

ARE YOU THE GRINCH? (Part 1) - Peace, the Remedy for Conflict

VIDEO CLIP: FIRST CHURCH GRINCH POEM

Isaiah 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Luke 2:14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

We are entering the season of the year when Christmas cards will be circulated bearing the greeting, "Peace on Earth!" With the world events we have seen recently, that sometimes seems like a cruel joke.

We not only lack peace between nations, but within ourselves. Dr. Richard Swenson, Director of the Future Health Study Center in Wisconsin, reports these findings on the North American workplace:

- The average desk worker has 36 hours of work on their desk and spends 3 hours a week sorting piles.
- The average manager is interrupted 73 times a day.
- "Moonlighting" and overtime are at record levels.
- Men average 50 hours at work per week. Because their life is more likely to include domestic chores at home, most working women average 65 to 85 hours per week.
- We spend 8 months of our lives opening junk mail.
- We spend 1 year searching for misplaced objects.
- We spend 2 years of our lives trying to call people who aren't in or whose lines are busy.

In the 1960's those who predicted the future advantages of technology felt the biggest challenge to the future would be boredom. They believed that time-saving technologies would increase productivity, and they informed a US Senate subcommittee that by 1985 people would work about 22 hours a week, 27 weeks a year, and would retire at 38. We now look at those numbers and laugh.

In his book "It's About Time" Leslie Flynn has a piece entitled, "IF YOU ARE 35, YOU HAVE 500 DAYS TO LIVE." His premise is that, when you subtract the time spent on sleeping, working, tending to personal matters, hygiene, odd chores, medical matters, eating, traveling, and other time-stealers, in the next 35 years you will have the equivalent of only 500 days to spend as you wish.

WE NEED PEACE IN SPITE OF THE PACE! But how do you have peace in the middle of modern life?

First, let's define "peace" according to the Bible – because most people don't! They define peace as "the absence of tension or conflict." That's why they are puzzled when the Arabs greet one another with "Salaam" and the Jews greet one another with "Shalom" – both meaning "peace" – and then go right on fighting!

It's like the conference where the speaker asked the participants to greet one another with the greeting of the early church – "Maranatha!" ("the Lord is coming"). He met two little old ladies in the hotel elevator the next morning who trilled in unison, "Marijuana, brother! Marijuana!"

The ancient words for peace do not mean "the absence of tension or conflict," but rather, "the tranquility of order." In other words, there may be chaos all around us, but a person with God's Spirit inside remains at peace because there is "ORDER" in their life.

The peace of God is not a lack of activity or challenge! You can be busy, but you need to be busy doing what God has called you to do or you won't have peace! One Apostolic salutation was "PEACE!"

Ephesians 1:2 Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are three applications of "PEACE" in the believer's life:

PEACE WITH GOD

- **DISOBEDIENCE** always brings a feeling of disorder to your life
- This kind of peace is a sense of **SPIRITUAL** order
- **Romans 5:1** Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:
- **Romans 14:17** For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.
- **Romans 8:6** For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

PEACE OF GOD

- **DIFFICULTIES** can bring a feeling of disorder to your life, if you look at them with the wrong perspective
- This kind of peace is a sense of **PSYCHOLOGICAL** order

- **John 14:27** Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.
- **John 16:33** These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.
- **Philippians 4:6-7** ⁶Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. ⁷And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

PEACE ON EARTH

- **DIFFERENCES** with others can bring a feeling of disorder to your life, if you look at them with the wrong perspective
- This kind of peace is a sense of **RELATIONAL** order
- **Luke 2:24** Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.
- **1 Corinthians 14:33** For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.
- **Ephesians 2:14** For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;

Every one of us has the potential to be a “GRINCH” if there is not peace in one of these areas!

And, since relationships are where we live out our everyday lives, let’s talk about what a person who has “peace on earth” acts like!

Proverbs 29:8 (LB) Fools start fights everywhere; wise men try to keep the peace.

Matthew 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Because peace is not “the absence of tension or conflict,” but rather “the tranquility of order,” **you will never achieve peace by ...**

- **AVOIDING the problem.** Unresolved conflict is like termites in a relationship; it will eventually bring the house down. Pretending the problem doesn’t exist is not peacemaking, it’s cowardice!

- **APPEASING the problem.** God doesn’t expect you to be a doormat! Jesus never backed off from a legitimate issue. Peace at any price is not legitimate peace! When I swallow my feelings all the time, my stomach keeps score.

HOW TO BE A PEACEMAKER (P.E.A.C.E.)

P - PLAN FOR PEACE

- The reason most world peace conferences don’t work is the same reason many relationships don’t work – someone has to be willing to make the first move!
- **Matthew 5:23-24** ²³ So if you are about to place your gift on the altar and remember that someone is angry with you, ²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar. Make peace with that person, then come back and offer your gift to God.
- If you are a Christian, you are to always take the initiative in seeking peace, whether you have been offended or you are the offender. Why? The longer you wait to resolve a relationship problem the bigger it gets.

E - EMPATHIZE WITH PEOPLE

- The second reason most world peace conferences don’t work is that no one is willing to look at the problem from the other’s perspective. It’s the same in relationships!
- **1 Peter 3:8 (NLT)** Finally, all of you should be of one mind, full of sympathy toward each other, loving one another with tender hearts and humble minds.
- The first thing you do is LISTEN! Why? Listening shows you care!
- Old couple seeking divorce (woman deaf). Lawyer’s questions: Do you have grounds? Yes, 40 acres. Do you have a grudge? Yes, a double. Does he beat you up? No, I’m up before him every day. What’s the problem here? He doesn’t communicate!
- When someone is hurting you, please remember: **HURT PEOPLE HURT PEOPLE!** Look beyond the hurt that you’re receiving and ask, “What is hurting them that’s causing them to hurt me?”
- Did you know that the key to intimacy is CONFLICT?
- If you never have any conflict you always exist on the surface level. But when you deal with conflict in a positive way and resolve it, it creates greater understanding, brings you closer and makes you stronger.

A - ATTACK THE PROBLEM, NOT THE PERSON

- **Proverbs 10:10 (NLT)** People who wink at wrong cause trouble, but a bold reproof promotes peace.
- **Ephesians 4:15 (TEV)** Instead, by speaking the truth in a spirit of love, we must grow up in every way to Christ, who is the head.
- Anytime there's ongoing conflict, somebody's hiding something! The truth always sets you free!
- You're never persuasive when you're abrasive. You don't get your point across by being cross! You've got to stop fixing the blame in order to start fixing the problem.
- **7 rules for fighting fair in a relationship:**
 1. Never compare (unfair)
 2. Never condemn (not "you are ..." but "I feel ...")
 3. Never command (demanding)
 4. Never challenge (threats tear down)
 5. Never condescend (don't belittle or play psychologist)
 6. Never contradict (interrupting)
 7. Never confuse (don't bring up unrelated issues)
- If you follow these, you'll be attacking the problem, not the person.

C - COOPERATE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE

- Compromise is essential in every human relationship! Try to find areas of common ground, and places where you can be flexible.
- **Romans 12:18** If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.
- **James 3:17 (NLT)** But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and good deeds. It shows no partiality and is always sincere.
- More relationships die from inflexibility than from anything else!

E - EMPHASIZE RECONCILIATION, NOT RESOLUTION

- Reconciliation means to reestablish the relationship. Resolution means to resolve every issue. And you're just not going to do that!
- However, you can disagree without being disagreeable. You can have unity in a relationship without having uniformity. You can walk hand in hand in a relationship without seeing eye to eye. You can have reconciliation without having resolution of every difference.

- When two people agree on everything, one of them isn't necessary. In courtship, opposites usually attract. Once they're married, the opposites attack. So you have to get back on track by emphasizing reconciliation rather than resolution.
- **2 Corinthians 5:18** And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;
- Reconciliation is a synonym for being a peacemaker. When you attempt to be a peacemaker you're doing the work of God. When you're restoring relationships, you're doing the work of God.
- WHO DO YOU NEED TO RECONCILE WITH TODAY?
- Human beings are incapable of sustaining PEACE ("the tranquility of order") without help beyond themselves. You cannot produce lasting peace without God's Spirit!
- **Philippians 4:7** And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.
- Do you need peace with God (for salvation)? Do you need the peace of God (for a troubled mind)? Do you need peace on earth (for a troubled relationship)? **THEN YOU NEED GOD!**