

LWML *Texas* District

September 2023

Bible Study

Living Peacefully

Read Hebrews 12:14–15. What stands out to you the most in these verses?

When beauty pageant contestants are asked, “What goal do you have for our world’s future?” the Hollywood answer is always “world peace.” Is world peace even a realistic concept? Read Matthew 24:3–8. It gives us the answer.

However, we are told what we should strive for in Hebrews 12:14. We should strive for peace with everyone. Bizarre as it sounds, peace is a controversial topic. Surely, we aren’t being asked to be at peace with those whom we hate for good reason, or be at peace with those who mistreat us? We should strive to make peace with these exact people. We are to be striving for peace AND holiness. When we hold on to grudges or the sins of our neighbor, we are setting up the perfect environment for bitterness to take root. In your own life, where have you seen bitterness creep in? Have there been opportunities to resist the temptation of bitterness? What tips might you share with a friend on how to avoid it?

Striving for peace requires several things — forgiveness and active participation. Both things require God to be at work. Forgiveness is a gift from God, it does not come from our own desires. In Matthew 6:14–15, He gave us the authority to forgive others here on earth, but the power to do so came directly from Him. Active participation requires God to be sustaining our lives. Striving is significant work. The Greek word used in Hebrews 12:14 is *diokete*. The word can mean pursue, strive, or seek after. When you are pursuing a dream or goal, what are you actively doing to reach it?

You might make a plan. You may also create action steps to ensure your success. It’s also possible that you may enlist other people in the process of your goal — a support system. When we have accountability and stability, it’s much easier to stay on track to do big, hard things. Could these be helpful in striving for peace too?

Striving for peace can also look like letting our own personal desires go. There are times when we do not receive what we want. In fact, there are times when we get the exact opposite of our desires. Letting the feelings of disappointment or hurt fester can also allow bitterness to take root. God promises us His peace in Philippians 4:4–7.

We are given some amazing advice in Philippians 4. When we pray, God gives us a gift — peace that surpasses all understanding. God gives us courage and rest, and takes on our burdens gladly. The peace that surpasses all understanding is almost impossible to fathom with our limited knowledge. Have you ever experienced peace that made no sense? It should have been a terrifying situation, but God enabled you to get through it peacefully with a calm you have rarely experienced.

When my family brought a 17-year-old young man to live in our home he was a complete stranger. Yet, we were not scared to take him in temporarily. We were told it would only be for the summer, and he would get a dorm room in the fall. When fall came, he stayed with us a few more months. After he left us, we were asked if we were afraid of what could have happened to our 3-year-old daughter with a stranger living in our home. I knew that by following God's call to house this young man for a time and be an example of Christ's love, we would all be safe. In hindsight, it is easy to imagine all the terrible things that could have happened. However, in the moment, we knew we were supposed to do it, and God gave us peace about the decision. All fears and doubts were extinguished. It was a joy to have him with us, and we missed him when he was gone.

Where is God calling you to strive peace? Where is He leading you to pursue Him and His glory? Where do you need to seek God's help in uprooting the bitterness that has been growing in your life? Where do you need to seek forgiveness from others and bless them with forgiveness too?

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