



## Practical Peacemaking Tips

The world is being torn apart by violence. The day when there might have been any truth to the idea that war is just between opposing armies is long gone. The news is full of shootings, bombings, and attacks in which civilians are often the intended targets no matter who is firing the guns or detonating the explosives. Too many children are growing up knowing only violence. The constant barrage of violence filled news is breeding fear. It is causing many people to call for extreme measures – any measures – to help them feel safe.

### What can we do to counter the fear?

Remember, fear is an emotional response and like all emotional responses, it has important consequences. If you are in eminent danger (from a tornado or starting to slide on the ice in your car, for example), fear can help you do what you already know to do (seek shelter or handle your car carefully). However, fear can also shut down the part of your brain that helps you see options and think things through. What you already know to do is a key.

- People are more likely to be afraid of people and things they do not understand.
  - It is all too easy, and in the current climate, all too common to put large groups of people in categories and then paint them all with the same brush. Think of your own family or church family; work or school community. There are many things you have in common. You can probably make a long list. However, do you all think alike or come up with the same solutions to a problem every time? Is it likely that the same is true of any group of people? Just as you probably do not want to be put in the same category with someone with whom you *disagree* on something, it is not fair to assume all people in any group have the same attitudes on an issue.
  - We are called not to judge others. We are called to love others (friends and enemies alike!) as we love ourselves. When dealing with people, Always start with love.
  - If you do not really know anything about people and countries in the news, look them up. If you do not have a good current world map or better yet an atlas that includes basic facts about countries and cultures get one! Have a good U.S. atlas too. Learn where people live. Read up on the history of the place and the people. Find out what issues and problems they are living with. A World Almanac is a quick place to get the facts about many past events that have shaped current situations (what happened and when?) and statistics on lots of things. Try to understand any situation from the point of view of the people involved. People in circumstances different from your own may be dealing with issues you cannot even imagine just as they may not know your circumstances. Remember however, we are all human beings and we have the same emotions and the same basic needs. Therefore, we will have similar responses to things (we all

love our children; get scared of things we do not understand, etc.). Focus on the things you have in common with people then try to understand where you may differ and why.

- **Do not forget**, the Internet can be a good tool when seeking information. However, know your source and check more than one. There are lots of websites out there that are biased, and some are intentionally misleading. Also, remember, you have no way of knowing who is on the other end of many posts or tweets, and separating opinion from facts, especially in this form of communication, is not always easy. Because something is posted does not make it true.
- If an idea or concept is new to you, look it up in an impartial source. An idea may seem crazy, even dangerous, but it may not be once you understand it. (What was it like to hear for the first time that earth was round instead of flat like everyone thought it was at the time; what did people think when they first heard there was such a thing as a telephone, for example?) Remember, an idea is not necessarily bad just because it is new to you or you do not like its author. Also, it is not necessarily good just because someone you like comes up with it. How can you condemn or agree with an idea without understanding it? Once you do understand it, you are better equipped to help make it work or help find a better workable alternative if need be.
- Remember, you are not the center of the universe, God is! Jesus expects all His people to work together for the glory of God and the good of everyone!