemaking to do in our own community. A controversial bylaw was just passed in Maple Ridge concerning panhandling. Neighbors are alienated from one another.

Isaiah 52:7 invites us to **participate**, “How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger who brings good news, the good news of peace and

salvation, the news that the God of Israel reigns!” We cannot spread the message of peace from the sidelines – we need to be personally engaged in our community.

- **Personal reconciliation**

What will it take for followers of Jesus to be peacemakers? We must remember that reconciliation is only possible because of the blood of Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:20). You see, interpersonal peace is possible! But it means we have to be committed to reconciliation – we need to be prepared for the hard work of initiating or responding.



Maybe we need a reconciliation bench like this one in Zaporizhia, Ukraine which forces people to meet in the middle?!