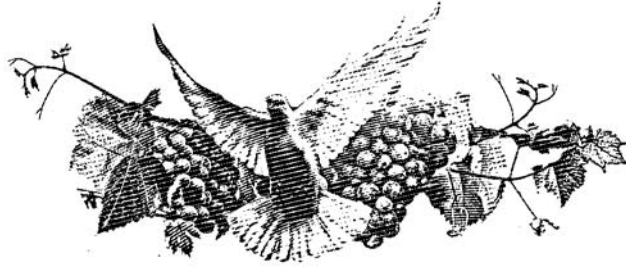


The Fruit of the Spirit Is Peace



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Lesson: *Matt. 8:23–27; 11:28, 29; Rom. 5:1–11; 12:9–21; Heb. 12:14; Col. 3:13–15.*

Memory Text: “ ‘Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid’ ” (*John 14:27, NKJV*).

As a champion of peace, Paul wrote, “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (*Eph. 4:3, NKJV*). The Greek word translated “endeavoring” is an imperative, excluding any passivity, any “wait and see” attitude. We must be proactive. If we fight and bicker in our homes, if we fall into factions at church, if we refuse to love and honor others, then we are denying the peace of God in Jesus Christ, which He established on the cross.

How ironic that you have to fight for peace. Eleanor Roosevelt, in a *Voice of America* radio broadcast, said, “It isn’t enough to talk about peace; one must believe in it. And it isn’t enough to believe in it; one must work at it.” The peace that Christ won for us also requires effort, hard work, and constant self-examination.

As we study this week, we should ask ourselves: Have I availed myself of the peace that Jesus won for me on the cross? How can I cooperate with the Holy Spirit as He engrafts that peace into my daily life?

**Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, January 23.*

Peace With God *(Rom. 5:1)*

“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” *(Rom. 5:1, NKJV)*.

To have peace with God is more than to feel comfortable in His presence. It means that we, who once were “alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds” *(Col. 1:21, ESV)*, have been reconciled and restored to fellowship with God. Once we were at war with God, but by His death on the cross, Jesus has made it possible for the hostilities to cease and for us to be God’s friends and not His enemies.

In one sense, this peace is not something we grow in, as in starting out with just a little bit of peace. Rather, we are reconciled to God, once and for all, by the cross of Christ. It is an accomplished fact. There is another sense, though, in which we do grow in peace with God. The more clearly we see God’s ways and walk in them, the more we appropriate His power to live as His sons and daughters. In this sense, peace with God is indeed a fruit of the Spirit. As we grow to maturity as children of God, we experience more and more the blessings and benefits of living in His kingdom until we can say, “Great peace have those who love Your law, And nothing causes them to stumble” *(Ps. 119:165, NKJV)*.

Colossians 1:20–22 reveals that sin did not cause God to be merciful and pardoning; rather, it revealed that He has been that way from eternity. The plan of salvation demonstrated that God loved us and was willing to forgive even from the beginning.

Read Romans 5:1–11 and summarize what you believe the crucial points are here.

Dwell on this idea that only because of what Jesus has done, because of His perfect life credited to you by faith, can you stand pardoned, forgiven, and accepted before God, regardless of your past. Why is this teaching so important to us if we are truly to know peace?

The Lesson in Brief

► **Key Text:** *Philippians 4:7*

► **The Student Will:**

Know: Trust that God’s peace keeps and guards our hearts and minds.

Feel: Embrace the peace that comes only from God.

Do: Demonstrate peacefulness in relationships and difficult situations.

► **Lesson Outline:**

I. Know: God’s Peace in Christ

A The peace that comes from God is found in fellowship with Jesus, not in isolation from God. What insight does taking His yoke upon us shed on our understanding of how we make peace with God?

B Jesus invites us to *learn* of Him. What is the relationship between *learning* about Jesus and enjoying His peace?

C We say “Like begets like.” How does peace in us create peace in others?

D The key text tells us that God’s peace guards us. How are we to understand what it means to be guarded by peace?

II. Feel: Peace With God

A Jesus has given us peace as a here-and-now inheritance. How do we make it our own in situations of conflict and provocation?

III. Do: Making Peace

A Making peace has many dimensions. How do we make peace with God? With each other? In our own hearts?

B Why is it true that if we do not know peace in our own lives we will not make it in others?

C How would we describe the absence of peace in a person’s life?

► **Summary:** We are kept guarded and enjoy peace only in fellowship with Jesus. Peace first must live in our hearts before it can create peacefulness in our relationships.

Finding Peace: Part 1 *(Matt. 11:28, 29)*

On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 is very peaceful, 10 is very anxious), how would you rate your life? People are increasingly frustrated in their search for personal peace. In Matthew 11:28, 29, Jesus makes an invitation. Though He doesn't use the word *peace*, He does use a word that means "to give rest, to refresh, to give one's self rest, to take a rest."

Read the following verses: " 'Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls' " *(Matt. 11:28, 29, NKJV)*. What is Jesus saying to us here? How can we experience for ourselves the reality of this wonderful promise?

From what Jesus is saying in these verses, is He proposing to give us peace as a gift, or does He mean to show us how to obtain it? Is not Jesus teaching that personal peace is a result of some cause and inviting us to learn that cause from Him?

"It is the love of self that brings unrest. . . . Those who take Christ at His word, and surrender their souls to His keeping, their lives to His ordering, will find peace and quietude. Nothing of the world can make them sad when Jesus makes them glad by His presence. In perfect acquiescence there is perfect rest. The Lord says, 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee.' Isa. 26:3."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 330, 331.

How does love of self lead to personal unrest and unhappiness?

How can we learn to die to self and to rest in Jesus? What choices can we make, every day, that can help make the promise of peace in Christ real? That is, what things are we doing, or not doing, that keep us from having the peace that Jesus offers us?

Learning Cycle

► **STEP 1—Motivate**

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: When we are at peace with God—made possible by His sacrifice, which brought about our reconciliation with Him—we will be at peace with ourselves and those around us.

Just for Teachers: Emphasize that, while we are not naturally peaceful, God has given us the means to become peaceful.

A few years ago, one of the earliest of the “viral videos” now so ubiquitous on the Internet showed two drivers squaring off over a parking space. After a series of maneuvers worthy of the demolition derbies in their heyday, the battered, defeated driver sped away, wheels squealing. The final frame of the video showed the rear bumper, sporting a sticker informing us that “war is not the answer.”

While obviously an exaggeration, this video reveals an unpleasant fact. We all want peace, but we’re incapable of achieving it, even in our most basic reactions to the world around us.

We’re not at peace with ourselves or with others because we’re not at peace with God. The good news (or gospel) is that for the past 2,000 years, God has been at peace with us. All we need to do is recognize it. Then we can be the peacemakers God wants us to be, spreading His message of reconciliation through our words and our examples.

Discuss: What does it mean to be at peace? How does God give us peace? Why do we have to work to be peaceful? Discuss whether peace is a natural result of being reconciled with God or some combination of what already has been mentioned in step 1.

► **STEP 2—Explore**

Just for Teachers: Emphasize that what we seek most is best described as peace. And yet, peace seems to be harder to achieve than anything else. What, according to the Bible, is at the root of our failure to be at peace? Discuss.

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Finding Peace: Part 2 *(John 14:27)*

The story is told of two painters. Each painted a picture to illustrate his concept of rest. The first chose for his scene a still, serene lake among the far-off mountains. The second painted a thundering waterfall with a fragile birch tree bending over the foam; at the fork of a branch, almost wet with the cataract's spray, a robin sat on its nest.

Which best portrayed the essence of rest? It is not often in this world of turmoil that we find the rest of a lone mountain lake. More often we must find our rest amid the turmoil of real life.

Read the story recorded in **Matthew 8:23–27** of **Jesus and His disciples on the Sea of Galilee**. *(See also Mark 4:35–41, Luke 8:22–25.)* **However unique the situation, what can we take away from this account for ourselves; that is, what is the message for us, and how can we apply it to our lives, regardless of our situation?**

Why do you think Jesus was concerned that His disciples have peace? Jesus left us with a beautiful promise about peace: “ ‘Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you’ ” *(John 14:27, NKJV)*. How does the peace the world is trying to give differ from the peace Jesus offers?

One thing we mustn't do is equate peace to a life without problems. Rare is the person, even the most faithful Christian, who goes through life without trials, pain, and suffering. Indeed, some folks have, it seems, more than their share of suffering. Peace, though, has more to do with how you handle these situations than with the situations themselves. Peace has to do with the deepest trust in a loving and caring God who knows what you are going through and has promised not to forsake you, no matter what comes your way.

What types of things upset you? Talk to God about your deepest fears. Call them by name. Ask the Lord to help you get in touch with the fear and identify it. Then take time to allow Him to begin to speak peace gently to those fears.

Learning Cycle CONTINUED

Bible Commentary

I. Peace in the Old Testament (Review Isaiah 26:2–4, Ezekiel 37:26, and Deuteronomy 28 with your class.)

The principal word translated *peace* throughout the Old Testament is *shalom*. It can refer to peace in one’s personal life in relations within society, among peoples and nations, and in the ideal relationship with God. Peace was considered to be necessary for individual and collective health and security, as well as economic prosperity, all of which were seen as results of a right relationship with God.

One example of this can be seen in Deuteronomy 28, where the blessings for obedience were essentially blessings of peace, while the curses for disobedience involved warfare—disruption of the personal, natural, and social orders, and chaos.


The word *shalom*, as well as its cognates in other Semitic languages of the region, implied wholeness or completeness. This linked it to health, or, literally, “wholesomeness.” Peace meant to be at one with oneself, with others, and with one’s environment. For example, peace in the literal sense of absence of war meant one had to be in “one accord” with one’s potential opponent. Physical wholeness or peace meant that the body was “whole,” that all the parts worked together to guarantee an optimal state of health.

The poignant fact is that the people of the Old Testament idealized peace and wholeness while achieving it only rarely and fleetingly. The story of Adam and Eve in Genesis can be seen as, among other things, an explanation of why peace was so rare and fleeting. This was, of course, because the original state of wholeness and unity that God had intended for His creation was disrupted by the first act of disobedience.

Consider This: How is the idea of peace central to the promises of the Old Testament, and how are these promises fulfilled in the New?

II. Peace in the New Testament (Review Romans 5:1–11 and 12:18 with your class.)

The Greek word for peace used in the New Testament (and the Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint) is *eirene*. As an ordinary Greek word, it had a

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Peace at Home *(Heb. 12:14)*

“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14). “If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men” (Rom. 12:18, NKJV). What can we learn from the life and example of Jesus that can make these admonitions real in our lives? What are we doing (if anything) that makes them difficult, if not impossible, to become real for us?

Strange as it may seem, the most difficult place to be a Christian is at home. How tragic, when home should be the one place in all the world where we all should have peace.

Two young men were in a battle during the days of the Vietnam War. The bullets were flying, and the bombs were exploding. All of this didn’t seem to faze one of the soldiers. When his friend asked how he could be so calm, he replied that it reminded him of home!

Study Romans 12:9–21. Identify verses in the passage that, if implemented, would help to bring peace to the home. Give a practical application for the verses you chose.

As Christians, we are called to follow an incredibly high standard, the standard presented by Jesus Himself. All of us have fallen short of that goal. That being said, it doesn’t mean that we can’t still reflect the principles revealed in the life of Jesus—principles of love, self-sacrifice, and an uncompromising attitude toward evil and sin.

Imagine what our homes would be like were we to, indeed, reflect these principles! Imagine what it would be like if we would learn to think of others before ourselves; imagine if we showed others unconditional love, even when folks didn’t deserve it. Imagine if we forgave those who hurt us. Imagine if we were as concerned about the well-being of others as we were about our own selves. Though implementing these principles wouldn’t solve all our family problems, no doubt they would greatly help!

Learning Cycle CONTINUED

much more limited scope than the Hebrew word *shalom*, referring only to the literal absence or cessation of war or hostility. Yet, in the Septuagint and the New Testament, it was used in the same way as the Hebrew word.

As in the Old Testament, peace was seen as the prerequisite of all things good; thus, we see Jesus following the universal custom of the time and place by greeting disciples, followers, and others with wishes for peace (*Mark 5:34, Luke 7:50, John 20:19–21*). Many of the New Testament epistles of Paul and others also begin with wishes for the peace of the readers or hearers.

The New Testament makes explicit what is only implicit in the Old Testament. The Old Testament clearly recognizes that the presence of peace is a sign of the presence of God (*Num. 6:26, for example*). The New Testament goes further and recognizes that the absence of peace, typical of the human experience, is a sign that humankind is literally in a state of hostility or war with God, from which all other lack of peace stems. Seeing that humankind is in no way ready to take the initiative, God therefore makes the first move by sending His Son (*Rom. 5:1–11*). By making peace with us, God makes us peaceful and also *peacemakers* (*Rom. 12:18*).—Adapted from “Peace in the OT,” “Peace in the NT,” *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), vol. 3, pp. 704–707)

Consider This: How does the New Testament expand and deepen the ideal of peace also found in the Old Testament? (*See Matt. 5:43, 44.*)

►STEP 3—Apply

Just for Teachers: Use these questions to challenge your students to take hold of the spiritual gift of peace God gives us and to be a vehicle to transfer that gift to others.

Thought Questions:

- 1 In John 14:27, Jesus says that the peace He leaves with us is different from what the world calls peace. How is it different? Why is the peace given by Jesus more permanent? Why is the peace given by God more than the absence of strife or conflict?
- 2 What does it mean that Jesus calls us to be peacemakers (*Matt. 5:9*), in light of the fact that permanent peace almost certainly never will be attained this side of the millennium? How and with whom are we to make peace?

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Peace in the Church *(Matt. 5:23, 24)*

“Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift” *(Matt. 5:23, 24, NKJV)*. What basic principle is Jesus teaching us with these words? Why do we find it so hard to implement this principle in our lives?

It is evident that Jesus takes more seriously our relationships with one another than we do. It is not uncommon for bitterness and resentment to exist for years between members of a church. Imagine how different things would be if we all followed this teaching.

Identify a characteristic of the children of God as recorded in Matthew 5:9. What does it mean?

According to Colossians 3:13–15, what are three ways we are to relate with one another as fellow members of the church? What does each one mean?

Notice the flow of Christian graces in James 3:17: “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy” *(NKJV)*. What would our churches be like if we would allow the Holy Spirit to nurture these qualities in our fellowship? What things would be noticeably absent?

Think about the last time you had a problem with a fellow church member. Did you follow Christ’s words in Matthew 5? If not, analyze the reasons why you chose the “easy,” worldly route as opposed to the path that would have required humility and self-denial. How can you learn to do what Jesus calls us to do in such situations?

Learning Cycle CONTINUED

3 How do we reconcile this mission to be peacemakers with the fact that Jesus (*Matt. 10:34*) specifically says that not only will He and His message be a cause of conflict, division, and strife but that this is His intent (for instance, He says that He brings “not . . . peace, but a sword”)? What notion of peace does Jesus hope to disturb, and how is it different from the peace He hopes to give to us?

Application Questions:

1 Philippians 4:7 refers to the “peace of God, which surpasses all understanding” (*NKJV*) that results from our acceptance of Christ. Yet, we all know people who have accepted Christ and yet fail to be assured of their salvation. We probably have felt that way, at least from time to time. How would you go about helping such a person to gain the assurance that brings that peace?

2 We are told “if it is possible, . . . live peaceably with all men” (*Rom. 12:18, NKJV*). This is a reflection of the peace with, and given to us by, God. Yet, clearly there are situations in which it is not possible to be at peace, or at least to avoid confrontation with others. Under what circumstances should the Christian embrace confrontation, and how can we confront while remaining peaceful people?

►STEP 4—Create

Just for Teachers: Like other aspects of the Christian life, the gift of peace is something that exists inside us; yet, if it exists only inside us, it is irrelevant. The following activity is meant to give your students a practical means of spreading peace and reconciliation in their immediate circle of friends, acquaintances, coworkers, family members, church members, etc.

Someone somewhere said, “Peace begins with you,” and it does. While your peaceful attitude is no guarantee that your external environment will be peaceful, the lack of such an attitude virtually guarantees that it will not.

Ask your class to consider ways in which they can make it easier for themselves to claim the peace that God has for us. These can include proactive techniques (starting the day a certain way, for example), ways of dealing with people or situations that push one in the opposite direction of one’s nature and inclinations, choices of music or literature, and so on. Write suggestions on a blackboard, flip chart, or dry erase board. Ask class members to share their experiences with any of these methods.

Further Study: *Pss. 4:3, 119:165, Isa. 26:3, Rom. 8:6, Phil. 4:7.*

“Shortly before His crucifixion Christ had bequeathed to His disciples a legacy of peace. ‘Peace I leave with you,’ He said, ‘My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.’ John 14:27. This peace is not the peace that comes through conformity to the world. Christ never purchased peace by compromise with evil. The peace that Christ left His disciples is internal rather than external and was ever to remain with His witnesses through strife and contention.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 84.

“Strife for the supremacy makes manifest a spirit that, if cherished, will eventually shut out from the kingdom of God those who cherish it. The peace of Christ cannot dwell in the mind and heart of a workman who criticizes and finds fault with another workman simply because the other does not practice the methods he thinks best, or because he feels that he is not appreciated. The Lord never blesses him who criticizes and accuses his brethren, for this is Satan’s work. Manuscript 21, 1894.”—Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, p. 102.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ What are ways you can work in your local church to help keep peace among members when inevitable tensions and disagreements arise?
- ❷ What are the common situations we face in our daily lives that threaten our peace? What Bible promises can we claim when each one arises?
- ❸ Of course, it’s easy to talk about trusting the Lord no matter our circumstances and from that trust deriving peace. And that’s true. At the same time, what concrete and practical steps can we take to change the circumstances that make peace difficult? In other words, how often might our unease and fear be the result of choices that we make?
- ❹ What practical things can we do to help others through circumstances that make peace difficult to achieve?
- ❺ How much peace should we realistically expect to have in a world filled with such strife, chaos, suffering, and turmoil?