



# 6 Practical Steps for being a Peacemaker.

Doing ALL WE CAN to pursue peace.

1. Clean out the bad stuff in my heart: When my heart is troubled, I pray and pour all of my negative emotion out to God. I tell him all of the hurt, frustration and anger that I feel - I get all of the ugly stuff out and lay it at God's feet - knowing that he can handle it. I've found that ignoring my negative thoughts and keeping them locked inside leads to bitterness, which is an enemy of peace. It's best to get the anger out! Anger blocks our ability to be humble and to forgive our offender. James 1:20 says that human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. The greek word used here for righteousness is literally translated as justice...so human anger cannot produce justice. Without justice there is no peace. In other words, we cannot be peacemakers if we are filled with anger. It's imperative to the peacemaking process that we find a way to get rid of the anger in our hearts. And the reason I suggest that we tell God about our negative emotion is that he is safe. He already knows our hearts. He wants what is best for us. He will point us to truth. They may not be true of all people. Can I caution you to be selective about who else you talk to about your negative feelings. Venting out anger to other people sets the stage for slander and gossip. If you choose to talk to someone about your feelings, make sure that person will hold you accountable to the standards of God's word, and not just justify your feelings and actions.
2. Fill up my heart with good stuff: out with the bad and in with the good: I spend time in God's word, reading about his goodness, his truth, and his promises for those of us who pursue him. It's an excellent encouragement on the difficult days. I have a page of scriptures that I turn to, and make myself read when I am caught in conflict and can't let my negative emotion go- the verses reset my mind and my heart and align them with truth. I have put a copy of those scriptures on my website, and you can access them under the tab called "practical resources." It's called Encouragement for Peacemaking. Feel free to download, print and use this sheet as a guide when you are struggling. I cannot overstate the importance of God's word in becoming a peacemaker. The second good thing to help fill you up with good is to ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with his fruit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23) This sounds simple - but it works. Just asking the Spirit to fill you with those qualities will make a difference. Trust me, I am about the least patient and gentle person on the planet, but when I take the time to ask for those things, I find that I have more available to me.



These two steps are so crucial - they cannot be circumvented. There is no shortcut. Doing the heart work is the most important preparation for peacemaking. From the heart flows everything else! **SO DO THE HEART WORK FIRST.** It changes you and enables you to be a force for peace. Then, and only then, If you are still struggling, move on to the next steps.

3. Give the benefit of the doubt: This has to do with changing the lens through which we interpret difficult interactions. Let me give you an example: after I have a challenging conversation with someone, I find that if I examine why I am so angry, it's usually because I assume they were ill-intentioned or had bad motives. I assumed the worst. "That person was so rude to me, they must not like me." Once I have identified that assumption, I force myself to give the benefit of the doubt and assume good, "That person was so rude to me, they must be having a really bad day or be really hurting to treat someone like that." Can you see the difference? One lens allows me to feel and act like a victim- which fuels my anger, one lens allows me to step aside and not take things so personally and forgive. But I have to take the time to analyze the conversation and find out where I am assuming the worst and switch it to the best. That's where it's helpful to journal it out. Colossians 1:13 urges us to "make allowance for each other's faults." Allow people to make mistakes. Allow them to have bad days. Allow them to screw up. Don't assume it's all about you. Most of the time, it's not. Give people the benefit of the doubt.

4. Keep your eyes on the prize: the ultimate goal of peacemaking is harmony. Unity. Reconciliation. So keep your eyes focused on the win and what it would look like if peace was achieved. Maybe family gatherings would be more pleasant. Maybe you would grow closer in your marriage. Maybe your workplace could become more productive. Don't look at the obstacles you see directly in front of you- like how hard it is to work for peace, or how unfair it feels to yield to others, or the pain that comes from interactions with that person, rather keep your eyes on the reward that will come with peace. In addition, doing the hard work of being a peacemaker will reap eternal benefits! Don't lose sight of the reward you will receive in heaven! Matthew 5 promises that peacemakers will be called children of God- and God's children have an incredible inheritance awaiting them.

Developing an eternal mindset is key- being willing to endure pain now for the eternal reward later. Patient Endurance. Keeping my eyes on the prize has been a wonderful motivator for me - both in reaping a harvest on earth and in anticipation of my heavenly reward.



5. Pray like crazy: Ask God to help you reconcile with the offender. Then, **PRAY FOR THE PERSON WHO YOU ARE AT ODDS WITH.** Pray that you will be able to forgive them. Pray that God will bless them. Pray for them to be healed. Pray for them to draw closer in their relationship with God. It will radically change you. It's almost impossible to harbor anger and bitterness in your heart for someone that you are earnestly praying for each day. It's the ultimate act of love and grace- to pray for your enemies. Romans 12:14 reiterates, "bless those who persecute you. Don't curse them; pray that God will bless them."

There is incredible power to change your heart found in praying for someone. So often, we pray for other people to change. But we should also pray for God to bless them and change us. Prayer helps clean out our hearts.

6. Keep Pursuing: **DON'T GIVE UP.** This is a process. Most of the time, becoming a peacemaker doesn't just happen overnight. I've found that the more I humble myself, the more I dive into the word, the more I am willing to endure, the more I give the benefit of the doubt, the more I am able to handle when it comes to difficult situations. Before I did any of those things, I wasn't able to handle very much before I was a complete disaster. I had strict boundaries in place, but I was miserable. It wasn't until I heeded the nudging of the Spirit, started pursuing peace, and started investing in the Word, that I saw breakthrough and results. It was almost as though sitting inside my boundaries, protecting myself, made me all the more aware of how "wronged" I was. It put the focus on my "rights" and didn't help me get stronger peacemaking muscles.

When I started to fill up with God's truth and Spirit, I slowly started to be able to handle more difficult interactions. Instead of avoiding certain people, I grew strong enough to encounter them and walk away and still be ok. My theory is that the more a person pursues godliness, and is empowered by God, the more peacemaking we can handle. So keep pursuing peace by continuing to work on your peacemaking muscles. The goal is to keep getting stronger in our capacity to be an agent of God's peace. It took me a year of seeking peace to get strong enough to handle the really tough people in my life. It's still not always pretty, but I can handle so much more than I used to be able to. I'd love to give you some personal examples here, but I want to be respectful of the people in my life that are involved as well. I don't mind being transparent, but other people have different feelings on the matter and I want to be mindful of that.