

## Finding the Missing

# Peace

By Pastor Doug Batchelor

*“But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.” —Psalm 37:11*

### **An Amazing Fact:**

*Do you know the strange events that led to the prestigious Nobel Prize? Alfred Nobel invented “safety blasting powder”—better known as dynamite, which is five times more potent than gunpowder. It made construction with explosives safer, more efficient, and cheaper. But military leaders also realized the value of dynamite. However, the man known as the “Lord of Dynamite” was a pacifist and was greatly troubled by the wartime use of his inventions. In 1895, a newspaper mistakenly published Nobel’s obituary while he lived! He was horrified to read that he’d be remembered as a man whose invention was linked to so much death and carnage. So upon his death, perhaps in an effort to alleviate his conscience and improve his legacy, Nobel’s will provided that the bulk of his vast fortune go to a fund that would annually celebrate advancements in science, literature, and peace.*



and the waves beat into the boat, but Jesus was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. “And he arose and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.”

This is a fascinating tale, because the disciples wake Jesus to ask Him a very strange question: “Don’t you care that we’re perishing?” Of course He cares—that’s why He came to earth! Jesus said, “God so loved the world . . . that they might not perish.”

Naturally, Christ was not distressed by the raging elements. In fact, He did not need to shout; rather, His words, spoken in faith, were potent enough. I imagine He might have even yawned, rubbed the sleep from His eyes, and stood to calmly survey the storm. I think He simply spoke, “Hush. Be quiet. Be at peace.” With that, the wind instantly stopped and the waters instantaneously flattened to a glassy calm.

That’s the way it is with God; He can instantly soothe all our fears.

However, when the disciples were rescued from their fear, they were still “exceedingly” afraid. But why after the storm was gone? Now they are wondering, “What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?” The elements had peace, but the disciples were still afraid. It’s clear their absence of peace was beyond environmental. Something else took away their peace—something on the inside. They did not know Jesus.

Like the disciples, we become anxious and lose faith when the gale blows. We wonder, “Does God care?”

### **God Is Peace**

A while ago, I was frustrated with a series of problems I faced as a pastor and parent. I wasn’t wringing my hands, but I did have many anxious moments. I woke up at night, my mind churning over this bundle of challenges. What bothered me most about this reaction was that I knew it demonstrated a lack of faith. I’ve learned so much more about peace since then, and I would like to pass on to you a few aspects of what the Lord taught me. Some of the best advertising for Christ is to exude peace no matter the external circumstances. Not only is God love, but He is also the essence of peace. I went through the Bible and found seven times when God is identified as a God of Peace. We don’t normally think of that as one of His titles, but it is—and I believe it is an important one. God does not bite His nails, nor does He pace the floor. God is never nervous, edgy, or restless.

### **Peace From Within**

Everybody desires peace. Many are longing for political peace. Others are craving mental, financial, social, and even physical peace. But most of the world seems to believe some external change in circumstances is what will bring lasting peace.

In Mark 4, we find the familiar story of Jesus sleeping through a storm. A great windstorm arose,

## Not Just a Word

The word “peace” is found about 430 times in the Bible, which means God has a lot to say about the importance of this theme. The Hebrew word for peace is “shalom,” which can be used to say “hello” or “goodbye.” In essence, shalom means peace, safety, well-being, happy, friendly, healthy, prosperity, and favor. The New Testament uses the Greek word “irane” for peace. This is where we get the name Irene. It can mean: peace, prosperity, one, quietness, rest, to set at one again, and to restore. Great words, aren’t they? They are sweet, endearing words. And the entire plan of salvation revolves around these words because we are alienated from God; we are at war. And Jesus, who is the pure Prince of Peace, has come to reconcile us. He came to make peace with the Father on our behalf, because our sins have separated us from God.

## True Peace

When people talk about peace, they say, “Let’s pray for peace.” What kind of peace do they mean? Usually, it’s global or civil peace. But is this primarily why Jesus came?

Many fear nuclear war, so they ask for world peace so nations don’t annihilate each other. Even with the current wave of disarmament, the nuclear nations still have enough weapons to exterminate life on this planet. And now an army of fanatical terrorists is trying to obtain nuclear weapons. That might leave you feeling a little edgy. If you didn’t know that God was on His throne, you might never sleep!

What about political peace? Jesus warns, “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword” (Matthew 10:34). Wars and crusades have been fought in Jesus’ name, so this can’t be the peace He’s offering. Herbert Hoover said, “Peace is not made at the council tables, or by treaties, but in the hearts of men.”

Some long for domestic peace, plagued by constant conflict in their homes—which have become battle zones. The Bible says it’s bad for a woman to marry a lazy man. And for a man to be married to an irritable woman, “It is better to dwell in the wilderness” (Proverbs 21:19). And yet even this domestic peace is not the real reason Jesus came, because He said, “For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the

daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law” (Matthew 10:35). The gospel of Christ can most certainly bring peace into a divided home, but it can just as easily bring division. Domestic tranquility is not why Jesus is called the Prince of Peace.

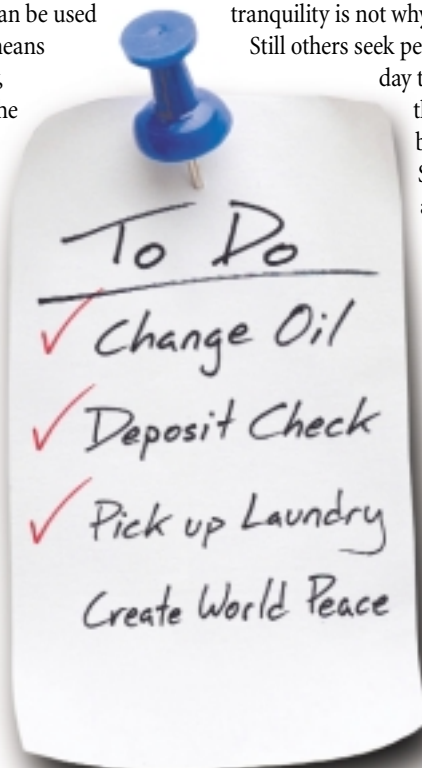
Still others seek peace through financial security. Every day they anxiously check the stocks, and if the market goes up, they’re serene; but when it drops, they’re agitated. Some are constantly fending off and stalling bill collectors. Who can have peace living like that? It’s hard to have peace when you’re daily drowning in debt. Some people think, “If I could just win the lottery, then I’d have peace.” But the Bible says peace does not come from the abundance of things a man possesses. Proverbs 11:28 says, “He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.” No. Real peace does not come from financial security either.

## False Peace

The devil wants us to pursue false peace through the popular counterfeits of finances, domestic affairs, and the world in general.

He even has some people looking for peace through cult-like religions or rituals, while persuading others to turn hopelessly to drugs for temporary sensations of peace.

Many are distracted and deceived by these false forms of peace. Ezekiel 13:10 says, “They have seduced my people saying, Peace; and there was no peace.” Many politicians have greased their way into office by promising peace. Before Jerusalem was destroyed, the religious leaders told the people, “God is going to defend us.” They claimed “Peace!” And they were destroyed. In Isaiah 57:21, we’re warned, “There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.” Though false prophets promise them peace, those without God won’t find it. In 1 Thessalonians 5:3, we read, “For when they shall say Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.” We need to especially be concerned when we hear world leaders shouting, “Peace and safety are on the horizon.” It is a popular platitude, but that’s not the kind of peace God promises. All these conditional concepts of peace change



**An Amazing Fact:** One of the best-selling over-the-counter remedies in North America is antacid—eaten like candy by millions feeling too anxious. In fact, we spend nearly \$2 billion each year fighting stomach ailments often related to stress. Ironically, regular use of antacids might have a debilitating effect on the human body: It’s been linked to esophagus erosion, diarrhea, constipation, and a host of other digestion problems—along with preventing protein absorption and disrupting other medicines’ effectiveness. Like most drugs, antacids really only treat the symptoms of what’s really going wrong inside us. A better diet, exercise, a thorough check-up, and most important, trust in God may be the ultimate steps in ridding oneself of this dangerous pill-popping problem.



so quickly. Remember Job? He lost his financial, physical, and family serenity suddenly. But he did not lose his peace (Job 22:21). Conditions will always change, so we shouldn't be caught off guard by trusting in false peace. The devil can use these illusions to make us complacent and then he pulls the rug out from under us!

## The Enemies of Peace

So where do you find abiding peace that gives you rest no matter what your circumstances? "All men desire peace," someone said. "But few people desire those things that make for peace." Often those seeking peace insulate themselves against it by falling victim to its enemies—such as fear, greed, ambition, envy, anger, and pride. Anyone embracing these traits can't have peace. They must let them go to make room for and nurture the peace of God. We cannot cling to pride or greed and then say, "God, grant me peace." Those enemies must first be evicted from the heart.

Peace is also something you'll miss by aiming directly for it. It's like happiness: If you spend your life trying to make yourself happy, you'll lose it (Matthew 16:25). You find happiness by serving and loving others. So if peace is something you're looking for in and of itself, you'll never experience it.

## Where to Begin

I'm amazed by the Bible story of Peter sleeping like a baby even while on death row. That's incredible! He had a peace that surpasses understanding. How would you like to find that kind of peace where you don't need to be anxious even though your life is on the line? Martin Luther said, "True peace is not merely the absence of some negative force. It is rather the presence of some positive force." Ridding yourself of negative forces will provide peace only temporarily. Eventually, some other crisis will sprout to displace your temporary tranquility—a constant roller coaster of peace and worry. True, abiding peace must be something more.

I once saw a bumper sticker that said, "No God, No peace; Know God, Know peace." I thought, "That's clever!" Because that's exactly where true peace comes from: knowing God. Job 22: 21 says, "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace." How do we acquaint ourselves with God? Through communion; His Word. By allowing Him to speak to us, we'll find peace. And we are promised that when we pray,

"The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7). He'll give you this peace that surpasses understanding when you begin to know Him.

## The Source

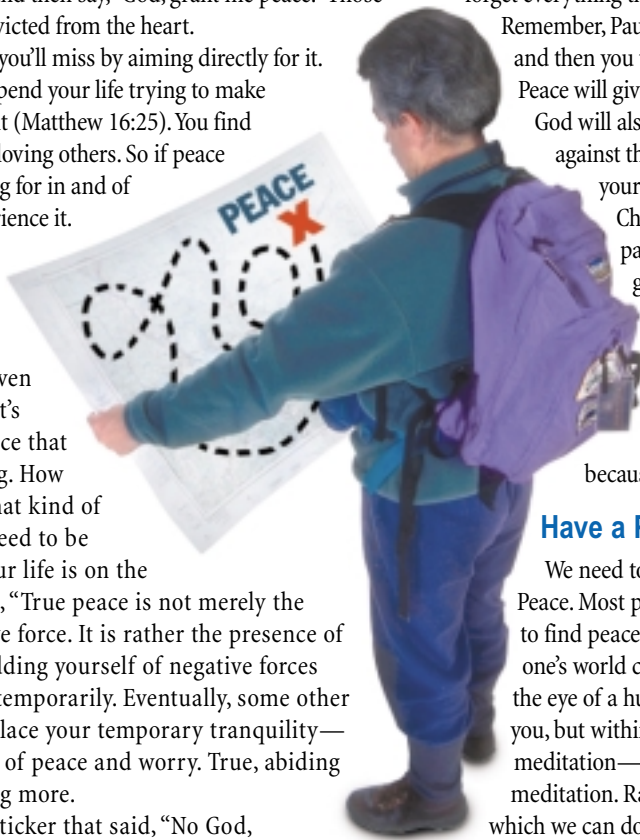
Thomas Jefferson once said, "When you start becoming anxious . . . count to ten. If that doesn't work, count to ten again." That's quaint, sound advice; but the real power of peace is found in the promises of God's Word. Christ met every one of Satan's temptations with that Word. Knowing Scripture gave Jesus the power and peace to overcome. An attitude of gratitude can also become a source of peace. Focus on those things for which you should be grateful. Sometimes, we get agitated because we have forgotten our blessings and ponder our problems. We become discontent by focusing on what is wrong and forget everything that is right. Thank God for what you do have.

Remember, Paul said, you pray, you supplicate, you request, and then you thank. After thanking God then the God of Peace will give you that incredible peace (Philippians 4:6, 7).

God will also guard your heart and mind through Jesus against the devil's attacks of distress, designed to destroy your peace. The strongest witness is when a Christian can demonstrate peace even when passing through trial. When you're peacefully going through a storm, you have a converting influence on others. David said, "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety" (Psalm 4:8). Even though King Saul and an entire army were hunting to kill him, David could sleep because he knew God was with him.

## Have a Peace Summit

We need to have a peace conference with the Prince of Peace. Most people are centered in self, which is like trying to find peace at the epicenter of an earthquake. To have one's world centered in God is real peace. He's the calm in the eye of a hurricane. The storm might be raging around you, but within all is still. Peace also comes from meditation—and I'm not talking about transcendental meditation. Rather, the Bible tells us to meditate on God, which we can do in so many ways. At our mountain home, my family can see a beautiful valley cascading below. A friend built us a beautiful oak swing on the porch—and my wife spends much time there, just meditating. One day, I began feeling restless because of mounting unfinished projects. But finally, I thought, "I need to try that!" So I joined her up on the swing. We gently rocked back and forth, and I surveyed the



**An Amazing Fact:** May 30, 1868, marked the first Decoration Day, designated as a time of remembrance for Americans who died in their nation's defense during the Civil War. Later, this date became known as Memorial Day and was expanded to include all service men and women who fought and died for the United States in war.

Nearly 1.5 million Americans have died in wartime service, fighting to bring peace and stability for their homeland. Of course, no human war has ever provided lasting peace—since the signing of the World War I Armistice in 1918, for every year of war, there have been just two minutes of political peace. However, the Bible tells us that at the conclusion of the greatest war ever fought, humanity will know true peace forever.

meadows and the birds. Then I heard that still, small voice. The Bible tells us to be still and to know that He is God. I found myself at peace.

Behold God's creation, and you'll find real rest. Isaiah 26:3 says, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." This is true meditation: keeping your mind fixed on God. I like to call this condition a "calm-plex." And when you stay your mind on God, you can have that calm-plex.

## Connecting the Peaces

I saw a sign in front of a church that said, "If life is a puzzle, look here for the missing peace." It suggests that along with reading the Word, meditation, prayer, and trust, you need to learn about that missing peace in the church environment.

Peace can be contagious. We learn much about the peace of God by fellowship with others who know the Prince of Peace.

Peace also comes from obedience—by knowing you're in God's will and surrendering to Him.

Philippians 4:9 says, "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you." That's an important biblical message. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace" (Psalm 37:37). Many people haven't associated peace with obedience, but the Bible is clear: "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them" (Psalm 119:165).

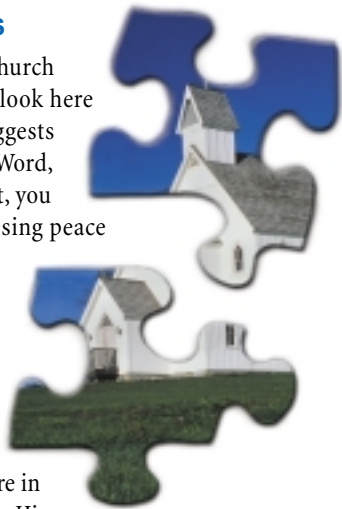
In fact, when I counsel a fretful soul, I usually ask, "Is there something you're doing that is not in harmony with God's will?" Often they'll admit to being disobedient in some area. Would you want your children to be at peace if they were disobeying you? Likewise, God loves you too much to let you have peace when you are disobeying your conscience and His will.

Jonah is a great example of this—running west when God said go east. He soon found himself in the storm, having lost his peace when he went directly against the will of God. The Bible is full of similar stories that remind us of this principle. "The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever" (Isaiah 32:17).

## Peace Is a River

Isaiah 48:18 says, "O that thou hadst hearkened to my [commands]! then had thy peace been as a river." Isaiah doesn't say, "Your peace would have been like a creek." Do you know why? A creek dries up. But a river doesn't; it is continual. (Rivers may fall or rise some, but they always flow.) It's constant, just like peace. It just keeps on moving—it's always there, available, and ever flowing.

Erwin Lutzer said, "Emotional peace and calm come after doing God's will, and not before." I once stole from my employer when I was 15 years old. I never forgot. It wasn't much money, but years later, after I was born-again, the Holy Spirit said, "Doug, you need to go and pay



them back." I didn't want to, and so I lost my peace. I tried to explain my conscience away, "Oh, that was 20 years ago and such a little amount." I had accepted Christ, and God had forgiven me—so why was it bothering me?

I think it has to do with progressive peace. To stay at peace means you must continually walk in God's will as He reveals things ... always flowing forward. Many Christians have new truths revealed to them but say, "I don't want to walk like that because it's different." And sure enough, they lose their peace! If God reveals new light, you can't refuse to walk in it. The Lord finally graced me with strength, and I returned to the place where I once worked. I went in, my hands sweating. Ironically, the employer I stole from was no longer there—no one knew where he went. But I found my peace. You see, God didn't want my \$15. He wanted my willingness to make things right. And once I was in God's will for me, I had my peace back again. I was a river once more. "When peace, like a river attendeth my way, it is well with my soul."

## Peacemakers

God has called you to be at peace, but He also wants you to be a peacemaker. He wants you to share that peace with others. Don't keep it to yourself because, like happiness, it's something you retain by giving it away. Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matthew 5:9).

How are we to be peacemakers? Are we to become politicians with a seat at the United Nations? Not particularly. As Christian peacemakers, we are to invite people to make peace with their God. That's the foremost responsibility. In Luke 10:5, Jesus sends out His apostles to preach. He instructs them to say "Peace be to this house" when they entered a new home.

And we are to give this benediction to a world in turmoil. As we invite the Prince of Peace into our hearts, we are then called to communicate Him to an anxious and fretful world.


When the priests would bless the people, they would say, "The LORD bless thee, and keep thee; The LORD make his face to shine upon you, And be gracious to you. The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, And give you [shalom]" (Numbers 6:24). We are a *nation of priests*. Christ came to bring us peace, so He sends us to bring other people peace.

## The Rock

Do you want to find peace? Jesus, the Prince of Peace, is the missing piece. The gospel opens with an angel singing, "Peace and goodwill toward men." Christ entered the world with a proclamation of peace.

And He concluded His ministry the same way. Before ascending to heaven, He appears to His disciples in the upper room and says, "Peace be unto you." And He repeats this for them again and again. This is why He's called the Prince of Peace. Ephesians 2:14–17 says this about our King: "For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation ... thus making peace [and]





putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who are afar off, and to those who are near” (NKJV). We are at war with God. But Jesus unites us. Jesus brings peace between the Father and us.

A few years ago, Karen and I went scuba diving at the Great Barrier Reef. We got caught in a storm on this small charter boat. The captain said our lives were at risk and whatever we paid didn't matter. He then steered the boat behind a huge rock near an island. And as we were anchored behind that rock, the storm raged around us—but that night, we were sheltered from the wet gale by this

island rock, and we slept peacefully. During the night, the anchor slipped and we were rocked awake violently.

But the captain simply got up and steered us back behind the rock. It was soon calm once more.

Jesus is our Rock. The world is full of storms, and we'll find true shelter only under His wings. “Peace

I leave with you,” Jesus says. “My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth ... unto you” (John 14:27). God wants

you to have peace! It's not political, social, physical, domestic, or financial peace.

It's an internal peace that God gives, not like the world gives. It's a peace like a

river, a peace that passes understanding.

## Peace, Perfect Peace

In the world, you're going to have tribulation, but be of good cheer, because Jesus has overcome the world for you. Christ said that no matter what's happening in the world, you can have peace. “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace” (John 16:33). Jesus is the best example of peace; He didn't allow outward circumstances to destroy His inner peace with the Father. He is the epitome of peace—the very essence. His peace wasn't contingent on physical relief from hunger or torture; rather, it sprang from a deep internal well. It wasn't reliant on His finances or social acceptance. His own people forsook Him, but He still had peace. It wasn't conditional on domestic bliss either, as His own family misunderstood Him.

Jesus' peace was such that He withstood the test of everything the world and the devil threw at Him. All the legions of hell assailed Him to take away His peace, and they couldn't touch it—because it was hidden in God. I want you to have that kind of peace—a peace that no devil can rob. If you want it, you can have it through a trusting relationship with God, communion in prayer, fellowship with His people, and through building on His Word.

Now you know the source of true peace in this life, but a more perfect peace is surely to come. Someday, there will be nothing but total peace everywhere. Isaiah 11:6 promises “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion . . . and a little child shall lead them.”

This means peace in creation, peace in our relationships, peace in the whole world. The promise is simply waiting for the peacemakers to claim it. 