

Introduction

The word *peace* has several facets of meaning.

- ✿ Tranquility—*like a boat sailing on a calm sea*
- ✿ Harmony—*like a song in which all the chords blend together in agreement*
- ✿ Absence of strife—*like two people walking hand-in-hand along a country road*

The Scriptures are full of admonitions to live peaceably with each other:

- ✿ *Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord* (HEBREWS 12:14).
- ✿ *Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace* (EPHESIANS 4:3).

✿ *Be of the same mind one toward another, or in other words, Be in harmony with each other* (ROMANS 12:16).

One of the biggest sources of stress is our relationships with other people. Getting along well with another person requires effort on our part, especially when the other person irritates us. That includes family members in the home, teachers in the classroom, people in our workplace, and even our brothers and sisters in the church.

None of us would like to be stranded alone on an island. Having people around keeps us from getting lonely, but people also provide multitudes of occasions for conflict. Each of us is a unique personality. Our experiences and tastes and convictions and viewpoints differ. And sometimes others bother us, disagree with us, or criticize us.

If we allow them to, any of the above can produce conflict and controversy.

According to an ancient forest folktale, two porcupines in northern Canada huddled together to get warm. When their quills pricked each other, they moved apart. But before long they were shivering, so they moved close together again. This ended the same way it had the first time, with the two edging away from each other. The lesson is this: *They needed each other, but they kept needling each other!* That's how it often is with fellow Christians.

You may have heard the little jingle:

*To dwell above, with saints we love,
That will be grace and glory;
To live below with the saints we know —
That's another story!*

What's the solution? Let's look at examples of conflict in the Bible, practical rules for making peace, and some final admonitions related to peacemaking.

1.

Examples of Conflict in the Bible

A number of times people in the early church “needled” each other. Paul referred to the Galatians as biting and devouring one another (GALATIANS 5:15). He exhorted the Philippians to “do all things without murmurings and disputings” (PHILIPPIANS 2:14). The Apostle James rebuked the Christians scattered abroad: “From whence come wars and fightings among you?” (JAMES 4:1).

Friction over the distribution of food.

When the church was expanding shortly after Pentecost, friction occurred among the new believers in Christ (SEE ACTS 6:1-7).

Some of the converts were Jews who had grown up in Israel, and others were Jews who lived elsewhere. Those who lived in Israel

spoke Hebrew; those who lived outside of Israel, for the most part, spoke Greek.

The Greek-speaking Jews murmured against the Hebrew-speaking Jews, and claimed their widows were being neglected.

- ✿ *Both groups had Jewish backgrounds.*
- ✿ *Both groups worshiped Jehovah God.*
- ✿ *Both were now Christians and were seeking to be loyal to Christ, but they were in conflict with each other.*

Both groups had widows that needed help, and the apostles had devoted much time to providing material aid for them. I'm sure they tried to be fair in the distribution and did not intend to neglect a certain group. But it is easy for people to imagine that they are being slighted. That seems to have been the case in the early church at Jerusalem.

Some church leaders might have glossed over the complaint, but not the apostles. They sensed that a fire was smoldering, so they