

GOD'S GIFT OF PEACE TO YOU THIS CHRISTMAS

John 14:27

Today it's really rare to find people who are at peace. It's a rare quality. And yet it is one of the reasons we celebrate Christmas. Jesus came to give us peace.

About seven hundred years before the very first Christmas, that'd be about two thousand nine hundred years ago, Isaiah who was a prophet predicted that the Savior of the world was going to come and that he would be called the Prince of Peace. He says in a book he wrote, *"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called... Prince of Peace."* (Is. 9:6) He's talking about Jesus seven hundred years before this happened.

And of course, look up here on the screen. At the very first Christmas when the angels appeared to the shepherds they said, *"Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men."* (Luke 2:14 NKJV)

So Isaiah announces peace and the angels announce peace. And when Jesus gets his own ministry, it's about peace on earth. In fact, before he goes back to heaven he says, *"I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give."* (John 14:27 NLT) That, btw, is the basis of my message this morning. I've entitled this message, *"God's Gift of Peace to You this Christmas"*.

He says the kind of gift that I give, nobody else can give to you. Folks, you can't get it in a bottle. You can't get it in a pill. You can't get it in an experience or in a book. The kind of peace Jesus gives, only he can give it. It isn't like the peace that this world gives. What is the kind of peace that this world gives? It's phony and it's fragile. It doesn't last. How many peace treaties have been broken in history? Practically everyone.

This Christmas I want us to do just a couple of things. As we think about the coming of the Prince of Peace, I want us to talk about what is peace really all about. What kind of peace does Jesus give us? Then I want us to look at how you get it. I'll share with you the keys to peace.

First, I want to say I don't know what your background is. You may have had a very good year or you may have had a really tough year. As we come to the end of 2024, some of you undoubtedly are pretty tired. You're fatigued, you're worn out. You've had a tough year. It's been stressful for you. If that's true you picked a good service to come to because we're going to look at how do you get the peace of God in your life. Because he doesn't intend for you to go into this next year full of stress, full of worry, full of anxiety. But instead, being full of peace and serenity and tranquility.

There are three different kinds of peace in the Bible. Now, do you know that there are actually over 400 verses in the Bible that mentions peace? So, we're going to look at every one of them today! *I'm just kidding!* What I'm going to do is to summarize what 400 verses in the Bible say about peace. When you categorize them, they all come down to three categories. You might want to note this down.

First there is spiritual peace, then there's emotional peace and third, there's relational peace. Spiritual, emotional and relational. So, let's look at **these three kinds of peace.**

First, write these down, the first kind of peace that Jesus came to give is...

1. Peace with God

Peace with God. That's spiritual peace. This is the most important because it affects everything else.

You know, when a relationship is out of whack, when you're in tension with a husband or a wife, a boyfriend, a girlfriend, nothing else seems to matter. When

you have a strain or a conflict in a relationship it really just robs you of your peace, robs you of your joy.

Nothing does that more than being out of whack with God. The Bible says the first thing Jesus came to do is restore peace between us and God. 2 Corinthians 5 (CEV), in the Bible says this: *“God sent Christ to make peace between himself and us.”*

Why do we need this? I’ll tell you why. Because anytime I go my own way, I say, “I think I know better than God. I know what God says to do but I’m not going to do that. I’m going to make up my own rules. I am my own God.”

When I try to pretend I’m God, I disobey God, I fight God, I ignore what God says to do, that’s an act of rebellion. It’s an act of revolt. It really puts me in conflict with God and the Bible says there’s no peace there. I get disconnected. That’s why it feels like God is a million miles away. God doesn’t want you to live disconnected from him. He made you to be connected to him. So here’s what the Bible says – Romans 5:1: *“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* In other words, we have peace with God because of what Jesus has done for us.

You see, peace with God doesn’t come from what you do. Peace with God comes from what Jesus Christ *did* on the cross. It’s not what you do. You can’t be a nice person to get peace with God. You get peace with God through what Jesus Christ did for you. That’s what Christmas is all about.

Look at the next verse: *“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 the life of his Son.”* (Rom. 5:10 CEV)

If you know anything about anthropology, a lot of religions have what’s called a peace offering. Going back to the Greeks and the Romans and a lot of other

native American religions, they would offer peace offerings to God. The Bible says you don't need to do that. You don't need to make a peace offering to God because God already did it. He offered his own son. Jesus Christ died for us on the cross.

Look at this verse on the screen: **"He (Jesus) sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself."** (Heb. 7:27) So you don't have to offer any peace offering to God; you just accept what Jesus did. He gave himself to pay for all of our sins. That's the first kind of peace – peace with God.

So the first kind of peace is peace with God.

The second kind of peace is ...

2. Peace within me.

That's emotional peace. The Bible has a word for this emotional peace, the peace that comes inside of me. It's called the peace *of* God. When I have peace *with* God then I get the peace *of* God inside me. This is the one that makes me feel good inside.

Colossians 3:15 (NIV) says, **"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts..."** Notice the word *in*. It's inside of you. It's internal. It's emotional.

The word for "peace" in the Bible in Hebrew is the word *shalom*. You've heard this word. *Shalom* means more than just ending of hostilities. It means well being. It means happiness. It means harmony. It means serenity.

In fact, as I said there are over 400 verses about peace of God in Scripture. So I'll summarize it and just say it this way – there is a peace for every one of your problems. Whatever problem you have God has a corresponding peace.

For those with a broken heart, he gives us comforting peace. For those with a confused heart, he gives us guiding peace. For those when we have a shamed heart, he gives us forgiving peace. When we have a worried heart, he gives us confident peace.

I don't have time to go into all these different kinds but there's literally hundreds of kinds of peace that God says he offers to you. When you have peace with God then you have the peace of God. Which is internal – peace within me.

Then there's the third kind of peace...

3. Peace with others.

Peace with God, peace with myself and the third is peace with others. This is relational peace. Relational peace is the fact that the farther away we get from God the more it messes up our relationships with everybody else. You want to strengthen your marriage? Get close to God. Because if you really get close to God, if you're growing closer to God and your spouse is growing closer to God, it pulls you closer to each other. The more out of whack you are with God, the more out of whack you're going to be with other people. And the farther away I get from God, the more cranky I get with you. That's just how it works.

You see, the world is not getting more peaceful. The world is getting more conflicted. And we see it happening all around. How do we have unity? In America alone, it's very diverse. We are people of different races, different political persuasions, different social status, and what have you. How in the world do we unity when there are so many different kinds of people?

The only way we're going to have peace is when we're unified as children of God.

Let me show you a couple of verses. The Bible says this in Ephesians 2:16 (MSG), *“Christ brought us together through his death on the cross. The Cross got us to embrace, and that was the end of the hostility. Christ came and preached peace to you outsiders and peace to us insiders.”* The Bible says Jesus is the unifier. When we have the Prince of Peace in our lives then we're going to have peace with each other.

You look around and you see all of the cities that are aflame with injustice and crime and racism and all these kind of things. The Bible says in Galatians 3:28, *“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”*

Folks, I just share with you the three kinds of peace according to the Bible. You know, these three kinds of peace build on each other. And these three kinds of peace start with Jesus.

How do you enjoy that peace that we just talked about? Peace with God, peace within me, peace with others. The Bible says you do three things. This could be the most life changing moment if you do what I’m talking about. Stress will go down, peace will go up and you’re going to be a new person if you’ll actually follow what the Bible says about **how to enjoy the peace of God.**

1. I MUST EXPERIENCE A MOMENT OF CLARITY

The first thing I have to do is I must experience, what I call, a moment of clarity. I must experience a moment of clarity. I’m hoping you’re going to experience a moment of clarity in this service.

A moment of clarity is a life changing moment that transforms you forever. You are never the same again because all of a sudden you see things like you’ve never seen them before. All of a sudden you see God as he really is, not as you were brought up to believe he was. You see yourself as you really are not like you think you are, not like what your parents told you you were. You see yourself as you really are. It is a moment of clarity and you go, I get it! You see other people as they really are not as you’ve been told they were. Not as you thought they were but as they really are.

Then, you begin to see your problems in a moment of clarity. All of a sudden you go, “That’s a problem. No wonder! I haven’t seen it. All my life I’ve been

battling, battling, against this. I just haven't seen it." But you see it in a moment of clarity.

You see your past clearly. Not the way you re-wrote it. You see your present clearly. You see your future clearly.

Friend, God wants you to have a moment of clarity.

In the very first Christmas every one of those people had a moment of clarity.

Joseph had a moment of clarity in a dream. He had a dream where an angel delivers a message to him and all of a sudden he goes, "Okay. I get it. I understand what's going to happen. It makes sense. Mary, who is a virgin, is going to be the mother of the Son of God." Sometimes people have a moment of clarity through a dream. There's nothing wrong with that.

The wise men had a moment of clarity in nature. They're out looking at the stars. They're outside. And they saw a star that was shining more brightly than the others. They realized that it led to the baby Jesus. Folks, you can have a moment of clarity in the middle of a campground. You don't have to be in a church. You don't have to be in a worship service. The wise men just looked at a star and go, I get it!

Mary had a moment of clarity when she understood the Word of God that was spoken to her.

The shepherds had a moment of clarity when there was a miracle and they go, "Let's go check this one out!"

What happens is what Paul talks about in Ephesians 1. Here's what the Bible says about a moment of clarity. *"My prayer is that light will flood your hearts and you will understand the hope given to you when God chose you."* (Ephesians 1:18 CEV) That's enlightenment! A light bulb came on over your head!

God knows everything about you; you know almost nothing about God. What you need is a moment of clarity where all of a sudden you go, I get it! I see it! For the first time in my life I actually see it.

Until that happens you're not going to have peace in your life. Here's the problem: Until you have a moment of clarity you don't understand what it feels like to have real peace. You can have lived your entire life so long without peace that you think that the way you're living is actually the normal way to live. You think that all that stress, all that anxiety, all that fear, all that fatigue, all that tension, all that stress – that's just normal. That's the way everybody lives.

No, they don't! There is the peace with God and there is the peace of God that gives you peace with others. In a moment of clarity you realize maybe there is a better way than I'm living.

You see, the root cause of all my stress is thinking that I know better than God does. That I know better and if I would just do it my way then things would work out instead of doing it God's way. The Bible says in Isaiah 48:18, God says, ***"If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river."*** He said, you'd have had more peace than you could imagine if you followed my ways.

I must experience a moment of clarity to have peace. Then,

2. I MUST EXHIBIT AN ATTITUDE OF HUMILITY

The second thing that leads to peace is I must exhibit an attitude of humility.

Folks, God blesses humility. The Bible says this in James 4:6 (ESV): ***"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."*** Grace is the power you need to have peace in your life.

So here's the exchange. I exchange my vanity for his serenity. What a deal! My vanity for his serenity. I humble myself and I get his peace. I exchange my anxiety for his tranquility. That's what happens.

I have been walking with God for many, many years. I've been a follower of Jesus Christ. I've had a friendship with Christ for over 40 years. One of the things I've learned is that God is not impressed with my whining. He isn't moved by my griping. When I gripe, when I complain, when I whine that doesn't move God at all.

What does touch his heart is humility. Humbly asking God: God I need help. God, as humbly as I can say it I need help. When I say that God just opens the flood gates of heaven and pours out his grace and his mercy and his peace.

He says I want you to come and express an attitude of humility. One of the ways you do that is just admit God's God and you're not. That's a good antidote for stress. When you get stressed out repeat this three times: God is God and I'm not. Say it to the person next to you, "God is God and I'm not. God is God, and you're not." Doesn't that take the stress out of you?

Isaiah 26:12 (TLB) says this: *"Lord, grant us peace; for all we have and are has come from you."* When was the last time you said that to God? Have you ever said that to God? Have you ever in a flat-out moment of humility said to God, "God, I just want to admit everything I am and everything I have is because of you? I wouldn't be taking the next breath if it weren't for you." The only reason you're sitting in that chair right now is because God made you to love you. If God hadn't wanted to love you, you wouldn't exist. You were made by God and for God. You were made to be loved by God. It's the whole reason you're alive. And God wants you to learn to love him back.

I realize as we end this year some of you had a really tough year. Some of you are probably going through a really tough time right now. Some of you are probably barely hanging on.

Let me tell you something. You're broken. I'm broken. We're all broken. We all struggle with something because we're broken. Sin has broken every one

of us. But we're deeply loved. We come to God first in a moment of clarity and then in an attitude of humility.

Now, if your heart is broken, here's a verse for you: *"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."* (Psalm 34:18)

When Eze was still in her mom's womb, I think he was 3 or 4 months there, the doctor told Bel that they found a hole in his heart. That meant only one thing. He could be born with a down syndrome. Bel and I felt distraught. Our spirits were downcast. Of course, we were ready with whatever God would give us but it was still depressing. Then, the doctor suggested abortion. We flatly rejected it. We knew God had a purpose for everything and that he knew what he was doing. Needless to say, we prayed and asked for people to pray for the baby, for healing. God gave us his peace which we simply could not explain. The Bible calls it "the peace that passes understanding." God knew we were brokenhearted, and we were crushed in spirit and so he gave us his peace. A few weeks later, the doctor came back and said she couldn't understand it, but the hole was gone. God answered our prayers. 18 years later, Eze is dancing for the Lord. And his purpose is to build an app for my game. Just plugging Opprimo!

Now, the Bible gives us a practical way to express humility. It's the next verse. If you'll do this you'll find peace welling up in your life. Philippians 4 says this: *"Don't worry about anything...Stop right there. That's the most difficult verse in the Bible right there, folks. Don't worry about anything. That is the hardest command to keep in the Bible. Not the one that says, don't murder, don't cheat, don't commit adultery, don't steal. No, no, no. The hardest command in the Bible is that one right there. Don't worry about anything."*

You break it every day of your life. Worry is assuming responsibility God never meant for you to have. And worry is the opposite of peace. He says, "Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything." He gives you an

alternative. He says you can pray or you can panic. That's your alternative. Pray or panic. You can worship or you can worry. You can have faith or you can have fear. It's your choice. God's not going to force you to pray, to worship, to have faith. So you panic and you have all these things. He says, *"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 peace, which is far greater than the human mind can understand. God's peace will guard your heart and mind as you live in Christ Jesus."*

So let's review. What do I do to get on the path to peace? I must experience a moment of clarity, I must exhibit an attitude of humility and

3. I MUST EXPECT JESUS TO HELP ME

I must expect Jesus to help me. God does what we expect him to do in our lives. This is the faith factor.

I want to sum up everything I've been trying to say to you today in one sentence. If you get this sentence and you do the three things that Jesus Christ says to do, oh man! Your stress level is going to go way, way down. And your peace level is going to go way, way up.

Here's what he says. In Matthew 11:28-29, Jesus says, *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."* Well, two sentences.

That phrase "rest for your soul." That's much, much deeper than physical rest. That's soul rest. That's inside rest. Your problem, your stress, is not from overworked muscles. In fact most of us need to work our muscles more. Your problem is not overworked muscles. Your problem is an overworked mind. Overworked mind, overworked tension. Overworked emotions, overworked spirit.

You need rest not from physical labor. You need rest from anxiety. You need rest from tension. You need rest from guilt. You need rest from fear.

So the antidote to an overloaded soul is not a time management program. They're good but that's not going to calm your soul and not going to give you peace. It's not a time management program. It's not a philosophy. It's not a pill. It's not a plan. It's a person. Jesus says, "Come to me. Come to me."

So here are the **three steps** that you have to do. Let me give them to you quickly.

1. COME TO JESUS

That's the first step if I want to exchange my panic for God's peace. My worry for God's worship. My fear for God's faith. My anxiety for God's tranquility. My vanity for God's serenity. I make that exchange by coming to Jesus.

That's not a one-time thing. You do it every moment and every day. And you keep coming back and back and back. Jesus says come to me.

The answer for your peace is a person. It's not a plan or a pill. It's a person.

Then the second thing is to

2. CONNECT WITH JESUS

He says yoke up with me. Every time I get attached to Jesus Christ, then life gets easier because God is helping me pull the load. Every time I get disconnected from God I get under stress because I'm pulling the whole thing by myself. And I'm tired. I'm frustrated.

He says connect with me. Put on my yoke.

The truth is you're going to be yoked to something in life. Jesus says take my yoke. It's an exchange. I exchange my heavy burden for his light burden. He says, "Put me in charge. Every time you just yoke up with me the peace is going to come."

3. LET JESUS CHANGE ME

Here's a third thing he says. He says you need to learn from me. He's saying there's something you don't know that I know that I can teach you. Here's the thing, let Jesus change me. I come to Jesus, I connect with Jesus and I let Jesus change me.

That means making Jesus the CEO of your life. Allowing him to run your life instead of you. Because he is perfect and you're not. He knows everything about you and he will change you inside out. Surrender to him your bad habits, your sinful ways, your mistakes. He will make things right. And he will cleanse you and purify you. His goal is for you to become like him.

Let me conclude with our last verse in Isaiah 26:3 (NLT), *"You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you!"*

Are you tired of being stressed out? Or do you think, "I think I'll have another year of misery." Let me tell you, peace is yours. This is the gift of peace. The Prince of Peace came at Christmas. My peace I give you. Not as the world gives. You were made for more. You were not made to live under tension, stress, fear, anxiety, worry, depression – all of those things for the rest of your life. You were made for the peace that passes understanding.

Merry Christmas, everyone! Kuya Ernie, finally I got the chance to look at it today. I think these are good promo goods. But I saw a web site that may charge cheaper. I actually googled the Weber 5-in-1 charging cable just to see it up close and it brought me to a web site and I saw that it's about a dollar less. I checked the other stuff and they cost less. Also, looks like their price is the same even after this year. Please check it out. I may have missed something. Please ask also how much it costs for 3-color artwork for the t-shirt. At the last camp, the shirts cost \$6.20 each. Thanks for your research.