

PURSUE PEACE

Ponder: Why am I so stressed out?

“He who would love life and see good days . . . Let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil” (1 Peter 4:10-12).

Politicians and diplomats talk endlessly about peace. Jesus, however, offers peace that is far different from what the world gives (John 14:27).

Biblical peace is not merely the absence of conflict, desirable as that might be. Two sides may not be shooting at each other; that doesn't mean they are at peace! Real peace involves tranquility, serenity, harmony, and rest. Unfortunately, such is not the norm, either in the political realm or the personal. For now, let's focus on the personal.

Paul told Timothy to “pursue . . . peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Timothy 2:22). Christians ought to be at peace with each other. Our adversary, the Devil, will provide more than enough hostility; we certainly need not fight with each other! As mentioned earlier, however, peace is not the norm. Christians are not immune from selfishness, and selfishness breeds hostility (see James 4:1). Keeping our own desires in check while truly seeking the well-being of others takes self-discipline and hard work.

Our efforts are not limited to peace with fellow-Christians. Hebrews 12:14 exhorts us to “pursue peace with all people.” Of course the Lord realizes that some people will rebuff our attempts; in fact, some are openly and intentionally hostile. Thus the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write, “If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men” (Romans 12:18). Not even Jesus had peace with enemies who were determined to fight against Him. It didn't all depend on Him, and it doesn't all depend on us.

Peace with fellow-Christians and with all people will be practically impossible unless we are at peace with God. Peter instructs us to “seek peace and pursue it” (1 Peter 3:11). This is one of the keys to living a long, happy life. Too much stress can kill! Being at peace with God, knowing that He is watching over us, hearing and answering our prayers, helps us to enjoy tranquility and serenity.

Yes, it takes effort and discipline to pursue peace; but the benefits are more than worth it!