

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your correspondence to the Al Denson Show and for tuning in every week to our program. My prayer for you is to be encouraged in your daily walk with Christ through the words of this booklet. Our hope is that in turn you will tell others of what God is doing through our ministry to youth and parents on TV. I am convinced you will not find another program on any network anywhere that deals with issues today's youth and their parents are facing, and provides answers from a Godly perspective.

In addition, we would love for you to help us by going to our web site at www.aldenson.com. Here you can write to us, order additional material like this booklet, check out all my music, have a daily bible study, and stay up to date on the ministry. You can also send us a prayer request and questions for the TV show. But more importantly, please continue to be in prayer with us as we work together to help those that are in need.

Thanks for watching and God Bless!

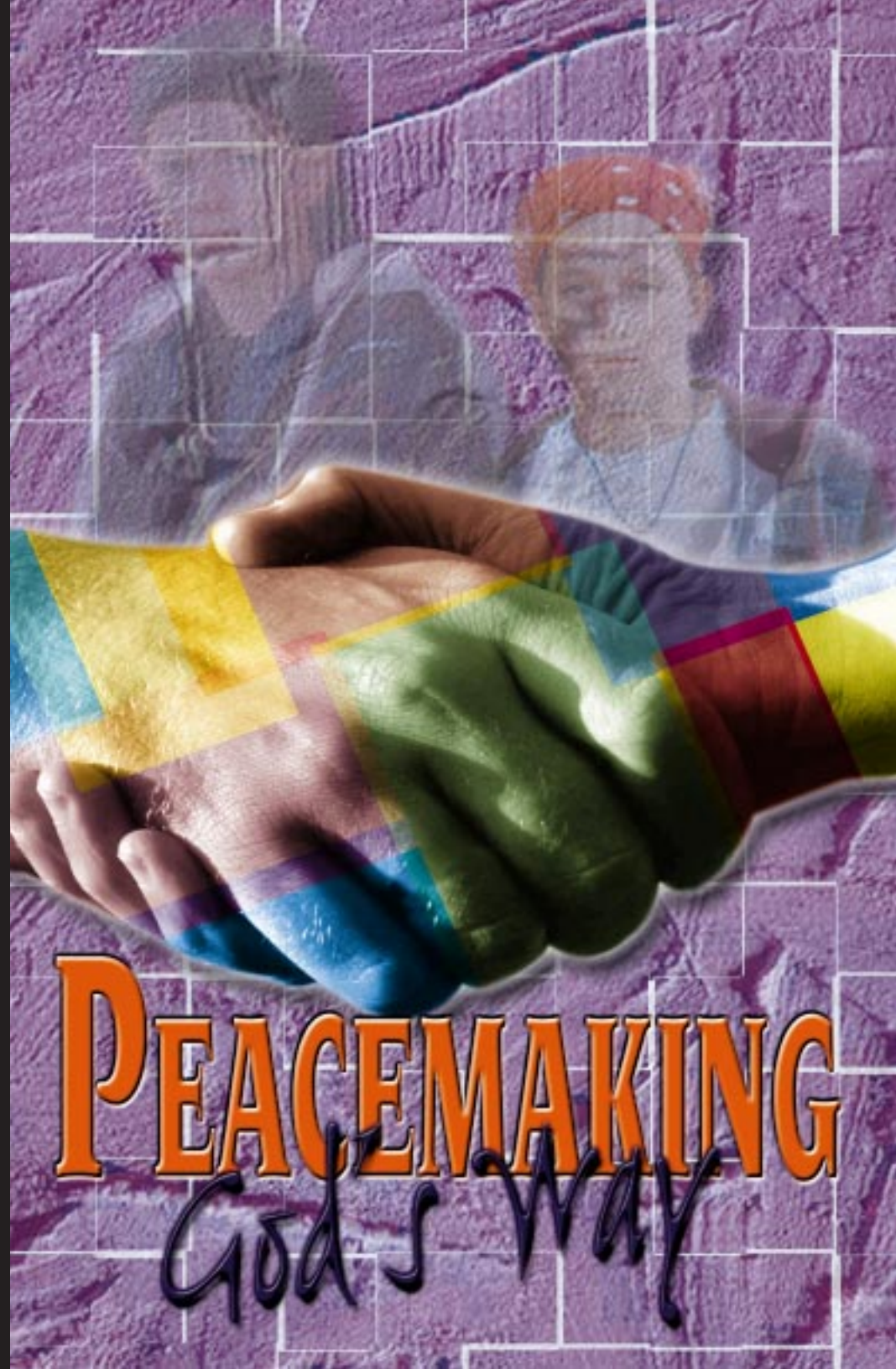
Sincerely,



An Outreach of Celebration Ministries

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Most artists create for only a brief moment in time. That phenomenon was once known as “15 minutes of fame”. Yet even in a fickle world, there still emerge a talented few that transcends time and trends. With nearly 15 years as a major label recording artist and seven hit

albums to his credit, Al Denson is that kind of artist.

But the attention and acclaim his artistry has brought him over the years are anything but the routine rewards of worldly success. Rather, they are the fruits of a life of purpose and passion, and a mission that has always reached far beyond merely making music.

The millions of young people Al has performed for, befriended, counseled, consoled and clowned around with in his career already know that. And thousands more are finding out every day.

This past year has seen Al expand his efforts to a global audience through the reach of his daily syndicated television production, “The Al Denson Show.” “You’ve got to reach out to people where they are with the most powerful means and this form of media allows you to build trust and a rapport,” says Al. “This has all been so amazing. I can’t imagine what lies in store when the Lord finally calls me home, but I don’t have to wait for heaven to receive rewards. I get them every time a kid comes up to me and says, ‘I heard what you said, and I accepted Christ.’ You can’t ask for anything more or better than that.”

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PEACEMAKING

God's Way

In Matthew 5:9 Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the sons of God.” Do you have some relationships that could use a little peace? Are you surrounded, it seems, by difficult people who just “don’t get it”

at times? If so, believe it or not, you can be a “peacemaker.” Jesus said in this verse that being a peacemaker will identify you as one of His own, but how do you make peace God’s way? Well, in order to make peace, you first must have peace. You must know experientially the peace in your heart that only the “Prince of Peace” can give. This is peace that isn’t dependent on the circumstances around you but on your relationship with Christ. You can never be a real peacemaker without first having and loving peace yourself.

It is also important that you understand up front that Jesus did not call you to “keep” peace but to “make” peace and there is a big difference.

Peacekeepers:

- don’t rock the boat
- don’t confront
- hide from problems
- ignore conflict

Peacemakers:

- are active and aggressive in the pursuit of peace
- are open-minded, fair, and strong

- care enough to confront
- deal with conflict honestly

The word “blessed” that Jesus used in Matthew 5 means “happy.” Jesus is letting you know that there is no way to be a happy

Christian without being a peacemaker. Happy Christians aren’t those who never have conflict in their relationships—happy Christians are those who deal with conflict properly. Jesus knew there is nothing more important in life than relationships. He also knew because Christians are all still human and all so different that conflict in relationships will be a fact of life for everyone.

Most people dislike conflict and try to avoid it, but to live is to have conflict. The good news is that conflict, when resolved God’s way, can actually make your relationships stronger.

Many times you can stop conflict before it happens by understanding the importance of good communication in relationships. Good communication is the key to what everyone really wants, which is to be understood. To be understood is one of the deepest needs humans have because to be understood is to feel you have value and are loved unconditionally. It means you can feel safe sharing your deepest feelings and needs. To make peace God’s way, you must understand that others (even your parents) want to be understood just as much as you do.

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Most researchers agree that there are five levels of communication, moving from the superficial to the most meaningful:

1. When you communicate on the first level, you speak in clichés: “How are you?” “Have a good day.” Most of the time communication on this level is as superficial as you would be with someone you have never met before.
2. The second level of communication is where you share facts—just information. “Looks like rain.” Just like level one, this is pretty shallow conversation.
3. At the third level you state your opinions. Here is where communication is not quite as safe and conflicts may arise.
4. The fourth level is when you say what you are feeling. “I was really hurt by the way you talked to me last night.” Opening up this way can be risky but it is the only way to reach the deeper levels of communication.

5. The fifth level is where you reveal your needs. “I need to know I’m important to you.” When you are expressing needs, you are at the deepest level of communication.

Too many times teenagers are especially guilty of putting the responsibility for communicating on their parents, but being a good communicator is the responsibility of everyone in your family. The goal for everyone should be to go into those fourth and fifth levels of communication more and more frequently. The more you can communicate on the fourth and fifth levels, the more successful your relationships will be.

Another important part of communication is listening—really listening. God gave you one mouth and two ears for a reason. The best communication tools you have are your ears. When you learn to listen to what people are (and sometimes, are not) saying you will find out what makes them tick. You will also find out what they really care about and what is important to them. Everyone has fears, anxieties, memories, dreams, hopes, and plans. If you listen to the people in your life, you will begin to discover what these are and you will have new insight into why they react the way they do.

Conflicts in relationships are caused for many different reasons. There may be power and control problems, there may be a difference in values, or there may be conflict over normal personality and temperament differences. But in relationships with those who are the closest to you, the main reason conflict occurs is that one or both of

you believes that your needs are not being met or that your feelings are not being valued.

You see, all human beings are born with three basic emotional needs:

- The need to feel unconditionally loved and accepted.
- The need to feel valuable and capable.
- The need to feel that we are not alone.

These basic needs do not change throughout life. Of course, God is ultimately the only One who can completely meet these needs in anyone’s life, but as a “son of God,” you are His agent here on this earth. When you are helping to meet these needs in the people God has put in your life, then your relationships with those people are more likely to be healthy and secure and will more likely survive the pressures and stress of life. When you are actively involved in meeting the emotional needs of others, they will see you as an ally, not an enemy. On the other hand, the person who feels that there are strings attached to your love and acceptance, or has been made to feel worthless, or feels as if he can do nothing right, or feels very alone and isolated, will be angry, rebellious, insecure, and more likely to constantly be in conflict with you.

Conflict and anger may seem to most people today to go hand-in-hand. It is normal to get angry over things about which you feel passionate. However, most of the anger that comes as a result of your day-to-day conflicts is not the result of “righteous indignation.” This anger is about unmet needs and it can get in the way of resolving conflict. To be a peacemaker God’s way you must be sure that you understand

anger—both your own and the anger of others. When conflict occurs you may think that anger is the feeling you experience first, but it isn’t.

Anger is born out of either fear, frustration, hurt, or some combination of the three. Anger is really about unfulfilled expectations:

- Anger can be frustration from not receiving what you expected from other people or from life.
- Anger can be hurt when you don’t hear the words or receive the actions you expected.
- Anger can be fear because either you expect something bad to happen, or you are afraid that what you want to happen, won’t. Anger is really a control issue—you don’t like being fearful because it makes you feel out of control, so you use anger to cope with your fears.

When a person feels there is no one in their life who understands the depth of their frustration, hurt, and fear, they will usually inflict pain on other people in an attempt to make others understand their pain and hurt with them. If you don’t understand that anger is only a symptom of the real, underlying problem in your life, it will be easy to get caught up in a cycle of anger that will prevent you from ever resolving your conflict. People who make a practice of venting their anger in times of conflict, over time, only produce more anger and tend to vent it more aggressively each time there is a conflict. Venting your anger is not the way to be a peacemaker and will never solve any conflict.



So, what then is the secret for peacemaking God's way? The answer is found in Ephesians 4:29-32: "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave you."

To make practical application of these verses, let's look at the first two sections in this passage again from the Living Bible and come up with some "Game Rules for Peacemakers" to follow. "Don't use bad language. Say only what is good and helpful to those you are talking to, and what will give them a blessing. Stop being mean, bad-tempered and angry. Quarreling, harsh words, and dislike of others should have no place in your lives."

Game Rules for Peacemakers

1. Make sure you both understand what the actual problem is. Clarify with each other exactly why you are in conflict.
2. Stick to the problem at hand. Don't dig up past problems, failures, or issues.
3. If at any point you hurt the feelings of another, stop and apologize before you continue. Remember, when you wound a person's spirit you have lost their ear.

4. Speak up about issues that are important to you. Don't give in just to keep peace—it isn't emotionally healthy. Remember, God wants you to be a peacemaker not a peacekeeper.
5. Be careful about your tone of voice. Sometimes it isn't what you say but how you say it that fuels the fire of conflict.
6. Never raise your voice. If you want to be heard, don't yell or scream.
7. Watch your "body language." Non-verbal signals can be powerful communicators, so be careful about your facial expressions, and what you do with your shoulders, hands, and feet.
8. Never use absolute words. Don't use the words "never" and "always."
9. Avoid "you" statements. Instead say "I think," or "I feel."
10. Never say "hate." This is a word that is off limits completely and should have no room in a Christian's life. Even when you are extremely angry with someone, a word like "hate" is never appropriate.
11. Never curse or use vulgar language. So many people today use these words that some people say they have lost their meaning. That may be true for the person who is ungodly enough to use them, but they never lose their meaning for the one on the receiving end.
12. No name calling. This is hitting below the belt and is never acceptable.

13. Never use hurtful phrases. "Drop dead," "Get lost," "You make me sick," "Big deal," "So what?" "I don't care," or even "Whatever" are words that hurt and devalue people and should never have a place in your conversation.
14. Never use sarcasm or be disrespectful in any way. It is an instant "turn-off."
15. Don't pout or use the silent treatment. This is childish and never solves anything.
16. Never exaggerate the facts. Making the problem larger than it actually is only makes things worse not better.
17. Never tell someone else what they think or how they feel, or what they "should" think or feel. This is a control issue, big time, and has no place in conflict resolution.
18. Don't make "winning" your goal. Conflict resolution is not about winning. If your only objective is to win, you will both lose. Being a peacemaker is about resolution, not about winning.

19. Keep working on the conflict until you both feel good about the solution. The right solution will be one where both of you believe your feelings are understood and your needs are being met.
20. Know the difference between a "smoke" issue and a "flame" issue. There are some issues that are worth dying for, but most of the time the issues you will be in conflict with someone else about, will be issues of "preference," not conviction.
21. Never take part in intellectual arguments that go nowhere. The Bible says in II Timothy 2:23, "Don't get involved in foolish arguments which only upset people and make them angry."
22. Always remember that the relationship is the most important thing. Unless you are in conflict over a moral issue, you some times may have to decide that the relationship is more important than being right.

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** Bear with each other and* **FORGIVE** ...

The last part of the passage in Ephesians 4:29-32 may be the most important part of making peace God's way. It says, "Be kind to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave you." A big part of resolving conflict and healing relationships is forgiveness. Over and over again in Scripture, Christians are commanded to forgive as they have been forgiven. Colossians 3:13 says, "Bear with each other and FORGIVE whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as God forgave you." The forgiveness Jesus gave you was unconditional and complete. You didn't deserve it, and He provided it before you ever asked for it or even knew you needed it. If you, like most Christians, have the same misconceptions about forgiveness the rest of the world has, you'll never be a peacemaker.

Here are some of the most common misconceptions about granting forgiveness to others.

1. Granting forgiveness is not denying, excusing, or minimizing what happened. It is being honest and objective about the offense, the pain, and the consequences caused by the offender.
2. Granting forgiveness has nothing to do with how you feel. It is a decision you make with an act of your will.
3. Granting forgiveness is not something you do for the person who has offended you. It is something you do for your own good. Choosing not to forgive is like drinking poison and expecting someone else to die.

4. Granting forgiveness is giving an undeserved pardon and an undeserved release. Forgiveness is the releasing of an obligation. Of course, the only ones in need of forgiveness are those who owe a debt, so forgiveness would have to be, by definition, only for the undeserving. If you think forgiveness is only for those who ask for your forgiveness or deserve your forgiveness, then you don't understand forgiveness at all.
5. Granting forgiveness is not letting the offender off the hook. Forgiveness is acknowledging what was done is wrong and inexcusable but choosing to show someone else the same kind of forgiveness God showed you, which is unconditional and complete.
6. Granting forgiveness will be a struggle if you mistakenly believe there's some type of payment you can get from the one who has offended you that will compen-



sate for what you have suffered. Gandhi made an observation once that the rule of "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" cannot sustain itself forever; ultimately, both parties end up blind and toothless."

Jesus offered a better solution when in Matthew 5:38-39 He said, "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." Jesus understood that forgiveness is sometimes the only way to break the endless cycle of hurt and unfairness, and forgiveness is simply surrendering your right to hurt someone else because they have hurt you.

7. Granting forgiveness can be a problem if you also mistakenly believe a person must be repentant before you can offer to forgive them—this is not Scriptural. Repentance has nothing to do with granting someone forgiveness. God forgave "while we were yet still sinners," the Bible says. God granted His forgive-

ness before you ever asked for it or even were aware you needed it.

8. Granting forgiveness does not automatically free the offender from the consequences of his actions. You can release the offender from any personal obligation toward you, but you do not have the power to release him from the consequences of those actions. When God forgave you, He removed the eternal consequences of your sins but not necessarily the temporal consequences of your actions.
9. Granting forgiveness is not forgetting about the offense. Forgiving as God forgives is to be our example, but this is one aspect of forgiveness where we are different. The Bible says in verses like Jeremiah 31:34 that when God forgives our sin, He forgets about it. This doesn't mean He gets a case of "holy amnesia." It simply means He puts our sins "as far as the east is from the west" (Psalm 103:12) and He chooses not to remember them.

... whatever grievances you may have against one another.

But for humans, there is a difference between forgiving and forgetting. Forgetting is a function of the brain; forgiveness is a function of the spirit. Forgetting an offense is not possible. It takes time, but eventually you will find your decision to forgive has taken the “sting” out of the memory for you.

Choosing not to grant forgiveness will chain you to the past, the offense, and the offender. You can never be free of reliving the offense over and over again, no matter how hard you try, and it is like being confined to a small prison cell with the very person who hurt you. Unforgiveness will be a prison of your own making and you will not only be the prisoner, you will be the jailer, as well.

Granting forgiveness provides a way to be “unshackled” from your offender. When you choose to release your offender from any obligation to you, you can walk out of that prison

cell and move on with your life. Lewis Smedes said, “The first and often the only person to be healed by forgiveness is the person who does the forgiveness...When we genuinely forgive, we set a prisoner free and then discover that the prisoner we set free was us.”

If you truly are ready to become a peacemaker, then there are six little words you must make a part of your vocabulary and practice using on a daily basis. Here they are. “I was wrong, please forgive me.” Regardless, if you are a teenager, a husband or wife, a Dad or a Mom, or the CEO of the world’s largest corporation, those six words must be sincerely spoken from your heart if you are going to have successful relationships and be recognized as a “son of God.”

When you reduce Christianity to its lowest common denominator, it’s the way we respond to the daily challenges of life that makes the

difference. Real faith is demonstrated in the small things of life. Are you ready to be faithful over the little things, such as how you react to those in your life, who push you, challenge you, and don’t always agree with you? Remember, in the Christian life, the little things are what count with God.

Forgetting is a function of the brain; forgiveness is a function of the spirit.

