

# This Way to Happiness: Wanted: Peacemakers

by Warren Wiersbe

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*Warren Wiersbe's sermon emphasizes the biblical call to be peacemakers, highlighting God as the source of peace and the destructive role of sin in creating conflict.*

**Duration:** 37:34

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:21-23

**Topics:** "Conflict Resolution", "Christian Humility"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the concrete responsibility that believers have in their relationships with others. He emphasizes the importance of not only refraining from physical violence but also avoiding anger and hurtful words towards others. The preacher highlights the need for reconciliation and humility, urging believers to prioritize resolving conflicts and making peace with their brothers and sisters before offering their gifts to God. He explains that selfishness and pride are the root causes of wars within individuals, leading to conflicts with others and ultimately a war with God. The preacher emphasizes the importance of having a humble and serving attitude, contrasting it with the pride and selfishness of the world. He concludes by highlighting the qualities that result from a right attitude towards oneself, sin, and God's authority, such as hungering for righteousness, showing mercy, and being pure in heart. The preacher encourages believers to be peacemakers, reflecting God's character and demonstrating their identity as children of God.

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## Transcript

Matthew chapter 5 and verse 9, our Lord Jesus says, Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God. If there's one thing that pains most of us more than anything else, it is this problem of personal disagreements. We come to God's house and we shake hands and we smile and we sing, we talk to people, and yet deep down inside there are discords and disagreements and sometimes divisions among God's people.

The psalmist said, Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. Now you expect brethren to do this, but they don't always do it. All of us are concerned about this matter of peace, not just on the international level, we pray for the peace of Jerusalem, I hope you do, or on the national level, but in our homes and in our offices and our jobs, even in places of Christian ministry, in the church, our heart's desire is that people get along with each other.

I think everybody here tonight sincerely wants to be a peacemaker and not a troublemaker. Now the Bible has a great deal to say about peace. I was amazed to discover that there are nearly 400 verses in the Bible directly related to peace, either international peace at the coming of our Lord to this earth, or church peace, or peace among brethren, or peace among the tribes of Israel.

The Bible has a great deal to say about peace. As you know, when our Jewish friends meet each other they say shalom, and shalom is the Jewish word for peace. When they're going to leave each other they say shalom.

A Hebrew Christian friend of mine says this proves that we don't know whether we're coming or going, but that isn't the reason why they do it. You see, in the Bible the word peace means much more than the absence of hostility. In the Bible, peace is a much bigger word than just the cessation of war.

When Jesus spoke these words, there was no war. The Roman Empire had brought peace, but it was a peace that was built on a clenched fist. It was a peace that was built on a sword and the tramping of soldiers.

It was a peace that was built on external compulsion and fear. And the Bible word for peace doesn't mean that. The Bible word for peace, shalom, means total well-being.

And so when a Jewish friend says to his friend shalom, he is saying much more than may your mother-in-law not argue with you. He is saying much more than may your customers not disagree with you. He is saying may you in body and mind and soul and spirit have health and well-being, and may the whole atmosphere of your life be creative.

In the Bible, peace is a positive thing. It's a creative force. You see, you drive past, well, let's just take the Lincoln Park Lagoon sometime in the middle of February.

There's peace. The water is not moving. It's frozen.

Or you drive up past a cemetery. Perfect peace in the cemetery, because the people there are dead. That's not the kind of peace the Bible is talking about.

The Bible is talking about the kind of peace that is creative, that gives you an atmosphere where you can grow and be what God wants you to be. It is a positive force, not just the negative absence of fighting. That's what Jesus meant when he said blessed are the peacemakers.

He wasn't talking about dead people or frozen people. He was talking about people who were so possessed of the peace of God that they could go out into a troubled world and be channels of a positive force, the kind of thing St. Francis prayed when he prayed, Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace. Now I think each of us wants to be a peacemaker.

I can't conceive of anybody in this auditorium tonight saying to himself, I wonder what kind of trouble I can cause this week. I wonder what I can say that will mess things up in the office. I wonder what word I can drop at the next committee meeting at the church that will really blow things up.

I don't think anybody thinks that way. I think most of the time you and I cause trouble unconsciously, not deliberately, because we don't understand what the word of God really has to say about peace. Now there are four very basic facts that you and I must grasp if we're going to be peacemakers.

If beginning tonight you want to dedicate yourself to the ministry of peace, and it's a great ministry, these four facts must be uppermost in your heart and mind. Fact number one, the source of peace is God. Man cannot generate peace.

Nature cannot generate peace. The source of peace is God. Now I want to deal with that in some detail because I think we need this kind of basic theology.

God's name is peace. Back in the Old Testament one of the Jehovah names is Jehovah Shalom, the Lord our peace. Six times in the New Testament he's called the God of peace.

I preached on one of those passages this morning. Now the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep. God is the God of peace.

Now follow me in this. He is the God of peace as far as his name is concerned, and he's the God of peace as far as his nature is concerned. God's nature is at peace.

You say, Pastor, what in the world do you mean by that? Well, let's just talk about your nature. Don't you have battles down inside? Of course you do. Each of us has characteristics that seem to conflict with each other.

For example, we want to have friends, but we also want to please the Lord. And there are some times when in order to please the Lord, we have to displease our friends. There's a conflict.

We have appetites. We enjoy eating, for example. I doubt that anyone here in this meeting doesn't enjoy eating at some time or another.

And yet the doctor says you better be careful. You're gaining weight or there's too much cholesterol in your blood or something else. And so there's a conflict between a natural instinct, the desire to eat, and the discipline of taking care of the body.

I think many of our problems stem right from this conflict that we have down inside. Of course, then you get saved. When you get saved, you get a brand new nature down inside.

Then you really start having some conflicts because the flesh fights against the spirit. The spirit fights against the flesh. This is not true of God.

There are no conflicts in the nature of God. God, if I may coin a phrase, God is at perfect peace with himself. Now, if he were not, this universe would fall apart.

There's no conflict between his holiness and his love. There's no conflict between his mercy and his holiness. There's no conflict between his love and his justice.

Thanks to the work of Jesus Christ on the cross, sin has been dealt with, but even before the advent of sin, God, as to his nature, is perfectly at peace. There's no conflict. Now, this peace, I would remind you, is not the peace of complacency.

God is not asleep. It's not the peace of the frozen lake. Rather, his peace is that creative peace where all of his attributes work together and all of his characteristics blend together in perfection.

And you know, thank God someday we're going to be like that. Thank God when Jesus Christ comes and we get a brand new body suited to a brand new home, our nature will be at perfect peace. And so our God is the God of peace as to his name and as to his nature.

Thirdly, he's the God of peace as to his will. Now, if there's one verse you ought to mark in your Bible, it's Jeremiah chapter 29 and verse 11. Someday you're going to get discouraged and you're going to say, God has declared war on me.

No, he hasn't. Jeremiah chapter 29 verse 11. God speaks to you and says, for I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord.

Thoughts of peace, not of evil, to give you an expected end. You know what this verse says? It says this, that when God thinks about you, he thinks about peace. And when God works for you and works in you, he's working toward an expected planned end that brings peace.

God's will for this world is not war. Oh, if I could just get people to see that. God's will for your life is peace.

You say, well, I haven't got very much peace in my life. That can't be God's fault. That has to be our fault.

God, as to his name and God, as to his nature and God, as to his will is the God of peace. And I want to go one step further and illustrate it. God is a God of peace as to his working.

When God goes to work, he works in peace. Now, right away, someone says, wait, just a minute. I can't agree with that.

All right. What's your disagreement? Preacher, have you read the Old Testament? Yes. Why, have you read the way the Hebrew armies moved in upon the Canaanites? You call that peace? Why, they wrecked cities and they killed people.

You call that peace? Yes. Because God's program when he works is first peace and then war. Not war, then peace.

First peace and then war. Have you ever read in the book of Deuteronomy, God's law of war for the Jewish people? Maybe we better look at that. Deuteronomy chapter 20.

Moses is telling them how to fight their battles when they go into the promised land. Deuteronomy chapter 20. In the first nine verses, he tells them how to take care of their army.

If anybody's scared, send them home. Anybody's engaged or newly married, send them home. Now, verse 10 of Deuteronomy 20.

When thou comest near unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. How about that? First peace. And it shall be, if it make thee an answer of peace and open unto thee, then it shall be that all the people who are found therein shall be bound servants unto thee, and they shall serve thee.

And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it. Every city that declared war was conquered. Now, this is an interesting thing.

God said to his people, proclaim peace, proclaim peace. If they won't believe you, then we have to have war. Now, someone says, all right, I'll accept that.

You can blame the cities for that. But let's move over to the New Testament. Have you ever stopped to think of all the conflict that Christianity has brought into this world? Yes.

Our Jehovah Witness friends have written a book that they give away or sell telling how awful Christianity is, especially the doctrine of the Trinity, in bringing all of this conflict into the world. Now, when you read history, you have to admit that the Christian faith has brought conflict into the world. May I remind you that not all unity is good and not all division is bad.

Three times I read in the Gospel of John about the Lord Jesus, there was a division because of him. There was a division because of him. Paul went into a city and there was a division because of him.

Look at the Gospel of Luke. Let's talk about the Lord Jesus as the minister of peace. I'm saying this, before God declares war, he always declares peace.

He did it in the Old Testament. He did it in the Gospels. Look at Luke chapter 2. In Luke chapter 2, we have the announcement of the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we read in verse 14, the angels, as they are praising God and saying, glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace, good will toward men. So the Gospel of Luke begins with a declaration of peace. The baby has been born.

This is God's declaration of peace on earth. Turn to Luke chapter 12 and our Lord says something in verse 51 that is just a little bit devastating. I'm going to start in verse 49.

Our Lord says, I am come to send fire on the earth. The angel said he came to send peace on the earth. And what will I, if it already be kindled? I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how I am constrained till it be accomplished.

That, of course, was his baptism of suffering on the cross. Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division. For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, two against three.

And he spells it out in verse 53. You see, the Luke Gospel of Luke begins peace on earth. Jesus said, I didn't come to bring peace on earth.

Now why? Turn to Luke chapter 19. You see, something happened between the announcement of the angels and the announcement of the Savior. Luke chapter 19, verse 41.

And when he was come near, he beheld the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace, but now they are hidden from thine eyes. And he talks about the coming of the armies to wreck the city of Jerusalem. Why? Verse 44, the last sentence, Because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

The angel said, Peace on earth. Jesus said, I'm not going to bring peace on earth. Why? You didn't know the day of your visitation.

You've rejected the things that belong to your peace. Is there peace anywhere? Yes. Look at Luke chapter 19 and verse 38.

The crowd is praising the Lord as he comes into the city. Blessed is the king who cometh in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven.

Isn't it good to know that though there's no peace on earth, there's peace in heaven? You know why there's no peace on earth? Because a group of people one day said, We will not have this man to reign over us. Oh, but he's the prince of peace. We will not have him to reign over us.

And so Jesus came and declared peace. They said, We don't want you. Then God had to declare war.

That's what Paul meant over in second Corinthians five. He said, Look, our ministry is a ministry of reconciliation. I can never forget a man coming in to see me when I was pastoring in Kentucky, very distraught.

His wife was going to divorce him and he was greatly concerned and rightly so. He said to me, Pastor, what my wife and I need is a recancellation. I said, You mean a reconciliation? He said, I don't know what I mean, but that's what we need.

But the more I thought about it, the more sense it made. That's what they did need, a recancellation. If they just take all the sins they'd committed against each other and cancel them.

You see, the Lord Jesus Christ came to earth and men rejected his peace, but there's peace up in heaven. There is peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. So in the Old Testament, first peace, then war in the New Testament, first peace, then war.

Paul came into a city and preached reconciliation, peace, and they declared war. You see, God can't force anybody to be at peace with him. God is the source of all peace.

That's his nature. That's his name. That's the way he works.

That's his plan toward us. Jesus is the Prince of Peace. He said to his disciples, My peace give I unto you.

When he arose from the dead, he said, Peace be unto you. The Holy Spirit of God generates peace. The fruit of the Spirit is love and joy and peace.

And so the source of peace is God. Now, if you're trying to have peace and you're leaving God out, it won't work. Which leads us to our second fact.

The enemy of peace is sin. Now, it's obvious why. Sin is exactly opposite God.

God is light and in him is no darkness at all. And so if you try to mix the light with the darkness, it won't work. Wherever there's sin, there is war.

Now we're going to turn to the war chapter of the Bible. James chapter 4. I'm not going to expound the whole chapter because that's not necessary, but I want to show you something very basic. James chapter 4. From whence come wars and fighting among you? And he's writing to Christians, not writing to the Israelis and the Arabs.

He's not writing to nations. He's writing to Christians. How is it that you believers are fighting each other? Come they not hear even of your pleasures, your lusts that war in your members, in your body? Ye lust and have not.

Ye kill and desire to have and cannot obtain. Ye fight and war, yet ye have not because ye ask not. And ye ask and receive not because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts, you adulterers and adulteresses.

He's speaking in spiritual language here. Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore wills to be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. Now James says there are three wars going on.

Verse 1, Christians are at war with each other because they are at war with themselves. You notice that? He said, why are you fighting among yourselves? Because there's fighting going on down inside. There's a war down in your members.

Oh, but why is there a war down inside? Because you're at war with God. Verse 4. So here are three wars going on. People fighting each other, at war with each other because they're at war with themselves, and they are at war with themselves because they're at war with God.

And the thing that causes this war is selfishness, pride. When you read the rest of James chapter 4, he talks about submit yourselves, humble yourselves. God resists the proud.

You see, Satan is the incarnation of pride. Jesus is the incarnation of humility. The world is the expression of pride, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life.

But the church ought to be the expression of humility and service. You see, God has three enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil, and they're all here. The world, friendship with the world is enmity with God.

The flesh, your desires at war in your members, verse 1. The devil, down here in verse 7, resists the devil. So here are the enemies of God getting a hold of the people of God and making them selfish. Now, don't forget this.

Whether it's in the front seat of my car or at my dinner table or in a committee meeting at Moody Church or anyplace else, if two saints are at war with each other, I don't mean they disagree lovingly. They're at war with each other. Somebody is selfish.

If a husband and wife are at war with each other, somebody is selfish. And selfishness is born of pride, and pride comes from the world, the flesh, and the devil. So the source of all peace is God, and the enemy of all peace is sin.

I want you to mark a verse back in the book of Isaiah, chapter 32. I didn't even know this verse was in the Bible. I'd been reading the Bible so many times since I'd gotten saved.

I went off to seminary. I remember one evening a fellow came knocking at my door. I opened the door of the seminary, my dormitory room, and the fellow said, I want to show you a verse.

What kind of a kook is this? He interrupts my studying to show me a verse. He said, have you ever seen Isaiah, chapter 32, verse 17? I said, sure. He said, what's it say? I said, I don't know.

So Ralph said, let me show it to you. Isaiah 32, 17, and the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance forever. If you want peace and quietness and assurance, it comes from righteousness.

So wherever there's sin, there's going to be a fight. Sin breeds pride. Pride breeds sin.

Pride breeds selfishness. Selfishness breeds more sin. And there's a war on the inside because there's a war between me and God.

And if I'm fighting God and fighting myself, I'm not going to be able to get along with you. And the only answer, of course, is cleansing, which leads us to fact number three. The source of all peace is God.

The enemy of all peace is sin. The minister of peace is the Christian. Oh, how many times we've said, oh, Holy Spirit, work in his heart so he'll get along with me.

Ever pray like that? Oh, Lord, change his mind. I'm beginning to learn little by little. I'm so slow to learn some things, but I'm beginning to learn little by little that when I pray about people, I need to pray about myself.

It's not enough for me to pray, oh, God, may this person agree with me. Change his mind. I need to pray, oh, God, help me to be more patient and more loving and more understanding.

Maybe if I really knew what he's going through, I'd be more understanding of what he's saying. It's hard to pray like that. It's much easier to bounce your prayers off the clouds and ricochet and hit the guy, you know, Lord, take care of him.

God doesn't do it that way. The minister of peace is the Christian. That's what Jesus meant when he said, blessed are the peacemakers, not the peace talkers.

We have a lot of those. Not the peace prayers, but the peacemakers, the people who do something. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.

Now, before I was saved, I was not a peacemaker. You want to know what you were like before you were saved? If you ever get proud of your ancestry, just turn to Titus chapter three. Here's what it says in verse three, for we ourselves also were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.

That's the unsaved person. But he says, after the kindness and love of God, our savior toward man appeared not by works of righteousness, but according to his mercy, he saved us. Before I was saved, I couldn't be a peacemaker.

My nature was such that I couldn't make peace. God is the source of peace. Unless I have God's nature, I can't be a peacemaker.

And the only way to get God's nature is to be born into God's family. Now you say, but I'm in God's family. Does anybody call you a child of God? You see, children are like their parents.

You go to see relatives you haven't seen for a long time. This happened to me this past week. I saw some children I hadn't seen in years.

I took one look at the girl. I said, I know who you belong to. Sure enough, that's who it was.

Looks just like her mother. Now that should be true of us. Out in the world, we should so be making peace that people say, you know, he must belong to God.

He must be in God's family. You know, God's a great peacemaker, and he must be in God's family. He's a child of God by the way he acts and the way he lives.

The minister of peace is the Christian. Now turn back to Matthew. I want to show you how this works.

I'm not going to preach abstractions tonight. I want to preach the concrete responsibility that we have. Look at verse 21 of Matthew chapter 5. He have heard that it was said by them of old, thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of judgment.

But I say unto you that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of judgment. Whoever shall say to his brother Rekha, empty fellow, empty minded fellow, shall be in danger of the council. Whoever shall say thou fool shall be in danger of hellfire.

Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, you're going to church now, and there remember that thy brother hath anything against thee, leave thy gift before the altar. Don't try to worship like that. And go thy way.

First be reconciled to thy brother, then come and offer thy gift. Now one of the greatest pieces of advice in the world is in verse 25. Agree with thine adversary quickly.

Do it as soon as you can. If there's a disagreement between brother and brother, husband and wife, parents and children, as soon as possible, settle it. Be the peacemaker.

He doesn't say when you go to the altar and you remember your brother has something against you, pray for him. He says, leave your gift. Go see your brother.

The vertical worship of God is useless if the horizontal fellowship with man is broken. So the first peacemaking I ought to do is between me and my brother. Our Lord says the same thing in Matthew 18.

If your brother has ought against you, go tell him about it. If he won't hear you, take one or two. If he won't hear them, tell the church.

Do your utmost to be a peacemaker. If he still doesn't want to give in and make things right, then you can treat him like a publican and a sinner. There's some people you can't be at peace with.

Paul wrote to the Romans and said, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men, which means sometimes you can't. Over in the Sermon on the Mount, he talks about an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Verse 38, he says, turn the other cheek.

Don't be out causing trouble. Verse 43, thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you.

Why? That you may be the sons of God. He's talking here in a practical way about getting along with people. And how do you do it? You go to people and you try to settle things in a sweet and loving way.

The minister of peace is the Christian. Quickly, one final truth. The source of all peace is God.

The enemy of all peace is sin. The minister of peace is the Christian. Right now, I am either a peacemaker or a troublemaker.

The blessing of peace is becoming more like God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God. He's just like his father.

What has God been doing all these centuries? Making peace. Jesus made peace by the blood of his cross. Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God.

So when you become a peacemaker, you're moving into the territory where God is working. God is a peacemaker. Jesus said, either you gather with me or you're scattering.

Now, I'm a gatherer. I put things together, says Jesus. The devil's a scatterer.

He tears them apart. And so the blessing of being a peacemaker is growing in godliness. Would you go back to the Beatitudes as we close and just review them with me? I want you to show you what's happening here.

In verse 3 is where it all starts. My attitude toward myself. Blessed are the poor in spirit.

Theirs is the kingdom of heaven. My attitude toward my sin. Blessed are they that mourn, mourn over their sin.

They shall be comforted. My attitude toward God's authority. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Verse 6, what's the result of all this? If I'm poor in spirit, if I mourn over my sin, if I submit myself to God, blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness. They shall be filled. Now it changes in verse 7 from getting to giving.

If we have received the righteousness of God through faith in Christ, what's the result? Verse 7, blessed are the merciful. They shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart.

They shall see God. Mercy, purity. Blessed are the peacemakers.

They shall be called the children of God. Notice in verse 8 you have purity. In verse 9 you have peace.

Now James says the same thing. James says the wisdom that comes from above is first pure, then peaceable. The Bible doesn't teach peace at any price.

The Bible doesn't teach whitewashing sin. Jeremiah said they say peace, peace, when there is no peace. They've whitewashed a tottering wall that's about to fall down.

Nowhere in the Bible is there peace at any price. Rather he says when there's purity, there's peace. That's why we have blessed are the pure in heart leading into blessed are the peacemakers.

Now I want to warn all of us. When you become a peacemaker, you become more like the Lord Jesus. You know what that means? You'll suffer.

You'll be crucified. There never was peace without sacrifice. This is why some of us don't want to be peacemakers.

We'd rather be troublemakers. It costs too much. Have you ever known the quiet agony of living with the unkind accusations of people you tried to help? Jesus lived with that.

When you try to be a peacemaker and you stand between two warring factions, you get shot at from both sides. That's what happened to Jesus. But you know what makes us more like the Lord? Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God.

Does anybody call us God's children because we are ministers of peace? Now if I speak tonight to one unsaved person, you don't know a thing about this peace. Either peace with God or peace with yourself or peace with others. And the only way you can know it is through faith in Christ.

If I speak to a believer who doesn't have peace, it's probably because of some sin in our lives. For the wisdom that comes from above is first pure then peaceable. And the man who is the peacemaker has purity in his heart.

His motives are pure. His outlook is pure. And usually he suffers for it.

I think most of us would rather suffer in creating peace than to suffer later on because we declared war. I would rather go through life building bridges than building walls and digging foxholes. Oh there's a price to pay.

But you know someday when we face the Lord Jesus and he can look down upon us and say you know you were a peacemaker. There was trouble in that home but you brought peace. There was division in that committee but you brought peace.

There were problems in that neighborhood but you brought peace. You paid for it but now I'm going to pay you back. Here's your reward.

And the greatest reward of all is just simply being more and more and more like the Lord Jesus. Father each of us in one way or another has failed. Forgive us.

May we go from this place determined by your Holy Spirit to be instruments of peace. Teach us the difference between conviction and stubbornness. Between our own ideas and the mind of God.

Between shallow sentiment and true Christian love. Help us not to compromise where compromise would be sin. We would not like to be like Pilate and Herod who were made friends together because they had a common enemy.

We read in your word that at the cross right and peace kissed each other and we would experience that in our own lives. Oh God may we be at peace with ourselves and with you that we might be instruments of peace with others. This is our prayer through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

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