

peacemaking journey. And all eyes are turned towards us: from God, from others, and from the world when it comes to how we navigate the disagreements that come.

RIGHT & WRONG WAY

Psalm 34:14 instructs us to, “turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.” Practically speaking, it can be challenging to grasp just how to do that. When conflict arises, it’s important to pause, and not just in the literal sense. Peacemaker’s Ministries and Ken Sande suggest the acronym “P.A.U.S.E.” can help you remember just what to do when it comes to seeking and pursuing peace in the relationships in our lives:

- PREPARE for peacemaking by remembering how God has already made peace with you through Jesus Christ. Reflect on that as you begin to restore a broken relationship.
- AFFIRM the relationship you have with the other people involved. 1 Corinthians 13:7 tells us that, “Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” Whether in a marriage, a friendship, or a working relationship, we have to remind ourselves that our ultimate purpose is to love like Jesus.

- UNDERSTAND the feelings and perspectives of the others involved. As believers, we are called to do nothing out of selfishness or conceit but instead consider others as more important than ourself
- SEARCH for creative solutions for reconciliation and peace. Ecclesiastes 9:16 reminds us that “wisdom is better than might.” If it seems as though you aren’t getting closer to reconciliation while sitting down and talking face to face, suggest going for a walk together or doing something out of the box to help bring you together as you work through the situation.
- EVALUATE the options prayerfully, objectively, and reasonably. Spend time in prayer, asking for God to give you ideas on how you can move through whatever you are facing, and don’t forget to listen to Him through His word, wise counsel, and the Holy Spirit.

The fact is that conflict is inevitable in this broken and sin-filled world. We will find ourselves at odds with one another from time to time, but we don’t have to stay there. Instead of positioning ourselves in a defensive posture, we can take a step back and pause, which allows the Holy Spirit to move in and through us as we do the hard work of seeking and pursuing peace. And that, my friend, is a holy and pleasing effort.



A PAUSE to Pursue Peace

Josh Weidmann



I was telling a friend that this has been the most challenging season to pastor people through—not because of masks and mandates— but because people are seemingly in disagreements all the time. I am on the front row of people’s lives, watching small groups, families, and friends be divided, unlike any time in my previous fifteen years of pastoral ministry.

When it comes to describing the current state of our world, peaceful is not the word most people would use to characterize culture. The word peace evokes images of a calm and serene environment, free from conflict or strife. Yet when we begin to think about it from a biblical perspective, we realize that God calls us to a kind of peace that doesn't mean living in the absence of conflict. Instead, He gives us a roadmap for navigating the struggles and disagreements that come when sinful people engage with one another, inevitably leading to broken relationships.

Peace, you see, comes from the originator of perfect harmony, God Himself. But when sin entered the picture, our peace or shalom, was lost and we engaged in a battle we could never win—a conflict with our Creator. Romans 5:10 tells us, “For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.” It was our own sinful, rebellious nature that led to us waging war against God. God knew this would happen, and because of that, He had a plan to reconcile us, to bring peace once again between Himself and His creation, and that was through the perfect life, death, and resurrection of His one Son, Jesus Christ. It is through the gospel of Jesus Christ that we are no longer an enemy of God. We are considered a child of the most trusted Father, and this love gives us a template for navigating even the worst of conflicts.

This sinful nature that once led to our battle against God can also lead us to fight amongst

ourselves, robbing us of peace in our earthly relationships. James, the brother of Jesus, once wrote about what he saw the issue to be when it came to disagreements amongst the people of God. He said, “What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask.” (James 4:1-2) Our unchecked desires and jealousy can create disunity with brothers and sisters in Christ, which can steal our peace faster than anything else.

GETTING BACK PEACE

The question becomes then: how do we get our peace back? There is no quick answer to peacemaking but working to diligently gain it back where we do not have it and working equally as hard to keep it where it already exists is one of the essential steps in the process.

The author of Romans says it this way, “If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.” (Romans 12:18, emphasis mine). This passage tells us that peace has something to do with us. There is some dependence on you. While God is undoubtedly the source of our peace and the Holy Spirit strengthens us to reconcile with those who have hurt us, there is still some responsibility, some action, some steps of obedience that depend upon us when it comes to making peace. While God never asks us to compromise truth or right living to live at peace with others or to force peace on those who refuse it in a relationship, He does ask us to examine ourselves and make sure we've done all we could to create it.

RIGHT & WRONG WAY

But when it comes to working towards peace, there is undeniably a right and wrong way to go about it. There are usually two ends of a spectrum that we can tend towards if we are not careful in making peace: fight or flee. We can try and verbally or physically attack when conflict arises. Still, Proverbs reminds us of how this approach can leave an even greater wake of destruction in our path: “A dishonest man spreads strife, and a whisperer separates close friends. A man of violence entices his neighbor and leads him in a way that is not good (Proverbs 16:28-29).” Lies, gossip, and violence keep us from drawing near to one another and threaten any chance of reconciliation. On the other extreme, we can choose to deny or avoid any issues altogether, preferring to escape the hard conversations and refusing to engage in the steps necessary to bring peace back into a relationship. This approach allows for new sin to grow and emerge as we evade efforts of peacemaking. One of those potential sins can be bitterness which can color our perspective and influence the view of others as well. Hebrews 12:15 says this, “See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled.” When we refuse peace, we allow the roots of bitterness and the like to entangle us and those around us in more sin.

Remembering that conflict doesn't have to be a negative, but rather an opportunity for us to grow in becoming more like Christ and bringing glory to God is an integral part of the