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| **SERIES** | The Pursuit of Happiness |
| **BIBLE** | Matthew 5:9; 1 Peter 3:9-18 |
| **TITLE** | #8: Blessed are the Peacemakers |
| **OVERVIEW** | As a citizen of the Kingdom of God you do not fight any longer for your own reputation. You do not attempt to defend yourself against every attack or return the same treatment towards those who wish to harm you (verbally or physically)—INSTEAD you seek and pursue peace, respond in gentleness and respect, and return good instead of evil. This follows in the way of Jesus and His Kingdom, and when you live this way, you will be living out what it means to be a “child of God”. (**Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. —Matthew 5:9**) |
| **SCRIPTURE BREAKDOWN** | **DO THE OPPOSITE** (1 Peter 3:9-12; Mt. 5:9, 19:30, 23:11; 1 Cor. 1:27, 2:14)  In a world where it is quite normal to pay back what someone “deserves”, Jesus calls us to pay back what someone does NOT deserve. To give forgiveness instead of revenge. To help someone who has just hurt you. To seek peace instead of evil. This upside-down way of living is what it means to be a part of this New Kingdom. WHY? Because God is our new Lord. He is the One we are trying to please. Not our families, not our friends, and especially not ourselves.  **OUR RESPONSE SHOULD SHOCK** (1 Peter 3:13-16; Is. 53:7)  As Christians, too often we are known for how divisive we can be. How critical we can be. How argumentative and angry we can be. How confident we are that we need to stand up for OUR rights. And protect OUR families. Peter is writing here to a group of people that are facing EXTREME persecution… and he tells them to respond with “gentleness and respect”. That doesn’t make sense to our brains—or even to our “Christian culture”. It’s not the model we see from our modern leaders. Too often we respond with either extreme: we are very combative OR we don’t say anything at all. But what if we responded to people’s accusations and attacks, AND WE ACTUALLY DID IT with “gentleness and respect”? Apparently, God says that this will shock the world into seeing that there is something different in us. That this is the Kingdom Way.  **GOD MAKES PEACE OUT OF SUFFERING** (1 Peter 3:17-18; 1 Pt. 2:24; Rom. 5:8; Is. 53:5)  Like a carver who can turn an ugly block of wood into a beautiful carving, God brings peace into this world through the hardest of moments. We literally bring peace—many times—by bearing the evil of others. By taking the blows. By being the Jesus that someone has never seen (letting Jesus live through us that is). Jesus—our greatest example of a peacemaker—and He brought peace out of suffering. Out of anyone who lived, He should not have had all these things happen to Him. He lived a perfect life. He loved people deeply. He gave up everything for all of us. And He was betrayed, misunderstood, beaten, and killed. But that… is how God brought redemption. Through death comes life. Through suffering… peace. May we follow the example of our Lord. |
| **GOSPEL** | 1 Peter 3:19-22 – Immediately after this entire section, Peter goes straight into the gospel. You can use the story of Noah—the way Peter does—to challenge people to find the peace that Christ has made available for you and to be baptized. Don’t miss it! |
| **NEXT**STEPS | Invite a mentor into your life to help you actually live this out. To help you change the way you respond to persecution or evil. To challenge each other to practically live out this way of the Kingdom that Jesus models for us. |