



Practical Peacemaking Tips

When is it time to walk away?

Part of peacemaking 101 is that when a conflict arises, you can stop a fight by just walking away. This is one of the first tools we teach from the peace-making tool box. For children on the playground, just walking away sometimes allows a schoolyard spat to be forgotten and relationships to resume. For children and the rest of us, walking away gives time for people to calm down and switch their brains from fight or flight mode to thinking mode. When people are thinking again, the fact that the answer requires only a few words – “I’m sorry”; “I forgive you” may become clear. Even when the issue is thornier, walking away allows people to consider the situation calmly and reasonably so it is much more likely a solution to the difficulty can be found. However, the key to how effective it is to walk away comes with what happens next. Especially with thorny issues, if all parties are able to sit down together once they are back in thinking mode and talk things out, walking away when the problem started worked and peace can result. If there is no follow up talking time and the parties involved do not try again to reason together, there can be no healing and the situation can get worse.

Do’s and Don’ts:

- Pray about the situation and for the other parties involved – not that they will agree with you, but that God will bless and be with them.
- Pray for an open mind so you will be open to God’s leading, to hearing and studying points of view different from your own, and to options you had not thought of.
- Do not gripe or complain about the other party to yourself or anyone else. Do not talk about the other party and the situation to anyone who will listen. This only turns the other party into a villain in your mind, makes you more entrenched in your views, and produces biased supporters for your point of view, all of which make the problem bigger.
- Do practice Matthew 18 if attempting to talk to the other person yourself does not work. Bring a third party both of you respect in to help.
- Do not make sure the third party is convinced that you are right and is ‘on your side’ before the meeting with the other party takes place. A third party must be neutral. If they are not, it will probably make the problem worst. When one or both parties start lining up ‘allies’ a disagreement between two people can escalate into a community splitting problem that can tear a family, congregation or other affected group apart.
- Do use good listening skills
 - Put as much effort into hearing what the other person says as you put into figuring out what you want to say
 - Repeat back to the other party what you heard them say to make sure they are satisfied that you heard what they meant
- Do not forget, you can control and change how you think, react and respond to the situation not how anyone else thinks, reacts or responds. If your goal is to change or fix ‘them’ you have failed to make peace before you start.
- Do let past disagreements go; do not hold grudges.

Remember, no two people will agree on everything. It is OK to agree to disagree. This too can bring peace if both parties do not let having different views on an issue stand between them. When views are deeply held, this kind of peacemaking can be hard work. It takes humility as well as love and respect for the other person not a secret belief that you are really ‘right’ and someday ‘they’ will see that. A little empathy, and compassion come in handy too. Peace does not mean everyone thinks the same way about everything. Peace means accepting each person as a child of God, unique, complicated, valued, and loved; capable of greatness and sometimes sinful just as you are yourself.