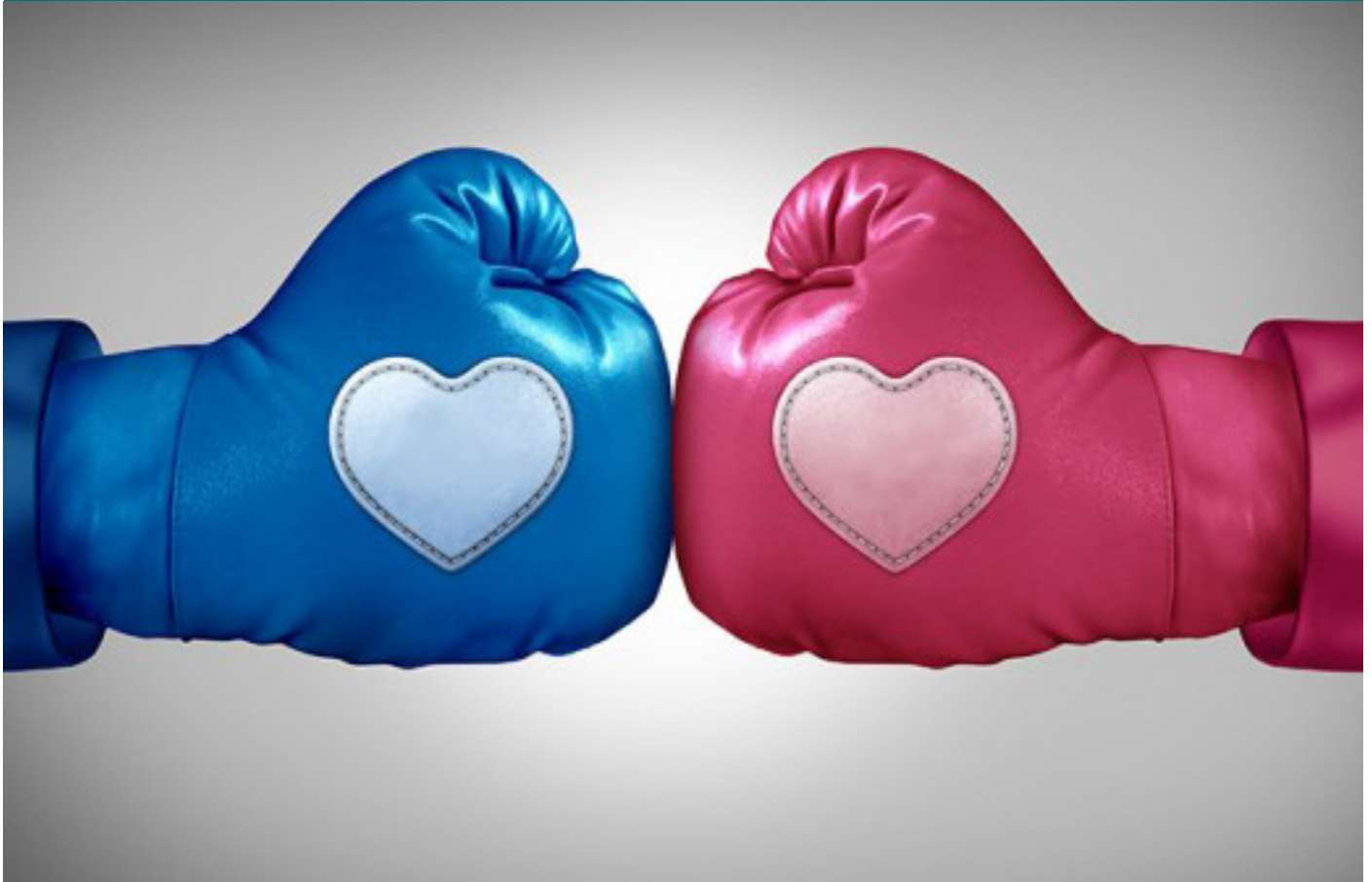


enjoying everyday life



YOU CAN LIVE CONFLICT-FREE

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Can you think of a time when you had an ongoing issue with someone in your life? Then, just when you thought you couldn't take another minute, God asked you to hang in there one more time and not give up?

Maybe you've thought, God, I have held my tongue and kept a good attitude with this person so many times, and now You want me to play the peacemaker again? This is just too much to ask!

God calls each one of us to be an instrument of His peace. Many times this means being the first to ask forgiveness or sticking with someone who has tried our patience over and over again. These situations are perfect opportunities God will use to build our character, because He can use other people to be the "sandpaper" that smooths down the rough edges in our personality.

You're probably familiar with Matthew 18:21-22 (AMPC). Peter asked Jesus how many times he had to forgive someone who sinned against him. I'm sure he thought he was being generous when he said, "Up to seven times?" But Jesus answered Peter by saying, "Not up to seven times, but seventy times seven."

You see, God is asking us to be longsuffering with the people in our lives. He wants us to go the extra mile and stay determined to do the right thing, even when other people do the wrong thing. And I have found that it's almost impossible to stay in conflict with someone if you refuse to argue!

Over the years, the Lord has used my marriage to teach me important lessons in this area. I can vividly remember one occasion when my husband, Dave, and I had been arguing, and afterward, the Lord spoke to my heart and

said, "I want you to go apologize and ask for his forgiveness."

I said, "But God, he started it! Dave should be the first one to say he's sorry!"

The Lord was asking me to be the peacemaker, regardless of what Dave did or didn't do. He wanted me to see how taking this action brings unity and allows Him to bring healing in our relationships. Conversely, if we always wait for the other person to apologize or be the peacemaker, we actually harm ourselves and hinder the potential for peace.

The Lord instructs us to *pursue* peace with others and "seek it eagerly" (1 Peter 3:11 AMPC). It's not always easy, but as we take steps to follow God's Word in this area, it opens the door for Him to bless us in so many ways.

One of my favorite examples is the story of Abraham and his nephew Lot. Genesis chapter 13 tells us how they each had a tremendous number of livestock. In fact, their possessions were so great that there wasn't enough land for both of them, and it inevitably led to strife. But look at how Abraham handled the situation: "*Abram said to Lot, Let there be no strife, I beg of you, between you and me, or between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, for we are relatives. Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself, I beg of you, from me. If you take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if you choose the right hand, then I will go to the left*" (Genesis 13:8-9 AMPC). Because of Abraham's willingness to keep peace in the family, the Lord blessed him abundantly. In verses 14-17, God says to Abraham: "*Lift up now your eyes and look from the place where you are...for all the land which you see I will give to you and to your posterity forever. And I will make your descendants like the dust of the earth, so that if a man could count the dust of the earth, then could your descendants also be counted. Arise, walk through the land, the length of it and the breadth of it, for I will give it to you.*" I encourage you to apply this lesson to your own life. Maybe somebody's trying to stir up strife and you find yourself in a situation like Abraham's. If so, let peace begin with you, *even if you know you're right.*

No person or relationship is perfect, and there will always be things to work through. However, when you make a firm decision to *pursue* peace, you can quench the spirit of strife and put a stop to conflicts before they ever really begin. And remember, even if no one else notices, *God always sees.* And when you choose to do what's right *because* it's right, *He will reward you in some of the most marvelous ways.* 📌



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