

Christian Character– People of Peace

Our quest for true peace begins at birth. As babies, we long for our mother's comforting arms, as children we yearn for happy experiences that are void of fear, and as adults we strive to find success and fulfillment through jobs and relationships.

These pursuits are desirable—but they only give temporary peace. Lasting peace cannot be attained through our own efforts. Lasting peace is a gift from God. Just as a clear mountain stream refreshes and nourishes the wildlife in its midst, God wants to fill our hearts with peace and comfort. There is no greater peace than that which is available through Jesus Christ. God's peace washes over us like a cool stream of water—soothing our heartache, washing away doubt, and cleansing the wounds of sin and pain.

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 5)

What causes disruptions in our peace with God? "Peace-barriers" are often composed of habitual sin, unresolved guilt, and unforgiveness toward others. Obstructions can also occur when we blame God for difficult circumstances, or when we decide to live in a state of rebellion against God's truths.

Our thoughts play a great role in the level of peace in our lives. When our minds are occupied with negative, nagging, and unproductive thoughts, we push peace away and invite anxiety and worry into our lives. Therefore, we must learn to recognize and replace negative thought patterns before they rob us of peace. There are several categories of thoughts that steal peace from us—sinful, negative, erroneous, unrealistic, rebellious,

and obsessive. Each category represents a different area in which Satan aims to establish a stronghold in our minds.

Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful. (John 14)

If I want to experience true peace I need to ask God to expose anything that may be preventing me from receiving the peace that only He can give. I need to listen with an open heart and receive what God reveals to me through teaching, the Scriptures, or His own voice. When the barriers are removed, I will experience the peace I long for. To obtain God's peace, I must make three key decisions. Accept Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior, believe that the peace God offers is mine for the asking, and live in obedience to God's will. It is impossible to live with peace in my heart and rebellion in my actions.

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God and the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4)

Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. What is peace for me? What does it feel like? When do I have it?
2. What breaks down peace in my life?
3. What can I do to welcome God's peace into my heart?
4. How do I get long-lasting peace?