

The Wisdom of Making Peace

James 3:18

Peace seems like such a fabulous concept, yet it is one that also seems so elusive. Deals for peace are brokered but negotiations break down due to the slightest wind of controversy. Peace treaties are signed and broken. Division, animosity, broken promises, harsh words, destructive actions can cause the thin thread of peace to break. Emotions smolder and fester to the point of boiling over into some aggressive action against the truce breaker.

It's evident in marriages between husband and wife. Over time, the annoyance of little things can gnaw and eat away like cancer resulting in drastic actions that bring divisiveness rather than wedded bliss. [For example, take this 1930 article from the Chicago Tribune. They ran a story about Harry Havens. He was the kind of husband who liked to help his wife around the house. But one day she scolded him for the way he did the dishes. Harry became so mad that he said, "All right, if that's the way you feel, I'm going to bed. I'm going to stay there for the rest of my life and I don't want to see you ever again."](#) According to the story he stayed in bed with a blindfold around his eyes for seven years. The article concluded by saying that he got up when the bed started to feel uncomfortable.

Sibling rivalry is a real and threatening thing. It happened in our home over some toy or who got the bigger piece of cake or who crossed the imaginary line in the back seat of the car. If you aren't an only child, it happened in your home as well.

Parents and children have their moments of unrest. Extended families have squabbles. Spats erupt between neighbors because tree limbs hang over a fence.

Tensions arise between employers and employees. A strike happens because they can't agree on something: hours, wages, promotions.

The history of any nation is fraught with examples of divisiveness between people and government, between communities and states. Our own Civil

war is a prime example.

It even occurs within the church. They are usually ridiculous things like the color of carpet, where the piano should be located on stage, the choice of hymnals, style of music, or a perceived dress code. Some border on more serious matters such as who should or shouldn't teach or the finer points of doctrine. And yes, there have even been fist fights in the church parking lot – thankfully not ours.

In his first letter to the church at Corinth, Paul sternly rebuked them because he had been informed about quarrels over what teacher they followed.

I Corinthians 1:11-12 (then v. 10)

The dictionary defines peace as freedom from war or a stopping of war; a treaty or agreement to end war or the threat of war; freedom from disagreement or quarrels, harmony; an undisturbed state of mind, absence of mental conflict, serenity; calm, quiet, tranquility.

The word itself implies that for some reason peace is lacking between those who are at odds but who seek to settle differences. The word suggests a certain degree of fragility with the possibility of being fleeting. The delicate balance of peace reminds me of two children sitting on opposite ends of a seesaw trying to balance and adjust their weight so that the evenly distributed weight causes the seesaw to be suspended in air. But the slightest movement or addition of something on either side can cause the see-saw to fall to the side where the disruption in weight or movement created the imbalance.

The word implies that where there was once division and animosity, there is now harmony.

The concept of peace in both the Old and New Testaments is the same. At its root it means well-being or salvation. This sense of wellbeing suggests that you wish the best for the other person, that there is no ill feeling toward that person. That it implies salvation reminds us of peace with God that comes through faith in Christ. Romans explains that because of sin we are enemies of God. His original

creation was one of peace and harmony. God and man were in harmony. But Adam upset the see-saw in their relationship when he made a deliberate choice to break that harmony when he sinned, casting all of us into a state of animosity with God. Both the Old and New Testament alike is God's unfolding plan to restore peace between Him and mankind and it only comes when we accept His peace offering in the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus dying on the cross for our sin. We must admit we caused the breach in peace as a sinner, repent and trust Christ as Savior and peace between us is restored. But let's be clear, it's God's doing. If it weren't for His initiative, we wouldn't seek peace.

The verse we will consider this morning is a call for each of us to be a peacemaker. But that is not possible unless and until we know the first peacemaker personally. In passages like **Romans 16:20; I Thessalonians 5:23; and Hebrews 13:20** God is called the **"God of peace."** He is the original peacemaker. **Luke 19:38** describes heaven as a place of peace. And **II Corinthians 5:19** and **Colossians 1:20** speak of peace or reconciliation through the shed blood of Christ. God has reached out and made it possible to be at peace with Him – for eternity. John Piper says **"God is a peace-loving God and a peace-making God."** And as His children, we have His character. Since He loves and pursues peace, we should too. His character is being developed in us by His Spirit as noted in **Galatians 5:22 "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace..."**

Romans 8:9 makes it clear that if we don't have His Spirit, we don't belong to Christ. If we don't have the Spirit, if we are not saved by faith in Christ, we are not God's children and we cannot be a peacemaker.

John 1:12 "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the power (right) to become the sons of God, even to those who believe on His name." And Jesus made it abundantly clear in **Matthew 5:9** that those who are the Sons of God shall be called peacemakers.

Now, let's come to our verse and read it together. **James 3:18 "Peacemakers who sow in peace**

raise a harvest of righteousness."

The Message **"You can develop a healthy, robust community that lives right with God and enjoys its results only if you do the hard work of getting along with each other, treating each other with dignity and honor."**

Let's consider three thoughts about peacemaking.
 The determination that is required in peacemaking.
 The deterrents that restrict peacemaking.
 The development that results from peacemaking.

First, the determination that is required in peacemaking.

I. THE DETERMINATION THAT IS REQUIRED IN PEACEMAKING

In the previous verses, James has been talking about differences between false wisdom and true wisdom, wisdom that is worldly or wisdom that is from God. **Verse 17** states that wisdom from God is peace-loving. That means the wise person seeks after it. Let me suggest then that being a peacemaker requires wisdom.

A. Being A Peacemaker Requires Wisdom

Anyone can create chaos. It only takes one angry person to bring havoc and turn a mob into riotous action. One angry word, one thrown brick, one dissenting voice, one thrown punch and a peaceful gathering can turn ugly with ill intent. We saw it played out again and again last year. I am not condoning or justifying the actions of some of the police incidents that have occurred over the past number of years. But what happened as a result was unjustifiable – rioting, looting, assaulting citizens as well as other law-enforcement, destructive mayhem to property by burning buildings and cars and breaking windows. It was unconscionable. Angry mobs in cities across our nation burned with hatred as they chanted "no justice – no peace." People were looking for any little thing to unleash their bitterness through violence. In some cities, little effort was made by those in authority to curtail the lawlessness that erupted with brutal terror. Rioters would not listen to any voice of reason.

One exception stands out. When others were marching with ill intent on their minds and destructive hostility in their hearts, acting Sheriff, Chris Swanson of Genesee County, stood in the gap of brewing tension in Flint to listen to those who were also demanding justice along with many across the nation.. That night he was a peacemaker, seeking to bring calm into what could have turned chaotic. Law enforcement was poised with their riot gear to suppress any attempts at lawlessness, but there was none because as a believer in Christ, Sheriff Swanson sought to be a peacemaker. He was wise. Peace didn't come instantaneously or automatically, it took effort.

From the message on **James 3:17**, we discussed the importance of understanding that true wisdom is peace-loving, because first of all true wisdom that comes from God is pure. It seeks the best. It seeks what is right and good, to obey God by right conduct, to bring resolution and reconciliation where there is animosity, not instill further chaos. We looked at **Romans 15:5-7** where Paul exhorts believers to have a spirit of unity. That's another way of saying that we are to be at peace with one another.

We also noted from **Proverbs 13:17** that the path of wisdom is peace. In the context of our passage as we consider **verses 13-19**, James points out that being a peacemaker requires wisdom. But then he explains that being a peacemaker requires work.

B. Being A Peacemaker Requires Work

Notice that James uses an agricultural setting to help us understand what is involved in peacemaking. It's the principle of sowing and reaping. We all know what the word sow means, it means to plant something. There's more to planting than just throwing some seed into the ground and hoping for the best. The soil has to be prepared, which may include putting down and tilling in some fertilizer. Robyn's favorite is spreading some llama manure she gets from a friend's farm. I spend a lot of time tilling up the soil and tilling in the manure so it's ready for planting. She selects the plants, plots out where each type of vegetable will go, and

then gets out her yardstick so she can systematically lay out the plans as uniformly as possible.

But even after the plants are in the ground, the work isn't done. If it's been hot and dry, she waters them. And then there are the weeds. They grow as fast or faster than the plants. She gets out her little tiller and tills the weeds up or she will sit on her little rolling garden bench and pull weeds.

Whether it's a vegetable garden or a flower garden, sowing is work. It's not one and done, it takes a lot of effort. So does peacemaking. There is always a little weed of unrest here and there among people that pokes through requiring attention if we are to maintain peace. Signing a peace treaty doesn't mean that all tensions are automatically resolved. James implies that peacemaking is constant work.

If it isn't clear from what James says about the work required to be a peacemaker, consider carefully Paul's words.

Romans 14:19 "Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification."

II Corinthians 13:11 "Finally, brothers, good-by. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you."

Ephesians 4:3 "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."

I Thessalonians 5:13 "Live in peace with each other."

II Timothy 2:22 "...Pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

Did you catch the actions required that speak of the work involved in being a peace maker?

Effort
Live
Pursue

We do that first by yielding to God's Spirit. Remember peace is a characteristic of God that His

Spirit is developing in us. It is not referring to peace with God through salvation or the peace of God that comes when we pray trusting Him to settle our anxious minds from doubt and fear. This is a peace that is directed toward others with whom there may be strife of some kind.

We are to make the effort to pursue peace. When something occurs in a relationship with someone else be it in the home, at work, with a neighbor, Scripture directs us to pursue after peace, to seek reconciliation.

Matthew 5:23-24

I have a note in my study Bible that says “seek restitution or reconciliation – take responsibility.”

Now you might be saying, “I didn’t start it. It was their fault. They caused the rift. I’m not the problem. They should come to me.”

That may all be true. But what **Matthew 5:23-24** says is that while you may not be the problem that created the split, you are the solution. We are to make every effort to do what leads to peace.

Now some of you might be tempted to say “what if the other person doesn’t want to seek peace? What if they aren’t interested in mending the fence? To that I say, you have done your part. You have sought peace. You can’t make them mend the fence.

Being a peacemaker takes work. It means attempting to build bridges that have been broken down. Peacemakers don’t want the tension and animosity to remain. They want unity. We are to make every effort to bring reconciliation. Sometimes a peacemaker may serve as a mediator. Sometimes the mediator is the one who receives the punches.

I have read different sources that among the most difficult situations a police officer walks into is a domestic dispute. They get a call that a husband and wife are having a heated argument. They arrive on scene to be a mediator and diffuse the situation only to find that where moments earlier the couple was at each other’s throats, they join and turn on the officer with verbal and sometimes physical assault.

Jesus was the ultimate mediator. He not only took the wrath of God against man, He also took the insults of man against God. And yet it was His sacrifice that made it possible for the two to come together in peace through His shed blood.

Being a peacemaker takes work. It takes work to pray about how to approach someone with whom you may be at odds for any variety of reasons. It takes mental energy to work through figuring out how to approach them and what to say, so that you don’t say the wrong thing or say the right thing in the wrong way and make things worse.

It takes emotional energy because as you think about approaching that person, you recall everything that caused the hurt in the first place.

It takes emotional energy because you aren’t sure how that person will receive you or the message you hope to convey in order to restore a broken relationship.

It takes emotional energy to overcome pride as the reason for not wanting to pursue peace in the first place. Until you humble yourself and deal with your pride, it will be difficult to go and seek peace.

In his book The Peacemaker, Ken Sande talks about three ways that people deal with conflict. The **first type** is what he calls *peace-faking*. They are the people who try to escape it. The person becomes cold or distant around you and when you ask if you did something that might have offended them, they just say no, everything is okay. Rather than deal with it they avoid it and fake peace.

The **second type** of person Sande calls *peace-breaking*. Rather than attempt to reconcile, this person goes into attack mode and slanders you. They spread rumors about you and do what they can to destroy your reputation.

The **third type** of person is *peace-making*. That’s the person we need to be. Peacemaking is what our verse is about.

As you consider these three types of people,

which type best describes you? Are you peace-faking, peace-breaking, or peace-making?

Being a peacemaker requires determination. James says it is the wise path to take but one that will require work. In **Matthew 5:9** Jesus pronounced a blessing on peacemakers. Paul told the Romans that **“If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.” (Romans 12:18)** In other words, don’t let the reason peace isn’t pursued, be your fault. You do what you can to promote peace. **One author stated that “believers are to cultivate peace with everyone to the extent that it depends on them.”**

Let me offer one more reason being a peacemaker is work. It’s because it requires obedience. Sometimes doing the right thing is the hard thing, and sometimes the hard thing is obeying God to go and be a peacemaker. They might reject us or turn on us again and lash out at us and we aren’t sure we want to go through that emotional, even potentially physical abuse again. We can’t handle another rejection.

Proverbs 16:7 “When a man’s ways are pleasing to the Lord, He makes even his enemies live at peace with him.”

Determine in your heart to be a peacemaker.

As we have seen, being a peacemaker can be work, not just because of the effort required on our part to pursue it, but sometimes we are the problem as to why we don’t seek peace. We can create our own barriers to peacemaking. There can be deterrents restricting peacemaking.

II. THE DETERRENTS RESTRICTING PEACEMAKING

We see several mentioned in **verses 14-16**. Since we considered those verses a few weeks ago, I won’t take the time to discuss them at length here. But let me just remind you that such deterrents which restrict the pursuit of peacemaking have everything to do with the kind of wisdom that comes from the world. They speak for themselves because such worldly wisdom is self-seeking rather

than serving to promote peace with others.

In **verse 14** James mentions bitter envy and selfish ambition or putting self first above everyone else. That’s the kind of attitude that would say “if the other person wants peace they’re going to have to come to me. I’ll never take the initiative to go to them. They started it, they can finish it.”

In **verse 15** James talks about false wisdom that is worldly, sensual or unspiritual and of the devil. The devil doesn’t want unity, he wants disunity. He doesn’t want peace, he wants disruption. He doesn’t want harmony, he wants havoc. On the other hand, we see in **John 17** that Jesus prayed for unity.

In **verse 16**, James concludes that where those kinds of characteristics exist, you will have chaos or confusion and every evil work. That lacks peace. Let me remind you from **I Corinthians 14:33 “God is not the God of confusion, but of peace.”**

When we get to **James 4**, we will see that James helps us understand why fighting and quarreling exist even within the church.

Other characteristics that restrict peacemaking are things like bitterness, anger, resentment, jealousy, unforgiveness, and lying. It really boils down to the difference between letting the old nature have its way in you or living by the new nature.

If we are a new creation (**II Corinthians 5:17**) and old things have passed away, we should get rid of things in our character that cause chaos and division and seek things that bring peace. If we live by the new nature, peace will ensue. If we live by the old nature, there will be no peace.

Ephesians 4:22-24, 29-5:2

When you compare the kinds of characteristics of the old nature and those of the new nature, it’s very obvious which ones do not promote peace. And as we see in **5:1**, we are to imitate God. So if He is a God of peace, that should be an attribute that we emulate. **How would you rather be known, as someone who creates chaos and insights rebellion or someone who is a peacemaker?**

Anything in our life that does not promote peace is part of the old nature that is to be put off. Those are the characteristics, the deterrents that restrict peace.

Let me close by speaking about the development resulting from peacemaking.

III. THE DEVELOPMENT RESULTING FROM PEACEMAKING

Psalm 85:10 “Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other.”

Consider again **Proverbs 16:7 “When a man’s ways are pleasing to the Lord, He makes even his enemies live at peace with him.”**

J Vernon McGee writes “What we are is what we live, and what we live is what we sow. What we sow determines what we reap. If we live in God’s wisdom, we sow righteousness and peace and we reap God’s blessing. If we live in man’s worldly wisdom, we sow sin and war, and we reap confusion and every evil work.”

Among the things mentioned in **Proverbs 6:16-19** that God hates is a person who sows discord. If we want to be a peacemaker we must pursue righteousness, being right with God in our lives. The literal translation of **verse 18** reads “**and the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.**”

The Living Bible “Peacemakers plant peace and reap righteousness.”

When we sow peace, we sow righteousness. Peace making produces more fruit of righteousness in us and in others.

John Piper adds that “purity is the basis for biblical peace.” As I mentioned earlier, if we are not at peace with God, we cannot be a peacemaker. The fruit of peace can’t be developed in us because we are not right with God. As we saw **in verse 17**, the wisdom from God is first pure or righteous, then peace-loving. Righteousness precedes peacemaking.

Consider Jesus as our example for developing the characteristics necessary to be a peacemaker.

A peacemaker is gentle. **Isaiah 42:3** says the Messiah would be the kind of person who would mend broken lives because He would be gentle.

A peacemaker loves others as himself.

A peacemaker willingly forgives others as Christ has forgiven him.

Ephesians 4:32

Colossians 3:13

A peacemaker exemplifies the characteristics of **I Corinthians 13** – love, patience, kindness, not envious, not proud, not rude, not self-seeking, does not keep record of wrongs, does not delight in evil, it seeks to protect, trust, hope and persevere.

One author noted “the legacy of those who bring peace rather than conflict is a harvest of righteousness. The fruit that comes from peacemaking in the Christian community will be the righteous conduct that God will bless (but this is not produced by the ‘the anger of man).”

James 1:20 says that “**anger does not produce the righteous life that God desires.**”

Some people look at an apple and see only the apple. They see something they can eat, make into a dessert or put on a salad. Others look at that same apple and see all the fruit that is contained in the seeds that are sown which produce an abundance of trees that produces more fruit to be harvested.

Are you at peace with others or are you the kind of person that disrupts peace? How is your character affecting the reputation of Christ and His church in your family, with your neighbors, and in your community?

Do you need to be a peacemaker with someone today?

If you seek righteousness, you will pursue being a peacemaker. There is true wisdom in that kind of pursuit. It will take work, but you will reap righteousness.