

How God Meets My Deepest Needs: He Provides Peace

Peace of mind is big business in America, and especially on the internet. Everybody thinks they have the key to it. Yesterday, I googled the phrase “peace of mind” and found 4,820,000 sites on the Internet after only 7 seconds. I searched through the sites and found some very interesting ones:

- There was a company called “Peace of Mind” that sold home security systems.
- There was a Peace of Mind funeral services
- There was a Raga band called Peace of Mind, and a song by Lauren Hill called “I Gotta Find Peace Of Mind”.
- There were Peace of Mind candles, crystals and body soaps.
- There was even a plumbing warranty plan that insures your toilet. (I know you’ve all been very anxious about that!)
- There was a site offering peace of mind through Dianetics and Scientology.
- There was a site to help you care for seniors at home called “peace of mind”
- There was Hinduism’s Ten Commandments for Peace of Mind

I searched through a list of 100 sites and did not find one that mentioned Jesus. I am sure that of the 4.8 million sites there were sites that offered Jesus as peace of mind, but it wasn’t the first thing, nor the first 100 things that popped up.

Everybody thinks they have the key to peace of mind or at least wants you to think so. They want you to buy their product. Last week I was dragged into one of those stores that Sarah makes me go into every once in a while: Bath & Body Works. I walked around and began reading some of their advertisements. They had a whole section on aromatherapy. One of the bottles was labeled, “Jasmine Vanilla.” It went on to tell the costumer that, “Intoxicating Jasmine is said to inspire a relaxed awareness and deepen emotions. In synergy with Vanilla — favored for its soothing nature — and other comforting essential oils, this blend helps promote a sense of harmony and peace of mind.” Now, folks, if it were as easy as sniffing something, it would be great – just put a little of the oil on your wrist and every time you get stressed out just sniff it. You’ll have peace of mind.

Peace of mind is such an important concept in life that people will do almost anything to find it. They will travel to exotic places at great expense. They will sniff up their nose a brain-destroying drug. They will experiment with New Age rituals. They will try all kinds of things.

But the truth is very few people in this world are at peace with themselves. Most people carry a high degree of stress, of anxiety, of tension in their lives. I have noticed that there are three things that tend to rob our peace. Three things that steal the peace of mind that God intends for us to have.

1. **When circumstances are uncontrollable we often lose our peace.** As you know much of life is beyond your control. You get frustrated by delayed flights and stuck in traffic and there's nothing you can do about it; you just set there. But even more than that the most important things in life are often beyond your control. I know couples who've want to have a baby and it just isn't happening. I know singles who want to get married and it just isn't happening. Lots of things just end up being out of your control. When that happens we get frustrated and we lose our peace of mind.
2. **When people are unchangeable we tend to lose our peace.** People naturally resist change. And they resent it when you try to change them. Have you ever tried to change someone? Have you tried to implement a personal improvement program for your husband or wife or children? They just don't cooperate and you can't figure out why they aren't working on the thing that is for their own good! They resist it and they resent you. The quickest way to lose your peace of mind is to try to change somebody else because most people are just not going to change. So we get frustrated and lose our peace.
3. **When problems are unexplainable.** We know that life is not fair. Not everybody has a happy ending and live happily ever after. Things don't always turn out right. What makes it more difficult is that you are not always going to know why. And when you don't know why things don't happen in your life the way you intend for them to do, you tend to get frustrated, you tend to get anxious, nervous, stressed. And you lose your peace.

God, however, has promised peace of mind because it's a fundamental need of your life.

Psalm 52:9 - I will praise you forever for what you have done; IN YOUR NAME I WILL HOPE, for your name is good. I will praise you in the presence of your saints.

We have been talking about what it means to hope in the name of God. Last week, we looked at the names, "El Simchathgali," which means "I am the God of exceeding joy". We talked about how God provides Joy. The week before we looked at two names of God: Yahweh-Shammah, "I am the God who is always there"; AND Yahweh-Rapha = "I am the God of Healing."

Today I want to look closely at another Hebrew name of God to see how it meets our deepest needs. Yahweh-Shalom (Judges 6:24). Shalom means peace. Yahwah Shalom means, "I am the God of peace." God tells us that His name is "peace giver"! This means that we can find the ultimate peace in God

The greeting that is most used in the New Testament is “Grace” and “Peace”. Instead of “hello”, or “how are you doing?”, Christians would greet each other with the phrase “Grace and peace to you.” This was a constant reminder that God wants to provide peace in your life. In fact, Jesus says three times in John 20 “Peace be with you.” And in John 14:27 He says this “I am leaving you with a gift – peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give isn’t fragile like the peace the world gives. So don’t be troubled or afraid.”

If God says “I’m offering you a gift of peace,” He means it. It’s not something you work for. It’s not something you deserve. It’s not something you try for. You don’t beg for peace. You don’t plead for peace. It is simply a gift. When I realize this, I asked myself “if it is a gift, then why don’t I have it?” Today we’re going to talk about that. We’re going to look at The Path to Personal Peace.

I need to say right up front that peace has nothing to do with problem-free living. If you have to wait until all your problems are solved to be at peace, you’re never going to be at peace. Because Jesus said, “In the world you will have problems.” You’re going to have tribulation – count on it. Peace of mind does not come from conflict-free living. Much of your life you’re going to have conflict. But did you know you could have peace of mind in the conflict?

Peace of mind is the result of three important decisions you need to make. Three choices. And when you choose these things it will produce peace in your life. It is the choice for acceptance, the choice for trust, the choice for surrender. This is the Path to Personal Peace.

The first step in this path is:

1. ACCEPT WHAT CANNOT BE CHANGED

Worrying about what cannot be changed certainly won’t give you peace. Becoming resentful or bitter about what cannot be changed will certainly not give you peace. Feeling guilty about things that cannot be changed will not give you peace – so you can stop beating yourself over the head. Having self-pity over things that cannot be changed in your life will not give you peace.

There is only one thing that will bring peace in your life and that is acceptance. Acceptance of what cannot be changed. In the Bible, in the book of 2 Samuel 12, there’s the story of King David who had a young baby that was dying and David did everything he could to keep that baby from dying. He even prayed in the temple for seven days all night long. He fasted, he wept, he cried, he pleaded with God – “God! Please save this baby!” and on the seventh day, the baby died. God did not answer

his prayer. I don't know why. Someday we'll learn why He did not answer that prayer but He had a plan and purpose in it.

When David's advisers heard this they were scared to death. They thought, "This guy's nearly over the edge with the baby near death. When he finds out the child has actually died, he may lose it all!" So they were afraid to tell him. But David heard them whispering and he said, "Has the child died?" They said yes. And David got up. He went and took a bath. He put on clean clothes. He ate a big meal. And he went back to work.

The advisors were astounded. They said, "What are you doing? You were in agony when he was near death. Now that he's died, you're ok. What's happened?" David said, "The child has gone to heaven. And one day I will die and I will be reunited and go to heaven with that child. In the meantime there's nothing else I can do. I've got to get back to work." He accepted what could not be changed.

Last week we looked at the Apostle Paul and all the things he went through. We talked about how he was taken to Rome, put in prison, chained to a guard 24 hours a day. He was awaiting execution by the emperor Nero. During that time he wrote Philippians, the most positive book in the Bible. We looked at how Paul says, "I've learned to be content." I want to go back to that verse. Philippians 4:11-13 "I have learned to be satisfied with the things I have and with everything that happens. I know how to live when I am poor, and I know how to live when I have plenty. I have learned the secret of being happy at any time in everything. I can do all things through Christ because He gives me strength."

Notice several things

First, acceptance is a learned experience and you learn it from going through tough times – learning to accept in the experience. It is a choice and it is only possible by supernatural power. You're never going to learn to really accept the things of life without God's power in your life.

Let me tell you the one thing that keeps you from peaceful circumstances, what keeps you tense and nervous and stressed out about the things in your life. It's your demand for an explanation. When something goes wrong in your life, when something doesn't happen the way you think it ought to happen, you go, "Why?? Why, God? Why is this happening? Why did You allow this? Why is this happening to me?" and by going over and over it in your mind trying to figure out why something happened, you are kept in turmoil.

We need to understand some things about our demand for an explanation of the things that happen in our lives.

One, God doesn't owe you an explanation for anything. He's not obligated to explain everything that He does to you. You are the creation, He is the creator. God is a good God, He's a just God, He's a fair God, He's a loving God, and He understands things that you don't. You need to just say ok. The fact is, God doesn't owe you an explanation for anything in your life.

Two, even if He did explain why things happen the way they do, you probably wouldn't understand it. God's mind is so much greater than my mind, I can't comprehend all the ways of God. There are forces at work in my life, in my family, in our world and throughout history that, if God sat down and took the time to explain to me how generations affect generations and on and on, I probably wouldn't understand it anyway.

Third, explanations never bring peace. You think, "If I just knew why this happened, then it would make sense" No, it won't. Some of you have figured out why certain things happened in your life but it didn't bring peace. You still felt resentful or bitter or angry or upset or whatever. Explanations never satisfy.

What comforts us is the presence of God in our life. Not God's explanations, God's care and concern and comfort. What brings peace of mind is when we allow God to hug us and His presence surrounds us.

The classic example of accepting things that cannot be changed is the story of Job. In the Old Testament, Job played in the superbowl of suffering. This guy was the wealthiest man who had ever lived. He was a very godly man, very dedicated, very devout to God. One day, actually a 48-hour period, he lost everything. First, all ten of his kids were murdered. Then he lost all his wealth, his crops were destroyed. His flocks and herds were destroyed. He went bankrupt instantly. He lost everything he had overnight. Then, as if that weren't enough, he got a terrible, painful disease that left open soars on his body oozing and left him in pain 24-hours a day. You think you had a rough day! That's pretty tough. The only thing that he was left with was a wife who nagged him! And she comes to Job and says, "Why don't you just curse God and die?" That's what I call emotional support!!!

But the most difficult thing about Job's circumstance is this: there was no apparent explanation given. He had no reason why all these things had befallen him. There was no understanding, no hint, no God saying, "This is why I'm doing this, allowing this in your life." Looking back, we can see what was going on because, as we read the book of Job, we find out that there were forces at work, that God was allowing a test, that Satan was involved – there were all kinds of things that were going on that Job didn't understand. We can see that looking back, but he had no idea in the moment. It

didn't make sense and the most difficult part of it was this: Job says, "Why is this happening, God? I'm a good guy!" And for 37 chapters God says nothing! Zip!

Have you ever been in a crisis when God was silent? That is one of the most difficult things to handle in life. When you're going, "Why? Why is this happening?" and heaven is like brass heaven and your prayers are bouncing off the ceiling and nothing is coming through. Job was going through the greatest test of his life. It was a test of his peace of mind but it was also a test of his character. This is the guy who said, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." And it was a major test.

Here's the point of the story: When God is silent you need acceptance.

Remember when you were in school and you took a test. There was no talking allowed during a test. The teacher demanded silence when a test is being given, and was quiet herself through the test. You can count on that in your life. God's not going to give you the answers to the test of life and He may be quiet. You might get the answers later. In fact, you might not ever get it until you get to heaven, but you're certainly not going to get it in the test.

Millions of people pray the Serenity Prayer everyday. You're familiar with this: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." That is a very famous prayer that has helped millions overcome addiction. This, however, is the edited version. There are eight more lines to the Serenity Prayer that you may never have heard. That's where all the power is. The power of peace is not in the first part of the prayer. It's in the part that they've cut out.

"God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
 The courage to change the things I can,
 And the wisdom to know the difference.
 Living one day at a time
 Enjoying one moment at a time
 Accepting hardship as the pathway to peace
 Taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is not as I would have it
 Trusting that You, God, will make all things right if I surrender to Your will
 So that I may be reasonably happy in this life
 And supremely happy with You forever in the next.
 Amen.

It makes a little bit of difference, doesn't it? All of the power is in the second part of the prayer. It's through the acceptance, the trust, the surrender that you find the path to peace.

Here's what you do: When you go through an experience that you don't like, you do what you can but then you accept what can't be changed. If you've got a health problem, a handicap, a difficulty, you go to the best doctor you can find and work on it. But once you've hit the wall and nothing else can be done, you accept what cannot be changed.

If you've got a problem with a child, you try to work with that child and you do the best you can. You get the best experience and advice – whatever you can. But once you've hit the wall and there's nothing more to be done, you accept what cannot be changed.

If you are in a marriage that just isn't working out, you do the best you can in bringing some resolution, but you accept that person whether they ever change or not.

God says this is the starting point to peace –accepting what can't be changed.

The second step in the path to peace is to:

2. TRUST IN GOD'S LOVING CARE

Isaiah 26:3 “You, Lord, give true peace to those who depend on You, because they trust in You.” God gives peace to those who trust in Him because they depend on Him.

Proverbs 3:5-6 “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and don't lean on your own understanding. [Don't try to figure it all out.] In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths.”

You will never live a problem-free life. There is no such thing as a problem-free life. Because... It's always something. If it isn't one thing it's another. You have a list of problems in your life, the moment you knock off your biggest problem, Number Two gets promoted. Now you have another Number One problem. When you get that knocked off, Number Three has moved up to Number Two and now it's Number One. The rest of your life, you're going to have one problem after another. There is a word for a series of problems – LIFE. You've got to learn to have peace in the middle of your problems or you're never going to have peace. As soon as one pops up and you deal with it, another one is going to take its place.

Why does this happen? Why is my life just one problem after another?

There are three reasons:

In the first place, Adam messed it up for us. He blew it. He and Eve gave into temptation, allowed sin to come into the world and we're all paying the result. We live in a fallen world. So this is not a perfect world. There are things around you that cause problems. We live in an imperfect world.

Second, you have an enemy and his name is Satan. You say, "Do you believe in a personal, real devil?" Of course I do. God does. The Bible talks about him. And all you have to do is pick up a newspaper and see his work all around the world. Evil is a real entity in this world. Satan and his demons want to mess you up. He wants to mess with your mind. He wants to mess with your family. He wants to mess with your health. He wants to mess with your finances. He wants to mess you up. Particularly if you are a follower of Christ if you're trying to do the right thing, you're the enemy of the devil. He's going to try to mess you up anyway.

So you've got the world competing against you – a fallen world – and you've got a personal enemy who's competing against you.

On top of that, you just make your own mistakes. You blow it. Most of the problems and pain in my life come from my own poor decisions, from my own lousy choices. When I make dumb decisions, I pay the penalties. When I sin, there are always results. Most of the time the devil doesn't have to worry about me because I'm messing up my own life.

Those things are always working to bring problems into your life and pain comes as a result.

Sometimes, however, the pain in your life is no one's fault. Sometimes the problems in your life, you can't blame anybody for. One day Jesus was walking down the street and He found a man who was born blind. He was blind from birth. The disciples looked at the man and said to Jesus, "Ok, Lord, who sinned? This man or his parents?" Implying that he had this problem because of sin. And that's a common therapy today; it's either your fault or your parent's fault. The idea is still around. It's either blame yourself or blame your parents. That's the reason for every problem in your life. It's not a new idea. When they asked Jesus whose fault it was, Jesus said, "Neither. It's neither the man's fault or the parents' fault. John 9 says, "This happened so the work of God maybe displayed in his life."

Sometimes there's a problem in your life so that the work of God may be displayed in your life. Regardless of why you have the problem that you have that's unsolvable, unchangeable, unexplainable, uncontrollable. Regardless of the problem, regardless of the source whether it came from the world, the devil, yourself, or you don't know where, you still need the same response every time -- trust in the loving care of God.

Philippians 4:6-7 “Don’t worry about anything; instead pray about everything. Tell God your needs and don’t forget to thank Him for His answers. If you do this, you will experience God’s wonderful peace which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand.” That’s the path to peace. Trust God’s loving care in the situation.

Most people respond to the uncontrollable, unexplainable, unchangeable situations of life with one of two responses and both of them are fatal mistakes.

Some of you, when you face an uncontrollable situation, you just try harder. You become more controlling. And the more your life gets out of control, the more controlling and compulsive you become. “I’m going to make this thing work!” And you make everybody around you miserable. The more controlling you become and the more compulsive you become, the more unhappy you become.

Others of you are at the exact opposite extreme and you just want to give up, not try anymore. You give in to despair. You basically say, “I’m a victim! And I will be a victim the rest of my life.” You swallow and wallow in a giant pity party. You give in to despair.

Both of those responses are foolish mistakes that don’t work. Instead, you need to take the third step in the path to peace. The third important decision.

3. SURRENDER TO GOD’S LOVING CONTROL

The real reason people are in turmoil, they have so much anxiety, they have so much tension in their mind is because their fighting a war with God in their minds. People tend to think they know better. Every day we wake up and have a decision to make: who’s going to be in charge of my life? Me or God? Who’s going to be in control of my life? Am I going to be in control or is God going to be in control? Because you think you know better, there are verses in the Bible you just want to ignore. You want to make up your own rules. You want to play your own games. You think you’re God. You think you know better. The more you take control yourself, the more miserable you become and the more out of control your life becomes. Because it doesn’t work. You are at war with the real God when you try to play God.

The Bible is very clear about the results of these decisions. Romans 8:6 says this “If a person’s thinking is controlled by his sinful self, then there is death. But if his thinking is controlled by the Spirit, then there is life and peace.” Those are your alternatives – death or life and peace. Who’s going to be in charge?

I don’t know if you’ve thought this through but it’s obvious. In a war with God you’re going to lose. It’s like fighting superman, except there is no kryptonite. There’s no way you’re going to win that war when you’re arguing with God. As the old saying

says, "Your arms are too short to box with God." Cassius Clay, Mohammed Ali, at one point in time was the World's champion. He used to go around saying, "I am the greatest! I am the greatest!" Several years back at the Olympics when Ali was chosen to light the torch, he was a different person. He climbed up the stairs and with a palsied, Parkinson's shake in his hand, he barely lit the torch because of all the shaking in his body. Later in an interview he said, "God gave me Parkinson's so I could remember that I'm not the greatest, but He is.

Sometimes God places a limitation in our life in order to force us to our knees, to force us to depend on Him, to prove that He is trustworthy. Sometimes God just flat out has to incapacitate us to show who's in control. If you fight with God, you're going to lose. And He loves you too much to let you win.

If you want to have deep, personal, satisfying peace of mind in heart and soul, you've got to surrender control of your life totally to God. How do you know if you've done that?

The evidence is this. Evidence of a surrendered life is always obedience. When God says, "Do it!" I do it. I don't care if I don't understand it, I don't care if anybody else is doing it, I don't care if it's possible, I don't care if it's hard or easy – I do it. If God says to do it in His word, whether it makes sense to me from a human point or not, I do it. Because I am surrendered to His control.

When I listen to His word and follow His direction, what is the result of that? It is always the same. Peace. "Those who love Your teachings will find true peace and nothing will defeat them."

Today, you may be in an uncontrollable circumstance. You may be married to an unchangeable person. You may be experiencing an unexplainable problem. But as Teri said, the good news is you can have peace. You can have the peace of God in your life. But first you've got to make peace with God. You can't have the peace of God until you first make peace with God. How do you do that? By surrendering your entire life in faith to Jesus Christ. "Since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us."

Are you tired of being at war with God? I had to come to grips with the fact that the single greatest source of stress in my life was being at war with God. I tried to blame everyone else for my problems, and tried to be in control of my own destiny and life. What is the result of being in control of my own life? Worry, guilt, bitterness, resentment, anxiety, fear, fatigue, depression, despair. And many of you are familiar with those emotions. What is the result of having Jesus Christ being number one in

my life and being fully surrendered to whatever He wants? Peace, power, strength, wisdom, purpose, meaning, eternal life, significance, joy.

Then why don't we surrender to God in every area of our life? Because some of us are holding on to resentment of God.

What is it that you're still angry with God about? That marriage that didn't work out? That marriage that never happened? That handicap in your life or that of a loved one? That birth defect? That big disappointment that you hoped would happen and it didn't? Those plans that you planned that didn't go the way you planned them? That loved one who died before you thought it was their time because you know better than God? What are you still resentful of God about? Do you realize that when you hold on to your anger and you're saying, "I know better than God," you are cutting off the very source of hope, healing and help you need in your own life. And you need to let it go. You need to realize that you're at war with God over that issue and that has kept you from having the peace of God in your heart.

Let me say this as clearly as I know how to say this: There is not a single bad thing that has ever happened in your life that God could not have prevented. Nothing has happened to you, all the bad, that God could not have prevented if He'd wanted to.

You say, "Then why didn't He?"

I don't know. I don't know all the details. I do know this. We live in a fallen world where you're free to make bad choices and so are others and as a result people get hurt. I do know that God has a greater purpose for your life than the problems you're going through. I do know that He's more interested in your character than He's interested in your comfort. And He wants to build you up. I do know that if everything went great in our lives, we'd be spoiled brats. And I do know that God knows just how much you can handle in your life. And I do know that this is not heaven. This is earth. Heaven is where we get the ultimate comfort. I do know that if you think you're due a problem free life on this earth you're kidding yourself and it isn't going to happen. And I do know that God has a plan for your life and that plan involves pain because He wants you to grow. And I do know that He has already determined the rewards that you will receive in heaven based on how you respond on this earth. And I do know that He loves you deeply. And I do know that He wants you to trust Him.

And I do know that there is only one way to peace. Through acceptance, trust and surrender of Jesus Christ.

Will you accept, trust, and surrender to Jesus today?

Time of prayer.