

## Shaped by the Spirit: The Fruit of Life with God (Part 3): Peace

By Pastor Ricky Stephen

The spiritual fruit of peace is the serenity that comes from “...settled trust in God’s Fatherly care.” (Christopher Wright, *Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit*, pg. 59)

Peace is the fruit of a truth, the fruit of our calling, and the fruit of a discipline.

### The Fruit of a Truth

God is called the God of peace. In Hebrew, **peace** is the word *shalom* which means ‘whole’ or ‘complete’. It came to refer to a ‘holistic sense of well-being’ or something complicated and vast working very well (see [The Bible Project’s advent video on Peace](#)).

Calling God, the God of peace means He is working for our holistic well-being. Peace is the fruit of the truth that God is working all things together for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).

Jacques Philippe in his book *Searching for and Maintaining Peace*, argues that our lack of peace is due to our lack of trust in God’s Fatherly care.

The opposite of Biblical peace is *not* anxiety or fear, it’s *disorder*. Our lives often look disordered chaotic and stormy as the sea of nothingness in Genesis 1.

But Jesus calmed the stormy sea (Mark 4:35). We can take comfort in Jesus’ having suffered His own storms and disorder, and that He rose again on the other side of them.

Paul says the same Spirit that raised Jesus is present in those who follow Jesus (Romans 8:11). The Spirit that hovered over the waters in Genesis 1 and filled the world, the Spirit that raised Jesus, works in us to bring order to chaos.

### The Fruit of Our Calling

Peace is the fruit of our calling, and we are called to be righteous.

Augustine, a 4<sup>th</sup> century pastor, argued righteousness is rightly ordered love. (See *On Christian Doctrine*). Jesus said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.” (Matthew 5:6)

Righteousness is the thing the Galatians were worried about (read Galatians 5:13-21). They wanted to go back to following Jewish law to know they were righteous, but Paul said the law

was like a tutor who was now dismissed (Galatians. 4:1-7). The new dichotomy was between the Spirit at work reshaping our desires and the flesh.

As Galatians 5:22-26 says, once the characteristics of God are grown in us there is no need for the law, because we will be the type of people who want the right things and act accordingly.

Righteousness and peacemaking are almost synonymous. James 3:18 says “Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.” When we are settled enough in our trust to God’s care to do what He asks, the result is peace.

Christians are called to be *peacemakers*.

## **The Fruit of a Discipline**

Peace is the fruit of the discipline of solitude and silence. Luke 5:16 says Jesus often withdrew to lonely places to pray.

This is because, as 19<sup>th</sup> Century philosopher and theologian Soren Kierkegaard wrote: “...this is one of the most crucial definitions for the whole of Christianity; that the opposite of sin is not virtue but faith.” (*The Sickness unto Death*) The way out of sin is settled trust in God’s Fatherly care.

The world is noisy, and C.S. Lewis argues that the devil uses noise to distract us. Writing in the voice of a senior demon He says:

Music and silence—how I detest them both! ... [Hell] has been occupied by Noise—Noise, the grand dynamism, the audible expression of all that is exultant, ruthless, and virile—Noise which alone defends us from silly qualms, despairing scruples, and impossible desires. We will make the whole universe a noise in the end... (*The Screwtape Letters*)

Silence and solitude get us away from the noise and close to our source—our Heavenly Father. However, starting out in this practice is often difficult and more unsettling than peaceful. One of the only pictures we get of Jesus’ quiet time was when he was tempted by the Devil (see Matthew 4).

Consider implementing a rule, no more than 24 hours without a quiet moment with God. Consider keeping devices away from this quiet time as well.

## **It's Not What Makes Peace, It's Who**

God the Holy Spirit is personally invested in your growth. It is He who is the one growing peace and the other characteristics in you. Have settled trust in His Fatherly care and in time you will find serenity.

When that serenity is found, you'll be invited to join the Spirit in making peace throughout the world. A prayer towards that end:

### **The Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi:**

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.  
Where there is hatred, let me bring love.  
Where there is offence, let me bring pardon.  
Where there is discord, let me bring union.  
Where there is error, let me bring truth.  
Where there is doubt, let me bring faith.  
Where there is despair, let me bring hope.  
Where there is darkness, let me bring your light.  
Where there is sadness, let me bring joy.  
O Master, let me not seek as much  
to be consoled as to console,  
to be understood as to understand,  
to be loved as to love,  
for it is in giving that one receives,  
it is in self-forgetting that one finds,  
it is in pardoning that one is pardoned,  
it is in dying that one is raised to eternal life.