

The Encourager

Blessed Are the Peacemakers

In Old Testament (and, even today, in some parts of the world), a well was an extremely valuable commodity. It was a necessity for human survival and for the well-being of livestock. It's not surprising, then, that a well was often a source of contention as people argued about who owned the well.

For example, "Isaac dug again the wells of water that had been dug in the days of Abraham his father...and he gave them the names that his father had given them. But when Isaac's servants dug in the valley and found there a well of spring water, the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's herdsmen, saying, 'The water is ours.'"... Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over that also." (Genesis 26:18-21).

I recently read a humorous story about a conflict over a well:

An Arab bought a well from a Jew. The next day, while on his way to market, he met the Jew who told him, "Brother Patel, I sold the well to you, but I did not sell the water, so if you use the water, you will have to pay extra for it."

The Arab replied, "I was just planning to come over to your place and ask you to empty the water, and if you don't, then you will have to pay me rent for your water staying in my well."

Sounds like someone could have used the peacemaking spirit of Isaac! When the herdsmen of Gerar wanted to argue about the two wells he had just dug, Isaac simply "moved from there and dug another well." (Genesis 26:22).

There's a part of us that wants to say that wasn't right. Isaac should have insisted on keeping his first two wells. He dug them. They belonged to him. They were his by right. But Isaac understood something that we are sometimes slow to understand – that God often expects us to give up our "rights" in the name of peace.

As a result, we have trouble understanding how to apply Jesus's command, "If anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well." (Matthew 5:40). That goes against our human nature. We want to fight for what is rightfully ours. And the more precious the item is to us, the harder we will fight. We don't want to be seen as a "doormat" and we feel the need to stand up for ourselves if we are not being treated fairly.

Meanwhile, Isaac simply "moved from there and dug another well." (Genesis 26:22). No fighting, no arguing. He said, "It's mine, but you can have it." And, in the process, Isaac lived out one of the Beatitudes of Jesus, setting a great example for us:

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." (Matthew 5:9) —*Alan Smith*

Passing the test

Samuel Stokes, a missionary who worked with lepers in India in the early 1900s, walked through the Punjab region with only a water bottle and a blanket. He depended wholly on the hospitality of the region's residents.

In one village, Stokes received a particularly hostile reception. Village leaders sat in chairs in a circle, leaving Stokes sitting on the floor the entire evening. When he asked if he might teach them and nurse their sick, they hurled insults at him. Stokes offered no reply. Finally, the men gave the missionary some stale bread crusts in a dirty bowl. Stokes thanked them and ate. This scene repeated itself for two days. But then on the third day, the top village official laid his turban at Stokes' feet as a sign of respect. "We'd heard that Jesus' disciples were commanded to love their enemies," the man said, "and we decided to put you to the test."

Having seen Jesus' love in action through Stokes, the amazed villagers found him credible. They served him a rich feast and listened eagerly to his teachings.



Therefore encourage one another with these words.

1 Thessalonians 4:18

QUOTES

Today is the tomorrow you worried about yesterday.

Author Unknown

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL ADVENTURES ARE NOT THOSE WE GO TO SEEK.

Robert Louis Stevenson

In times like these, it helps to recall that there have always been times like these.

Paul Harvey

What people say you cannot do, you try and find that you can.

Henry David Thoreau

Where all think alike, no one thinks very much.

Walter Lippmann

Treasure the love you receive above all. It will survive long after your gold and good health have vanished.

Og Mandino

HUMOR TO BREAK UP THE WINTER BLAHS

- Don't let your worries get the best of you; remember, Moses started out as a basket case.
- Some people are kind, polite and sweet-spirited ... until you try to sit in their pew.
- People are funny: They want the front of the bus, the middle of the road and the back of the church.
- Quit griping about your church; if it was perfect, you couldn't belong.
- Forbidden fruits create many jams.
- Working for God on earth doesn't pay much, but his retirement plan is out of this world.



Wishes for the new year

Faith that increaseth, walking in light;
Hope that aboundeth, happy and bright;
Love that is perfect, casting out fear;
These shall insure thee a happy New Year.

Peace in the Savior, rest at his feet,
Smile on his countenance, radiant and sweet,
Joy in his presence, Christ ever near!
This will insure thee a happy New Year.

—Frances Ridley Havergal

Burden bearers

Bear one another's burdens, the Bible says. It is a lesson about pain that we all can agree on. Some of us will not see pain as a gift; some will always accuse God of being unfair for allowing it.

But, the fact is, pain and suffering are here among us, and we need to respond in some way. The response Jesus showed was to bear the burdens of those he touched. To live in the world as [Jesus'] body, his emotional incarnation, we must follow his example.

The image of the body accurately portrays how God is working in the world. ... We announce his message, work for justice, pray for mercy ... and suffer with the sufferers.

—Philip Yancey, *Where Is God When It Hurts?*

Resolve to listen

Christian philosopher Paul Tillich said, "The first responsibility of love is to listen." Yet in our fast-paced culture, truly listening to someone has become a lost art.

The intricate Chinese written character for the verb to listen offers wise insight about how to listen to people so they feel heard. The symbol is actually a combination of characters for ears, eyes and an open heart. Basically it reads, "I give you my ears, my eyes and my undivided attention." What a great image of being fully engaged during the act of communication!

James 1:19 offers two wise resolutions for the year ahead: Be "quick to listen" and "slow to speak" (NRSV). Practicing the skill of active listening is a much-needed way to minister to other people, serving as Jesus' "ears" in a hurting world.



KINGS & PROPHETS OF ISRAEL Word Search



BiblePuzzles.org.uk

AHAB
 AHAZIAH
 AHIJAH
 AMOS
 BAASHA
 ELAH
 ELIJAH
 ELISHA
 HOSEA
 HOSHEA
 IDDO

JEHOAHAZ
 JEHOASH
 JEHORAM
 JEHU
 JEROBOAM
 MENAHEM
 NADAB
 OMRI
 PEKAH
 PEKAHIAH
 ZECHARIAH