

## EXPOSITOR'S BIBLE COMMENTARY

**9** Jesus' concern in this beatitude is not with the peaceful but with the "peacemakers." "Peace" is of constant concern in both OT and NT (e.g., [Isa 52:7](#); [Eph 2:11-22](#); [Heb 12:14](#)). The making of peace itself has messianic overtones (cf. "Prince of Peace" in [Isa 9:6-7](#)). Jesus does not limit the peacemaking to only one kind, and neither will his disciples. In the light of the Gospel, Jesus himself is the supreme peacemaker, making peace between God and us ([Eph 2:15-17](#); [Col 1:20](#)) and among human beings. Our peacemaking will include the promulgation of that Gospel. It must also extend to seeking all kinds of reconciliation. Those who undertake this work are acknowledged as God's "sons". In the OT, Israel has the title "sons" ([Dt 14:1](#); [Hos 1:10](#)). Now it belongs to the heirs of the kingdom who are especially equipped for peacemaking and so reflect something of the character of their heavenly Father.

## GOT QUESTIONS

**Question: "What does 'blessed are the peacemakers' mean?"**

**Answer:** [Matthew 5:9](#) is part of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in which He says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." The Greek word translated "peacemaker" is used in only one other place in the New Testament, in a slightly different form. [Colossians 1:20](#) says, "For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having *made peace through the blood of His cross.*"

Jesus laid down His life to make peace between God and sinners, and when we can carry that message of peace to others, we are peacemakers. God delights in those who reconcile others to Himself—those who bring the [gospel](#) are "beautiful" ([Isaiah 52:7](#)). God "reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation" ([2 Corinthians 5:18](#)). Those who bring [reconciliation](#) to broken relationships are carrying on the work of Jesus, the [Prince of Peace](#). Those who give of themselves as Jesus did in order that others may know God are called "blessed." There is no real peace apart from a relationship with God ([Romans 5:1](#)). What may masquerade as worldly peace is merely a temporary lull in chaos ([John 14:27](#)). True peace is found only in a restored relationship with God. "'There is no peace,' says the LORD, 'for the wicked'" ([Isaiah 48:22](#)).

Only children of God can bring the peace of [knowing God](#) to others. A person must have a real relationship with God before he or she can help someone else know God. Those who witness for Christ, share their faith with their friends, and serve others in the name of Christ are the ambassadors for peace this verse identifies (see also [Matthew 10:41-42](#)). Those who bring the wonderful message of God's peace to the world are "peacemakers," and Jesus calls them the "children of God."

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"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." (Matt. 5:9)

Two kids come howling into the kitchen. One has a toy. The other insists he temporarily set it down while he went to the restroom. The pasta water is boiling over. The kids' whining is like nails on a chalkboard. In a tone that can barely be classified as civil, a mother suggests each child find a different room to occupy.

Peace resumes. Or does it?

Each day, in a hundred moments like this one, you and I strive for what we *think* is peace. But if two children are smoldering in their rooms, planning how to avenge the evil that has befallen them, can we truly say we've brought about peace? Or have we only postponed conflict?

I believe our definition of peace is too narrow, too shortsighted, and too self-centered.

Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the (daughters) of God." (Matt.5:9)

Jesus didn't need to command us to avoid conflict or to protect our own tranquility. That's what we do naturally. Instead, the kind of person Christ is extending his blessing to is the person who brings true peace to others.

The Hebrew word for peace, *shalom*, refers to harmony, wholeness, prosperity, and welfare. We see this richer meaning of peace in Mark 5 when Jesus heals the woman with the issue of bleeding: "And he said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.'" She walked away after encountering the Savior with restored wholeness, prosperity, and welfare. She received peace.

I don't know about you, but when chaos arises, I need to stop thinking "How can I appease this person?" and begin praying "Father, how can I restore welfare here?" I'm sure the answer won't be easy and it won't be as quick a "fix" as postponing discord, but Jesus says there will be a blessing.

So, what practical steps can we take when there is conflict and we have the chance to be peacemakers?

Here are three practical steps for becoming a peacemaker.

### **Pray fervently and first**

While the Bible calls us ministers of reconciliation, it is important to acknowledge that only God can give the kind of humility, strength, resolve, perseverance, and grace that true peace will require. Faithful attempts at unity are our responsibility, but we are at God's mercy for the results. Plead with him. Pray to God that he would give you discernment and compassion and

prepare the person(s) you are struggling with for a meaningful journey toward peace. Jesus prayed for our unity; it seems fitting we should pray for it as well. Verses for inspiration: James 3:18, Philippians 4:7, Proverbs 16:7, and Psalm 29:11.

## **Listen lovingly**

Don't make assumptions about another's viewpoint or experience; ask her about it. Don't judge your brother from a mile away or let bitterness brew in your heart; have the difficult conversation. Compassionate listening is powerful and giving validity to someone's experience can build bridges. Verses for inspiration: 1 John 4:20, Romans 12:5,10, and 1 Timothy 5:1-2.

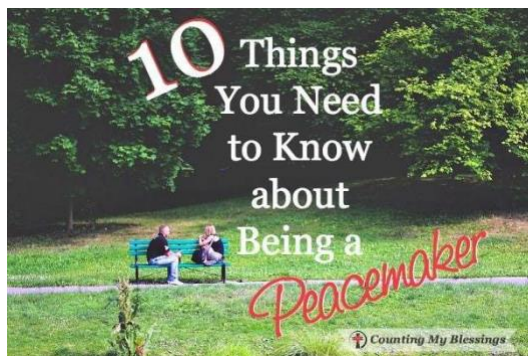
## **Rebuke when necessary**

Deception is dangerous. Sin is oppressive. If after praying for and hearing what's on another's heart, you feel as if some sin on their part is causing the discord, it is your obligation to humbly rebuke them. As people who are capable of being deceived ourselves, we correct respectfully. Being for their good and restoration, we point them back to the things God intends. Peacemakers don't avoid difficult conversations when someone's spiritual welfare is on the line. Verses for inspiration: Romans 12:1-21, 1 Corinthians 12:26, 1 Timothy 5:1-2, and Proverbs 17:17.

## **Rinse and repeat**

The process doesn't end. Even if peace was restored it will be challenged again soon enough. Persevere. Stay committed to peace and to those around you.

"Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you." (2 Cor. 13:11)



Are you a peacemaker or a peacekeeper?

As I ask that question, I want to make the point that this isn't about military or law enforcement peacekeepers . . . today we're talking personal and relational!

You see...

I hate conflict and for much of my life, I was a peacekeeper.

I did whatever it took to avoid conflict!

I have a secret for you...

***Peacekeepers operate out of fear.***

And trying to manage life through constant fear of conflict and upsetting people is a miserable way to live.

**5 Characteristics of Fearful PeaceKeepers.**

1. Peacekeepers believe in peace at any cost. Peacekeepers walk on eggshells to not upset anyone.
2. Peacekeepers walk on eggshells to not upset anyone. Peacekeepers hide their true feelings to prevent arguments.
3. Peacekeepers hide their true feelings to prevent arguments.
4. Peacekeepers work to avoid and prevent conflict.
5. Peacekeepers can be vulnerable to people who will bully and abuse them.

Jesus did not tell His followers to be peacekeepers.

**He told them to be peacemakers.**

*Blessed are the **peacemakers**, for they will be called children of God.*

Matthew 5:9

A peacemaker is defined as – **one who makes peace through reconciliation.**

Do you see the difference?

**Peacekeepers keep peace out of fear through avoidance.**

**Peacemakers restore peace out of strength through reconciliation.**

If fear is keeping you in the peacekeeper category. I've learned some things I believe will help you go from peacekeeping to the kind of peacemaking Jesus wants for His followers.

**10 Things You Need to Know About Being a Peacemaker**

*A peacemaker has God's peace.*

Take time to grow in your relationship with God and ask Him to remove your fear and fill you with His impossible to understand and explain peace.

*I pray that the God who gives hope will fill you with much joy and peace while you trust in Him. Then your hope will overflow by the power of the Holy Spirit.* Romans 15:13

*A peacemaker has genuine love for others.*

Make love your goal. Encourage and build each other up that way when conflict and confrontation become necessary your relationship is built on a strong and healthy foundation.

*You were cleansed from your sins when you obeyed the truth, so now you must show sincere love to each other as brothers and sisters. Love each other deeply with all your heart.* 1 Peter 1:22

*A peacemaker prays.*

Ask God to help you to know if confrontation is needed. Pray for His wisdom, direction, and peace. Ask Him to help you listen with compassion. And to give you words that will help not hurt.

*Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long. He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them His way.* Psalm 25:4–5,9

*A peacemaker builds trust in every relationship.*

Be truthful and trustworthy. Live with integrity. Reconciliation and peace are more likely when there is trust and honesty in the relationship. If you believe a person cares about you and wants what is best for you . . . you are more likely to work together toward peace.

*Brothers and sisters, think about the things that are good and worthy of praise. Think about the things that are true and honorable and right and pure and beautiful and respected. Do what you learned and received from me, what I told you, and what you saw me do. And the God who gives peace will be with you.* Philippians 4:8–9

*A peacemaker identifies and addresses conflict.*

Know when it's important to confront and when it's better to keep silent. That's not easy. Here are three questions to ask yourself:

**1. Does this behavior or situation dishonor God?**

*So you do not belong to yourselves because you were bought by God for a price. So honor God with your bodies.* 1 Corinthians 6:19–20

## 2. Does it hurt the individual?

*Respect for the Lord gives life. It is like a fountain that can save people from death.* Proverbs 14:27

## 3. Does it hurt our relationship?

*Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.* Ephesians 4:3

*A peacemaker wants to understand.*

Listen! Approach every conversation with a desire to understand not to respond and stay compassionate. This isn't about being right or winning . . . it's about loving and helping.

*The mind of a person with understanding gets knowledge; the wise person listens to learn more.* Proverbs 18:15

*A peacemaker controls his/her anger.*

Watch your tone and body language as well as your words. This is hard, isn't it? When emotions are high it's hard to stay calm. You can do it! Practice and pray!

*Do not be bitter or angry or mad. Never shout angrily or say things to hurt others. Never do anything evil. Be kind and loving to each other, and forgive each other just as God forgave you in Christ.* Ephesians 4:31–32

*A peacemaker speaks the truth with love.*

Choose your words carefully. Make every effort to communicate how much you value the person and the relationship as you talk about the problem.

*When you talk, do not say harmful things, but say what people need—words that will help others become stronger. Then what you say will do good to those who listen to you.* Ephesians 4:29

*A peacemaker works toward resolution.*

Do what you can. Do your best. Then trust God with the outcome. Continue to pray. And keep an open heart and mind.

*The whole body depends on Christ, and all the parts of the body are joined and held together. Each part does its own work to make the whole body grow and be strong with love.* Ephesians 4:16

*A peacemaker is not overcome by fear.*

You will have conversations that make your stomach do flip-flops. I know I do. But start at the top of the list and begin again. Don't give in to fear.

*God did not give us a spirit that makes us afraid but a spirit of power and love and self-control.* 2 Timothy 1:7

### **Peace-making is hard work!!**

It's not easy. Sometimes it feels easier to be a peacekeeper. But you and I are not called to peacekeeping, we're called to peacemaking.

I believe by God's grace and with His help . . . it's possible or He would not have told about the blessing of peacemaking.

*Those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of righteousness.* James 3:18