

### **Didn't Jesus use force to throw the moneychangers out of the temple?**

Jesus was calling the people to restore the temple to its rightful place—not a center of commerce but a place where people of all nations could come to pray peacefully. Jesus' actions hurt no one and killed no one. Neither did he take control of the temple, politically or religiously.

Isaiah 56:7; cf. 65:25; Jeremiah 7:1-15; Mark 11:15-16; John 2:14-16

### **Aren't Christians supposed to obey the earthly authorities that God has set over us?**

Actually, Paul writes that we are to be *subject* to the governing authorities, not *obey* them. This means we shouldn't rebel against the authorities or try to overthrow them. However, governments sometimes ask Christians for an allegiance that belongs only to God, which is idolatrous. Or they ask people to take actions, like going to war, that violate Christian principles and conscience. In such cases, Christians are to "obey God rather than human authority."

Acts 5:29b

### **What would Christian pacifists do if someone tried to attack their spouse or child?**

Christians committed to Jesus' way of peace might try to deter violent action by stepping between the assailant and the family member. Or they might appeal to the assailant's conscience and humanity, or try to restrain or distract a violent person. In the end, though, the Christian must entrust the final outcome to God. We need to trust that God will be with us and our loved ones, no matter what.

### **Shouldn't we stop murderers and terrorists so they don't do more harm? Don't we need to meet violence with an equal or greater force in order to neutralize it?**

Murderers and terrorists should be held accountable for their horrendous deeds. However, Christians committed to Christ's way of peace do not seek revenge, but seek to restore peace where there is hate and hostility. This means taking the long view, asking, What policies and practices will promote peace with justice? Christ's way of peace may not always be the most effective way to stop violence *in the short run*. But Christ's disciples want to be faithful to the way of Christ, even if it means the way of the cross—one's own death.

### **How can I enjoy religious freedom and other freedoms for which others fought if I am not willing to fight?**

It is easy to fall into the common belief that democratic freedoms can only be attained or preserved through war. But history proves that democracy and freedom have also been preserved by brave people who stood up for justice. In fact, ideas about separation of church and state and freedom of religion and conscience—essential to modern democracies—came from the pacifist Anabaptists of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, not from the American or French revolutions.

### **Why shouldn't I be proud to be an American, fly the flag, and say the pledge of allegiance?**

Christians should be grateful for our homeland, with its freedoms and opportunities. We should work for the good of all in our country, be respectful of our fellow citizens, and pray for our rulers. However, as Christians, we belong to a body without borders—the church of Jesus Christ. This body transcends nationality, ethnic background, and other human divisions. Our ultimate citizenship is in the kingdom of God. Some Christians choose to stand to show respect during the playing of the national anthem or pledge of allegiance, but they do not sing or recite because it compromises their ultimate allegiance to Christ.

Jeremiah 29:7; 1 Timothy 2:1-2

### **Is it okay for a Christian to join the military?**

In the early days of Christianity, when believers saw themselves as a prophetic minority, they steered clear of military force and killing. However, as Christianity became more of an established part of culture, this conviction began to break down. Christian pacifists will not want to judge Christians who choose to join the army, while at the same time they discern that this is inconsistent with Christ's way of peace.

Matthew 7:1; 1 John 4:1

### **A Historic Peace Church**

The Mennonite Church is a historic peace church that grew out of the Protestant Reformation in Europe in the early 1500s. A small group of reformers felt the New Testament taught that church should be separate from state. They believed their ultimate loyalty was to God, and that Jesus' disciples should follow his example and put away the sword. They also believed people should voluntarily follow Christ through adult baptism, rather than being baptized into the state church as infants. Thousands of these Anabaptists ("rebaptizers") were persecuted and martyred during the next two generations.

Menno Simons converted to Anabaptism in 1536, in the Netherlands. He traveled throughout northwestern Europe, preaching and writing. Eventually, many Anabaptists came to be called Mennonites.

*The Prince of Peace is Jesus Christ.  
We who were formerly no people at all,  
Who knew of no peace,  
Are now called to be a church of peace.  
Their hearts overflow with peace.  
Their mouths speak peace,  
And they walk in the way of peace.  
—Menno Simons, 1552*

### **Additional Information on Peace Teachings**

For more information on Mennonite beliefs, history, and peace teachings, and for a place to ask questions, go to Third Way Café ([www.thirdway.com](http://www.thirdway.com)). Also check out the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* at [www.mph.org/confess/](http://www.mph.org/confess/).

A video about Mennonites, *Many Grains*, and copies of this pamphlet and other resources about peacemaking, are available through:

**Faith & Life Resources**  
1 800 245-7894

**Mennonite Media**  
1 800 999-3534



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# MAKING PEACE WITH Enemies TEN TRUTHS CHRISTIANS NEED TO KNOW

# TEN TRUTHS CHRISTIANS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT **Enemies**

## 1. Everyone has enemies.

The Bible takes enemies seriously. King David and Jesus had enemies. If having enemies weren't a part of life, Jesus wouldn't have had to tell his disciples to love their enemies.

Matthew 5:43-44

## 2. We either fight or run from them.

Humans often respond to enemies in two ways: we either fight back or flee. Both are natural responses—our instinct is self-preservation. However, when we flee from our enemies, we can still carry them inside us. When we fight back, we take on the character of our enemies. If we strike back at our enemies, we might set off a downward spiral of attack and counterattack that quickly gets out of control.

## 3. We want to curse our enemies.

Many psalms that deal with enemies make Christians uncomfortable. The psalmist didn't just pray for them or for his own protection. He often cursed his enemies, seeking blood-thirsty revenge. Instead of dismissing these psalms, we can use them as God-given words for dealing with our own feelings of fear and anger toward enemies. If we pray these words, we release our hate and hostility to God. Then we don't need to act on our feelings of vulnerability and hostility. Then we can trust God to protect us from our enemies.

Psalms 55-59; 137:7-9

## 4. God loves them.

Jesus taught us that God loves enemies and treats them justly: God "makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous." God "is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked." Therefore, we too should "be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."

Matthew 5:45b; Luke 6:35-36

## 5. Jesus makes peace possible.

Jesus didn't just teach his disciples the way of peace. Jesus *is* our peace. The apostle Paul said that while we were warring against God, Christ died to make peace with us. Although we sinful human beings were at odds with God, God took initiative to make peace with us—through the life, death, and resurrection of his Son. Jesus has reconciled us to God in order to stop our warring madness with God and with each other.

Romans 5:6-11; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21;  
Ephesians 2:14, 17-18; Colossians 1:20

## 6. God's family makes peace.

If God makes peace with enemies, then so do God's children. As Jesus said in the Beatitudes: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called *children* of God." Peacemaking is a family trait in God's family. When God's children work for peace, they are demonstrating a family likeness, just as children in human families show traits of their parents.

Matthew 5:9

## 7. We disarm our enemies.

Jesus taught his disciples to respond to enemies in unexpected ways—ways that sometimes "disarm" them. "If anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile." Jesus' disciples respond in concrete ways to their enemies. They do not retaliate or seek revenge. They pray for their enemies. They do good to those who want to harm them.

Matthew 5:39-41; Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:27;  
Romans 12:17-21

## 8. Enemies can hurt us.

"Disarming" actions do not guarantee that Christian disciples will win over enemies. In fact, Christians are still persecuted and even killed by their enemies. It is not an accident that Jesus linked the Beatitude about peacemakers with the one about persecution. But Jesus' disciples believe there are worse things than dying. We would rather die than take another's life, since we have hope for eternal life.

Matthew 5:9-12; Matthew 10:28;  
1 Corinthians 15; Philippians 1:21

## 9. We "arm" ourselves against the real enemy.

Christians are not fighting against flesh and blood. We are not struggling with Adolf Hitler or the latest terrorist, but with principalities and powers, dark and evil spiritual forces. Our weapons are not worldly ones but spiritual ones: truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, the Spirit, and the word of God.

Ephesians 6:10-17

## 10. We can learn from our enemies.

Sometimes our enemies do us a service. Friends tend to accept or overlook our weaknesses, but enemies reflect back to us aspects of our personalities we don't like. So we ought to listen to our enemies. What are they saying to us about who we are? What can we learn from them about ourselves? Can they make us better people? We cannot be reconciled with our enemies unless we're able to see the situation from their perspective.

# IN CASE YOU WANTED TO KNOW **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

## ***Didn't God command the people in the Old Testament to fight wars?***

The children of Israel did fight wars, relying on God for victory. But prophets envisioned a different kind of world, in which peace between nations would prevail. In the New Testament, Jesus showed us "the more excellent way" of love. This gospel of peace overturned the Old Testament way of war, just as the gospel of grace overturned Old Testament dietary and ritual laws. The way of war was supplanted by Jesus' way of loving our enemies.

Isaiah 2:2-4; 11:6-9; Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 5:38-42; 1 Corinthians 13;  
2 Corinthians 2:15

## ***Didn't Jesus predict there would be wars and rumors of wars?***

This statement about the end time is descriptive, not prescriptive; it tells what *is*, not what *should be*. Jesus was calling the church to faithful discipleship in times of violence and warfare. He was not calling the church to arms or justifying participation in war.

Matthew 24:6

## ***Doesn't the peace of Christ make us right with God and bring about inner peace, rather than world peace?***

The gospel of peace results in right relationship between individuals and God. But "peace" is not just personal peace with God or an inner calm. The peace of Christ is a divine power that transforms relationships. Jesus Christ preached and embodied a peace that broke down walls of hostility between peoples.

Romans 5:1; Ephesians 2:11-22; Colossians 1:20