

CHAPTER 23

Peace

KEY IDEA

I am free from anxiety because I have found peace with God, peace with others and peace with myself.

KEY VERSE

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. – Philippians 6:6-7

BEGIN BY RECITING THE KEY VERSE AND THE KEY IDEA TOGETHER AS A GROUP.

LESSON

INTRODUCTION

Peace of mind is something that we all want. We all want to be able to rest, to not have to worry, and to feel free to enjoy life, family, friends, work, church, etc. We want to be able to enjoy ourselves and not be burdened down with worries that rob us of energy, life and purpose.

What is peace? Though some would say it is the absence of war and conflict, the peace the Bible speaks of is different. It is a personal peace.

- > It is an inner sense of contentment and quietness, regardless of life's circumstances.
- > It is confidence in our heavenly Father's love and care.
- > It is the presence of joy in the midst of unhappiness.

Does enjoying God's peace mean that we will never feel the effects of life's storms that seem to rage around us? Explain.

OLD TESTAMENT PEACE

People today tend to think of peace in negative terms such as absence of war or other conflict.

- > But it would seem that the peace of God, as revealed in Scripture, includes much more.
 - < It's not that people's thinking is wrong, but more that we believe too little. Our sense of peace falls short of the biblical vision.
 - ^ The Bible speaks of peace as something greater than merely the absence of conflict.
- > The Old Testament word for "peace" is *shalom*. *Shalom* has a fuller significance than the English word "peace."
 - < We may sometimes limit the idea of peace to the absence of conflict, but *shalom* includes:
 - ^ Notions of wholeness or completeness
 - ^ Soundness and prosperity.

In the OT peace is also connected to righteousness and justice. This links it to right relationships.

> This refers to not only doing morally correct deeds, but also to have a right relationship with others.

> Righteousness is connected to justice because the righteous person acts with justice.

> With this righteousness/justice link peace can be seen as a result.

NOTE: In biblical perspective, therefore, the absence of conflict is only the beginning of peace. True peace includes personal wholeness, corporate righteousness, political justice, and prosperity for all creation. This is the way God intended things to be when he created.

PEACE WITH GOD

Most of us think of peace as a feeling. We want to trade our anxiety, depression and fear for calming tranquility. There are many harmful and ineffective ways people attempt to achieve this feeling, most notably by using alcohol or drugs. Biblical peace, however, starts not with the feeling of peace but with the root cause of it, meaning a strong and healthy relationship with God and with others. Of course, peace with God is made possible only through the Prince of Peace. When Christ establishes his eternal kingdom, societal peace will be the norm. Around seven hundred years before Jesus was born, Isaiah foretold of Jesus' arrival to earth and the far-reaching impact of his reign.

Isaiah 9:6-7 (CEV)

⁶ A child has been born for us. We have been given a son who will be our ruler. His names will be Wonderful Advisor and Mighty God, Eternal Father and Prince of Peace. ⁷ His power will never end; peace will last forever. He will rule David's kingdom and make it grow strong. He will always rule with honesty and justice. The LORD All-Powerful will make certain that all of this is done.

Jesus as a child "born for us." speaks to his humanity. Jesus as a Son "given" speaks to His deity.

> He becomes our "Prince of Peace" who gives real peace to those who seek him.

God created this world with the intention that it be full of peace. But sin broke God's creation, so that brokenness has damaged that which God had intended to be peaceful. But God has not given up on his creation.

> Peace will come by God's effort. God's peace is intimately related to his salvation.

< When God saves, he will restore his kingdom so that those who live for him will experience the fullness of his peace.



FROM: Isaiah 53:1-12 (CEV) The Suffering Servant of God

¹ Has anyone believed us or seen the mighty power of the LORD in action? ² ... the servant grew up obeying the LORD. ... ³ He was hated and rejected; his life was filled with sorrow and terrible suffering. ...

We despised him and said, "He is a nobody!" ⁴ He suffered and endured great pain for us, but we thought his suffering was punishment from God. ⁵ He was wounded and crushed because of our sins; by taking our punishment, he made us completely well. ⁶ ... the LORD gave him the punishment we deserved.

⁷ He was painfully abused, but he did not complain. He was silent like a lamb being led to the butcher, as quiet as a sheep having its wool cut off. ⁸ He was condemned to death without a fair trial. Who could have imagined what would happen to him? His life was taken away because of the sinful things my people had done. ⁹ He wasn't dishonest or violent, but he was buried in a tomb of

cruel and rich people. ¹⁰ The LORD decided his servant would suffer as a sacrifice to take away the sin and guilt of others. ... He did everything the LORD had planned.

¹¹ By suffering, the servant will learn the true meaning of obeying the LORD. Although he is innocent, he will take the punishment for the sins of others, so that many of them will no longer be guilty. ¹² The LORD will reward him with honor and power for sacrificing his life.

Others thought he was a sinner, but he suffered for our sins and asked God to forgive us.

Isaiah's vision of God's future peacemaking effort is unexpected. Isaiah describes him as a "suffering servant."

> God would restore peace on earth, but only through One who would take the penalty of humanity's sin.

> Jesus entered the world as the one who would fulfill this mission.

< Peace doesn't mean much unless God deals with the basic human problem of sin. Jesus was the prerequisite to God's peacemaking effort.

^ Jesus represented us on the cross. He bore our sin.

^ His death dealt a fatal blow to sin, the cause of human brokenness and separation from God

^ Because of Jesus' crucifixion, we can have peace in all of its fullness. (Colossians 1:19-20

¹⁹God himself was pleased to live fully in his Son. ²⁰ And God was pleased for him to make peace by sacrificing his blood on the cross, so that all beings in heaven and on earth would be brought back to God.)

While Christ's life on this earth was often troublesome and tumultuous, it was his pouring out of his life unto death that produced the possibility of a life of peace. For instance, in Paul's day, there were enormous barriers of cultural prejudice and religious isolation between Jews and Gentiles. The Jews arrogantly despised the pagan Gentiles as dogs and viewed them contemptuously as the "uncircumcised." Those attitudes went both ways; for instance, the Greeks divided all people into two classes — Greeks and barbarians. But these barriers came crashing down because of Christ. Through the sacrifice of Jesus' death and resurrection all believers share mutual citizenship in God's kingdom of peace.

FROM Romans 5:1-11 (CEV)

¹ By faith we have been made acceptable to God. And now, because of our Lord Jesus Christ, we live at peace with God. ² Christ has also introduced us to God's undeserved kindness on which we take our stand. So we are happy, as we look forward to sharing in the glory of God. ³ But that's not all! We gladly suffer, because we know that suffering helps us to endure. ⁴ And endurance builds character, which gives us a hope ⁵ that will never disappoint us. ...

⁶ Christ died for us at a time when we were helpless and sinful. ⁷ No one is really willing to die for an honest person, though someone might be willing to die for a truly good person. ⁸ But God showed how much he loved us by having Christ die for us, even though we were sinful.

⁹ But there is more! Now that God has accepted us because Christ sacrificed his life's blood, we will also be kept safe from God's anger. ¹⁰ Even when we were God's enemies, he made peace with us, because his Son died for us. Yet something even greater than friendship is ours. Now that we are at peace with God, we will be saved by his Son's life. ¹¹ And in addition to everything else, we are happy because God sent our Lord Jesus Christ to make peace with us.

By accepting the simple fact that Jesus died for our sins and rose again, we have peace with God. Why, then, do so many Christians still fight him?

The sin that separated us from God is forgiven and forgotten because of what Jesus Christ did for us. We can have peace with God.

> Peace with God takes care of the **past**: He will no longer hold our sins against us.

< We can rest in our relationship with God.

> We not only have peace with God, but we also have access to God. Access to God takes care of the **present**. We can come to Christ at any time for the help we need.

< We can talk to him freely, and fellowship with him continually because we have peace with Him eternally.

FROM 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2 (CEV)

... ¹⁴ We are ruled by Christ's love for us. We are certain that if one person died for everyone else, then all of us have died. ¹⁵ And Christ did die for all of us. He died so we would no longer live for ourselves, but for the one who died and was raised to life for us.

¹⁶ We are careful not to judge people by what they seem to be, though we once judged Christ in that way. ¹⁷ Anyone who belongs to Christ is a new person. The past is forgotten, and everything is new. ¹⁸ God has done it all! He sent Christ to make peace between himself and us, and he has given us the work of making peace between himself and others.

¹⁹ What we mean is that God was in Christ, offering peace and forgiveness to the people of this world. And he has given us the work of sharing his message about peace. ²⁰ ... We speak for Christ and sincerely ask you to make peace with God. ...

Paul is sent as God's minister of the new covenant that Jesus brought—to announce God's "peace treaty" with those who will trust in Christ to free them from the penalty and power of sin.

FROM Ephesians 2:1-22 (CEV)

¹ In the past you were dead because you sinned and fought against God. ² We had made God angry, and we were going to be punished like everyone else.

⁴⁻⁵ But God was merciful! We were dead because of our sins, but God loved us so much that he made us alive with Christ, and God's wonderful kindness is what saves you. ⁶ God raised us from death to life with Christ Jesus, ...¹⁷ Christ came and preached peace to you Gentiles, who were far from God, and peace to us Jews, who were near God. ¹⁸ And because of Christ, all of us can come to the Father by the same Spirit. ...

Jews and Gentiles used to feel great animosity toward one another.

> The Jews went to extreme practices in order to avoid Gentiles. Coming in contact with one would make them "unclean."

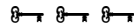
< If a Jew even accidentally brushed against a Gentile in a crowded area he would have to immediately ceremonially cleanse himself.

< When a Jew entered Palestine he would often shake the dust off his sandals and clothing in order not to contaminate the Holy Land with Gentile dust.

< If a Jew married a Gentile, the Jewish family would hold a funeral for the one that had been "lost."

< Many Jewish believers thought it was inconceivable that a Gentile could be saved unless he first became a proselyte Jew. (Keeping the laws of Moses and becoming circumcised).
> The Gentiles? ... well, I guess you can imagine how they felt about the Jews in response to their treatment of them.

So, how do we experience God's peace? It all begins when we enter into relationship with God through Jesus Christ.



PEACE WITH OTHERS

While the Bible is brimming with examples of hostility and fighting, it also contains notable examples of people striving for peace. For instance, in the Old Testament Abram (later named Abraham) and his wife, Sarai (later named Sarah), and nephew, Lot, moved to Canaan and lived as nomadic shepherds. When conflict arose between the two men regarding space and land, Abram took the initiative to calm their dispute. Although Abram, as the elder, would normally have first pick of the land, he put the peace of the family above his individual wishes.

See Genesis 13:1-18 (pgs. 361-362 in BELIEVE).

The story of Abraham and Lot begins with Abraham's father, Terah. Terah left Ur of the Chaldeans and traveled west to Haran with Abraham; Abraham's wife, Sarah; and Lot, Abraham's nephew. Terah died in Haran (Genesis 11:32).

In Genesis 12, Abraham received a calling from the Lord to leave his homeland to go to a land that God promised to him. This promise included a land, a nation, and a people. Abraham obeyed, taking Sarah and Lot with him, along with their servants and possessions, and settled at Shechem.

After a brief time in Egypt during a famine and after God rescued Abraham's wife from the Pharaoh's harem, the Pharaoh rewarded Abraham with riches (or more accurately, paid him to leave Egypt and take God's curses with him). When we get to the part of this story in Genesis 13, Abraham and his nephew Lot have returned from Egypt very rich men with each owning a significant share of livestock and other goods.

Upon returning, Abraham and Lot found that the land would not support the large number of animals that they were now required to feed. The problem was compounded by the fact that the native Canaanites used land in the area too and often held the most desirable land in the area. The stress of trying to feed the animals on limited land resources began causing tension between Abraham and Lot's workers.

In an effort to fairly resolve the problem, Abraham told Lot, "Let's split up. If you go to the left, I'll go to the right. If you go to the right, I'll go to the left." Abraham told Lot he could choose the land that he wanted and Abraham would take what was left.

Lot chose for himself the plain of Jordan and headed east. While Abraham stayed behind in Canaan, Lot chose to move to the plains near the wicked city of Sodom. Lot chose this area because the land was lush and green not caring (or considering) that the area he was moving his household to was a land of very evil men. God reiterated his promise to Abraham for land and family.

In this story we notice that Abram does not place blame on Lot. Because they are family Abram senses the importance of not making this issue a conflict between them. He realizes that there is more that unites them than divides them.

> Because of this sense of unity and desire for peace, Abram takes the secondary position when it comes to choosing the land and allows Lot the first choice.

NOTE: As a Christian community in our country and around the world, we need to realize the worth of this example set by Abram. Because we all embrace the person and work of our Savior, Jesus, we become a

family where there is more that unites us than divides us. We need to remember this! Diversity does not have to mean division.



Another example of people striving for peace in the Bible is found in the life of Jesus. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus encourages us to make living at peace with each other one of our top priorities, even above acts of worship. God makes it clear throughout Scripture that he values obedience over sacrifice. So if we are not at peace in our relationships, Jesus urges us not to keep performing acts of worship, but to pursue reconciliation first. (See Matthew 5:21-26, pg 362 BELIEVE).



Living at peace, even with fellow followers of Jesus, can be a challenge. We each think and feel differently. Naturally there are bound to be conflicts. The church in New Testament times was made up of both Jews and Gentiles. Many Jewish converts held on to the rituals of the Old Testament Law regarding diets and festivals. Some Jewish followers gladly left these rules behind in favor of their new freedom in Christ. Because the Gentiles had little regard for these traditions, it created tension in their community. Paul instructed the church in Rome how to experience peace even amid intense disagreements.

Romans 14:1-15:13 (CEV)

^{14:1} Welcome all the Lord's followers, even those whose faith is weak. Don't criticize them for having beliefs that are different from yours. ² Some think it is all right to eat anything, while those whose faith is weak will eat only vegetables. ³ But you should not criticize others for eating or for not eating. After all, God welcomes everyone. ⁴ What right do you have to criticize someone else's servants? Only their Lord can decide if they are doing right, and the Lord will make sure that they do right. ...

¹⁰ Why do you criticize other followers of the Lord? Why do you look down on them? The day is coming when God will judge all of us. ¹¹ In the Scriptures God says, "I swear by my very life that everyone will kneel down and praise my name!" ¹² And so, each of us must give an account to God for what we do. ¹³ We must stop judging others. We must also make up our minds not to upset anyone's faith. ¹⁴ The Lord Jesus has made it clear to me that God considers all foods fit to eat. But if you think some foods are unfit to eat, then for you they are not fit.

¹⁵ If you are hurting others by the foods you eat, you are not guided by love. Don't let your appetite destroy someone Christ died for. ¹⁶ Don't let your right to eat bring shame to Christ. ¹⁷ God's kingdom isn't about eating and drinking. It is about pleasing God, about living in peace, and about true happiness. All this comes from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸ If you serve Christ in this way, you will please God and be respected by people. ¹⁹ We should try to live at peace and help each other have a strong faith. ...

^{15:1} If our faith is strong, we should be patient with the Lord's followers whose faith is weak. We should try to please them instead of ourselves. ² We should think of their good and try to help them by doing what pleases them. ³ Even Christ did not try to please himself. ... ⁵ God is the one who makes us patient and cheerful. I pray that he will help you live at peace with each other, as you follow Christ. ...

⁷ Honor God by accepting each other, as Christ has accepted you. ⁸ I tell you that Christ came as a servant of the Jews to show that God has kept the promises he made to their famous ancestors. Christ also came, ⁹ so that the Gentiles would praise God for being kind to them. ...

¹³ I pray that God, who gives hope, will bless you with complete happiness and peace because of your faith. And may the power of the Holy Spirit fill you with hope.

Paul encourages the Roman churches to receive those who are weak in the faith. They should embrace and enjoy them without passing judgment on the areas in which they did not see eye to eye.
> The unusual aspect we see in these verses, though, is that the weaker brother seems most morally upright, most rigid in discipline and appears to have the higher standards of conduct.

FROM THE TRANSFORMATION STUDY BIBLE

Paul was addressing those who were strong in the faith, that is, those who understood their spiritual liberty in Christ and were not enslaved to diets or holy days. The "weak in faith" were immature believers who felt obligated to obey legalistic rules concerning what they ate and when they worshiped. Many people have the idea that the Christians who follow strict rules are the most mature, but this is not necessarily the case.

Do you think God really cares about a lot of things we get upset about, fight over, and debate?

Our Heavenly Father's agenda is probably a lot different from ours.

Do you think the things that upset many Christians the most are insignificant when compared to the bigger issues of eternity?

It is not our responsibility to decide the requirements for Christian fellowship, only God can do this.
> To set up human restrictions on the basis of personal prejudices is to go beyond the Word of God.
> Because God has received us, we must receive one another.

Our first responsibility is to the Lord. If Christians would go to the Lord in prayer instead of going to their brother with criticism, the fellowship in our churches would be stronger. - WARREN WIERZBE

Regarding the quote: Yes, no, what do you think about what this quote says?

What does God care about?

> He's concerned about people being saved, brought into the kingdom, walking in the Spirit, and growing in grace.

Looking at 14:4 in this passage, Jon Courson says this in his APPLICATION COMMENTARY:

"God makes to stand the persons I can't understand. The person I want to put down, God Himself holds up. Others may think, You're not going to make it. But what they fail to factor in is God's grace and mercy and His faithfulness to see us through."

FROM JON COURSON'S APPLICATION COMMENTARY

The vast majority of the issues that cause division in the body are those that are not clearly spelled out in the Word. They're opinions. They're perspectives. They can be solid and excellent. But we must always be mindful to give our brothers and sisters great latitude and to allow them the freedom to be persuaded in their own minds. ... Everything is pure, but anything with which you have a personal problem is unclean for you. Therefore, determine where you're at—but don't impose your convictions on others.

When we look at 14:13 in this passage we come to the “don't judge others” phrase. This has caused some debates, which we've just learned we need to be careful to avoid.

> The best thing to remember is that we are not to be judgmental of people's differences just because they are different. However, we are to judge with a godly discernment.

> We do proper judging every day.

< E.g. when we are in traffic, in the grocery store, making decisions for our children (or parents, in some cases).

< We need to be aware of situations and practices that will be harmful to ourselves or to those we love.

> Paul puts forth the principle of brotherly love.

< If we love each other, we will desire to edify and build each other up in the faith.

< It's not the externals, but the eternal things that count: goodness, peace, and joy.

Christians should help each other grow. Both strong believers and weak believers need growth.



Many of the New Testament letters helped to re-socialize the church to live in God's kingdom — a kingdom of righteousness, peace and joy. Paul offered specific instruction to believers in the various churches regarding how to achieve this divine vision through Christ. Believers were to set their sights on living at peace with everyone to the best of their ability.

FROM Colossians 3:1-17 (CEV)

^{3:1} You have been raised to life with Christ. Now set your heart on what is in heaven, where Christ rules at God's right side. ² Think about what is up there, not about what is here on earth. ...

¹² God loves you and has chosen you as his own special people. So be gentle, kind, humble, meek, and patient. ¹³ Put up with each other, and forgive anyone who does you wrong, just as Christ has forgiven you. ¹⁴ Love is more important than anything else. It is what ties everything completely together.

¹⁵ Each one of you is part of the body of Christ, and you were chosen to live together in peace. So let the peace that comes from Christ control your thoughts. And be grateful. ...

Personalize this passage, write down your thoughts.

FROM Romans 12:17-21 (CEV)

¹⁷ Don't mistreat someone who has mistreated you. But try to earn the respect of others, ¹⁸ and do your best to live at peace with everyone. ¹⁹ Dear friends, don't try to get even. Let God take revenge. In the Scriptures the Lord says, "I am the one to take revenge and pay them back." ²⁰ The

Scriptures also say, "If your enemies are hungry, give them something to eat. And if they are thirsty, give them something to drink. This will be the same as piling burning coals on their heads."

²¹ Don't let evil defeat you, but defeat evil with good.

Personalize this passage, use real names. Who are your "peace breakers"?

FROM 1 Timothy 2:1-8 (CEV)

¹ First of all, I ask you to pray for everyone. Ask God to help and bless them all, and tell God how thankful you are for each of them. ² Pray for kings and others in power, so that we may live quiet and peaceful lives as we worship and honor God. ...

⁸ I want everyone everywhere to lift innocent hands toward heaven and pray, without being angry or arguing with each other.

Personalize this passage, are there any people in your life that you would have problems praying with? Sometimes it's much easier to pray for, than to pray with.

Paul penned a letter to his faithful ministry partner Titus while Titus was leading the new believers on the Mediterranean Sea island of Crete. At this time Crete was known as an immoral, dishonest place filled with selfish people — all the ingredients for conflict and strife. Paul gave Titus tangible and practical advice to guide the believers there regarding how to live a life of peace. (See Titus 3:1-11; pg. 367 in BELIEVE.)



Scripture connects inner peace specifically to peace among people. (See Col. 3:15)

> If divine peace reigns within us, it should touch the rest of our lives, especially our most important relationships in family, among friends, and in church.

> But the peace of Christ impacts an even broader set of human relationships.

< The death of Jesus not only brings reconciliation between individuals and God, it also creates reconciliation among people by eliminating the hostility that keeps us from living peacefully together.

> On the basis of peace with God, we can have peace with others as well.

< This is not limited to a few close relationships.

< God's peace was able to transform the relationship between Jews and Gentiles in the early Christian churches.

^ It impacts races, ethnicities and nations.

There is something we need to be aware of though. This social relational dimension of peace is not simply whitewashing social evil in an attempt to "make nice." We cannot confuse peacemaking with "nice-making."

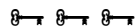
> In Luke 12 we read about division that Christ brought. But this does not contradict the passages we have been studying.

< In Luke, Jesus is speaking to those who expected a superficial peace, a peace that was really no peace at all because it failed to deal with the true cause of human brokenness.

< Jesus came to bring an unanticipated kind of peace. His peace would address the root cause of human suffering. His peace would be offered to all people.

< Jesus' statement about strife and division should warn us not to equate the absence of conflict with true peace.

True peace will always include right-relationships, just treatment of all persons, wholeness in all dimensions of life, and divine blessing to boot. Sometimes the path to true peace must pass through strife and division before it arrives at its destination. - MARK ROBERTS



PEACE WITH YOURSELF (INNER PEACE)

Two-thirds of the use of the word "peace" (shalom) in the Old Testament involves the fulfillment that comes to humans when they experience God's presence. Such peace can be experienced from God's presence in our lives even in difficult circumstances.

Worry is the chief robber of peace in our lives. It prevents us from lying down and sleeping in peace at night. It keeps us on edge during the day. Our Prince of Peace, Jesus, emphasized the immense capacity of God the Father to love and care for his people individually before they let the worries of this life overtake them. He also stressed the important role of the Holy Spirit, the gift of the Father, in supporting God's people.

Matthew 6:25-34 (CEV)

²⁵ I tell you not to worry about your life. Don't worry about having something to eat, drink, or wear. Isn't life more than food or clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds in the sky! They don't plant or harvest. They don't even store grain in barns. Yet your Father in heaven takes care of them. Aren't you worth more than birds?

²⁷ Can worry make you live longer? ²⁸ Why worry about clothes? Look how the wild flowers grow. They don't work hard to make their clothes. ²⁹ But I tell you that Solomon with all his wealth wasn't as well clothed as one of them. ³⁰ God gives such beauty to everything that grows in the fields, even though it is here today and thrown into a fire tomorrow. He will surely do even more for you! Why do you have such little faith?

³¹ Don't worry and ask yourselves, "Will we have anything to eat? Will we have anything to drink? Will we have any clothes to wear?" ³² Only people who don't know God are always worrying about such things. Your Father in heaven knows that you need all of these. ³³ But more than anything else, put God's work first and do what he wants. Then the other things will be yours as well.

³⁴ Don't worry about tomorrow. It will take care of itself. You have enough to worry about today.

Worry loves to rob us of the peace that God has for us. What are your greatest worries?

What steps do you plan to take in order to allow God to handle the worries of your life?

We may try to dignify worry by calling it by some other name: concern, burden, etc., but it's still the same thing. Instead of helping us live longer, worry and anxiety only make life shorter.

> The Greek word translated "to worry" literally means "to be drawn in different directions."

< It pulls us apart rather than builds us up.

> Warren Wiersbe says: "Until humans interfere, everything in nature works together because all of nature trusts God. People, however, are pulled apart because they try to live by depending on material wealth [and tangible things]."

Worrying about tomorrow does not help either tomorrow or today.

> It robs us of our effectiveness today.

> It makes us even less effective tomorrow.



It's true that each day has enough trouble of its own and, as followers of Christ, we must be prepared to deal with these troubles. It might be tempting to give in to the stress but, as Jesus vividly illustrated to his disciples, through our faith we can find peace and remain in control. (See Mark 4:35-41; pg. 371 in BELIEVE.)



Jesus was constantly working to educate and reassure his followers. On the day before his crucifixion Jesus talked to his disciples about a unique offer of peace. This peace comes only from God and is wholly different from the peace offered by the world.

John 14:27 (CEV)

²⁷I give you peace, the kind of peace that only I can give. It isn't like the peace that this world can give. So don't be worried or afraid.

As Paul wrapped up his personal letter to the believers at Philippi, he spoke to them directly on how to obtain a peace that transcends all understanding.

Philippians 4:4-9 (CEV)

⁴Always be glad because of the Lord! I will say it again: Be glad.

Even if we feel we can't rejoice in the circumstance, we can always rejoice in the Lord.

⁵Always be gentle with others. The Lord will soon be here. ⁶Don't worry about anything, but pray about everything. With thankful hearts offer up your prayers and requests to God.

Prayer is not a monologue. It's a dialogue.

> More and more the real need is not for God to hear from us, but for us to hear from God.

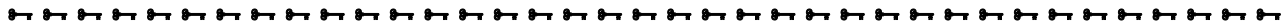
Talking to God about everything that concerns us and him is the first step toward victory over worry. Paul tells us to take everything to God in prayer.

> We may be prone to pray about only the “big things” in life and forget to pray about the “little things.” The problem with this is that the “little things” can grow to become “big things.”

7 Then, because you belong to Christ Jesus, God will bless you with peace that no one can completely understand. And this peace will control the way you think and feel.

8 Finally, my friends, keep your minds on whatever is true, pure, right, holy, friendly, and proper. Don't ever stop thinking about what is truly worthwhile and worthy of praise. 9 You know the teachings I gave you, and you know what you heard me say and saw me do. So follow my example. And God, who gives peace, will be with you.

If we think rightly, if we rejoice in the Lord continually, if we think on things that are true, pure, holy and proper, the God of peace will be with us.

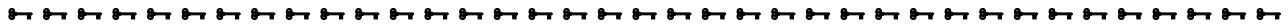


KEY QUESTION: WHERE DO I FIND STRENGTH TO BATTLE ANXIETY AND FEAR?

FROM THINK, ACT, BELIEVE LIKE JESUS by Randy Frazee

Most people would define peace as a feeling, as a sensation in the soul. Yet, temporary substances such as alcohol and drugs can artificially create a “peaceful” or sedate mood in us. The problem comes when the feeling wears off, and we are left, once again, with the chaos of our souls. ...

If you were to ask people to give you a definition of peace in our culture, you would likely hear more about the absence of trouble than the presence of contentment. A biblical definition of peace refers not to the subtraction of anything, but rather to the addition of Jesus. Wherever Christ is present, peace is available. (Romans 5:1-2 --Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.)



KEY IDEA: I AM FREE FROM ANXIETY BECAUSE I HAVE FOUND PEACE WITH GOD, PEACE WITH OTHERS, AND PEACE WITH MYSELF.

FROM THINK, ACT, BELIEVE LIKE JESUS by Randy Frazee

Jesus provides us the opportunity to have peace with God. His death on the cross satisfied God's wrath against sin. Yet we must choose to receive this peace offered in salvation. Again, Christ is present, so peace is available. Consider these words of Jesus:

*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. (John 14:27)
I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)*

In our relationships, Paul encourages us to choose peace whenever it is possible and in each situation, as much as we have responsibility for and control over: “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.” (Romans 12:18)

We are sinners, as are those we are in relationship with, and so peace will evade us at times; it won't always be everyone's choice — even our own. Paul... (calls) us to do all we can to live in peace, but to realize that even when others won't allow it, we can be at peace with ourselves and always be ready to offer peace to others. Why? Because Christ's peace is always available to us.

And even regarding enemies, God can work miracles. In the book of Proverbs, Solomon writes, "When the Lord takes pleasure in anyone's way, he causes their enemies to make peace with them." Proverbs 16:7

Peace is a choice Christ gives us access to out of our relationship with God, deep in our own soul, even in the noise of the world and in the face of those who may hate us. (See Psalm 4:8; 29:11; Isaiah 9:6.)



KEY APPLICATION: WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES THIS MAKE IN THE WAY I LIVE?

FROM *THINK, ACT, BELIEVE LIKE JESUS* by Randy Frazee

The peace of Christ brings us an end to our soul's search for security.

When Christians are asked about their lives prior to salvation, we hear a consistent testimony that they were searching for internal peace because they hadn't had it in their lives. We also often hear people say after praying to receive Christ, "I just immediately felt a peace come over me." While this is a feeling, it is also the spiritual sensation of the depositing of the peace of Christ into the soul. ... The presence of peace has come to live forever in a warring soul.

We must never forget that the nonbeliever cannot muster up the "peace of God, which transcends all understanding." A discussion about peace can open a large doorway to reaching those who do not know Christ. After all, who doesn't want peace? Every human throughout history has sought it. Regardless of what we may attempt to stuff into our souls, nothing will satisfy or accomplish what Christ can do. His brand of peace is the only one custom-built to fit our hearts. The book of Job contains these words: "*Submit to God and be at peace with him; in this way prosperity will come to you.*" Job 22:21

The peace of Christ brings us a proper response to a hurting world.

If Jesus is The Answer, then we have the answer. If he is the Prince of Peace, we now hold him in our hearts. This allows us to speak peace into volatile situations, promote peace in the midst of madness, and carry peace into confusion. ...

We should never gain the reputation for divisiveness and dysfunction, but rather live in such a way that we are known for harmony and unity. This atmosphere is found in the mind-set of Christ, and as his temples moving about in the world, we can be known as purveyors of peace. ...

The peace of Christ brings us an invitation to the atmosphere of heaven.

As peace permeated life in the garden for Adam and Eve before the fall, peace will once again reign for those who spend eternity with God. Yet the peace of heaven is the same peace that fills the empty soul after receiving Christ as Lord. We can experience a taste of eternity when we make the choice to follow him. ...

Peace, inexplicably, is most present when it shouldn't be present at all. It is most felt when life all around us is at war. Peace comes when it is most needed, ... We can't describe it; we can't explain it; and we certainly can't manufacture it on our own. ...

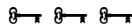
When it comes to difficult situations you can't immediately change or fix — broken, hurting relationships; illnesses or diseases; financial crises — go to God in prayer. Begin by rehearsing all the things you are thankful for — down to the smallest bit of beauty. ... Then lay your request before God. Just speak it out to him in complete honesty and clarity. Be specific.

Offer to him the things beyond your control and ability to fix. As you engage in this spiritual practice of prayer, a peace beyond your comprehension will begin to bud on the end of your "branches." ...

When peace is our soul's foundation, the walls of our life will be stable. It will steady and maintain our thoughts, emotions, attitudes, and feelings. If we daily surrender to Christ when the storms of life threaten, his peace will keep us grounded and secure.

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you;

the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace. Numbers 6:24-26



SEVEN WAYS TO INCREASE YOUR PEACE.

#1 See the value of peace. Maybe you need to take peace a little more seriously? If you don't think it's a big deal to lose your temper, worry all day or get stressed out, you may have underappreciated the gift of peace more than you realize. 1 Peter 3:11 tells us to "search for peace." And whatever you value, you will seek out with passion.

#2 Take a serious inventory of what you spend your time on. Do you have an unsustainable life? Do you have way too much on your plate, but keep saying yes to things and filling up your calendar? Jesus called us to be fruitful, not busy. Cut away the branches that are not bearing fruit.

#3 Trust God. Believers in Christ are supposed to believe. That means we trust what He says in His Word and completely give everything over to Him. When we do that, we enter His rest (peace). Proverbs 3:5 (AMP) says, "*Lean on, trust in, and be confident in the Lord with all your heart and mind and do not rely on your own insight or understanding.*"

#4 Make a decision not to be a people pleaser. It's not possible to keep all the people in your life happy all the time. This doesn't mean you can act rudely toward them. Just don't try to please another person at the expense of displeasing or being disobedient to God. Live to please God first.

#5 Mind your own business. Usually, the less known about other people, the better. Being nosy and spending energy trying to learn what others are doing or saying produces anything but peace in life. (1 Thessalonians 4:11)

#6 Let peace be the umpire of your life. If you are thinking about doing something, but you don't have peace about it, don't do it-because if it's not peaceful, it's not God.

#7 Do whatever you can to work toward simplicity. The busier you are, the more vital it is to have simplicity. This means sometimes it's best to let things go instead of starting a war over something petty. Also, it might be simpler to not own so much stuff. Trying to take care of too much can just overwhelm and frustrate you.