

EMBERS FROM MY FIRE

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THE SEARCH FOR PEACE

The recent conflict in the Middle East between Hezbollah and Israel is yet another sign that the peace process in the region is, as the press says, "Derailed."

The conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is extremely complicated and has a long history of instigation and reprisal that cannot be fairly addressed in this little article. However, there are a few crucial points worth noting as we all seek to become part of the honorable quest for peace. (See Matthew 5:9)

The US interest in the region has to do first and foremost with oil, which is crucial to our current economic prosperity. Like it or not we are dependent on stability in the Middle East.

As Christians our perspective on this regional conflict should go beyond concern about economics. Jesus says that above all else we are to love one another. As representatives of Jesus Christ our concern about human suffering and injustice must supersede geopolitical posturing. Unfortunately I don't often hear that truth echoed by my fellow biblically-minded Christians.

Few of us would deny the historical or moral right of Israel to exist as a nation. At the same time the Palestinians have a right to be able to live in peace and prosperity in their homeland. As a Christian I also acknowledge the right of Israel to what the Scripture calls the Promised Land.

In my two trips to Israel I have had both a Palestinian tour guide and a Jewish guide. It gave me a strong appreciation for the strengths and weaknesses, hopes and fears of both people groups.

It will take understanding and mutual respect for the two parties to find a common ground strong enough to build a lasting peace. At this point they are so far apart that I wonder if they can ever live together. The eschatological teaching of Jesus gives little hope in this direction but that does not diminish the responsibility to be peacemakers.

How do two very different peoples learn to live side by side in a land? It isn't easy! Look at what European colonists here in the US did to the Native Americans. Our Civil War and the slow up and down process of granting civil rights to African Americans has also been a slow arduous process. The journey to liberation or nation building is never simple. It will take more than just human nature to make for a lasting peace and justice.

The popular Christian and leadership writer, John Maxwell, gives a succinct and memorable description of the attitudes needed to build lasting relationships. He calls it "A Short Course in Human Relations."

The least important word: I

The most important word: We

The two most important words: Thank you.

The three most important words: All is forgiven.

The four most important words: What is your opinion?

The five most important words: You did a good job.

The six most important words: I want to understand you better.

When we adopt this supernatural approach to human relationships then "all things are possible." Since this is God's method for harmonious relationships we can be sure He will supply the strength to take make it work. Let's pray for the peace of Jerusalem and for peace in our own nation and communities. May it begin with me.

Pastor Ken