

Blessed Are the Peacemakers

Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God,” (Matthew 5:9). God calls us to resolve the conflicts and misunderstandings that inevitably arise. “If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men,” (Romans 12:18). Here are a few guidelines to help the process:

1. **Bear all things.** Not every disagreement and hurt needs to be directly confronted. Much of the tension that arises between us results from our character flaws as opposed to outright sin. Sometimes what we need is a simple spirit of forgiveness toward the failings of others. “Bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do,” (Colossians 3:13).
2. **Settle the motive.** Should you decide to confront a problem, what would your attempt at peacemaking accomplish? Keeping the glory of God and the good of people your focus will bring the best outcome. Be willing to die for your brother or sister. “Leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift,” (Matthew 5:24).
3. **Remove the plank.** Check for a critical spirit, a desire for revenge, or any number of other ungodly motives. “Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye,” (Matthew 7:5).
4. **Consider yourself.** Even the best of us can be tempted to great wrong. Go in the spirit of humility. “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted,” (Galatians 6:1).
5. **Talk alone.** “Speaking the truth in love,” communicate your concern (Ephesians 4:15). Spare the individual undue embarrassment by keeping the matter as private as possible. Such conversations will resolve the vast majority of conflicts. “In nine cases out of ten, these efforts will be successful.”ⁱ “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother,” (Matthew 18:15).
6. **Take one or two more.** This is the most neglected step in the Matthew 18 process. There aren’t enough peacemakers in the world or the church! This additional person should be as impartial and as mature as possible, lest the brother or sister feel “ganged up on.” “But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established,’” (Matthew 18:16).
7. **Take it to the church.** This last resort involves the situation coming before the church body as a whole, rather than just the church board. “Shall a few persons in a board meeting take upon themselves the responsibility of disfellowshipping the erring one?”ⁱⁱ “And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector,” (Matthew 18: 17). Persistent sin and stolid resistance requires strong action. But to treat a brother or sister like a heathen is to love them in Jesus. “But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,” (Luke 6:27).

i Ellen White, *RH* April 15, 1880

ii Ellen White, *Counsels to the Church*, 257.