

Introduction

The Bible describes different kinds of peace – “peace with God”, which has been obtained for us through Christ’s sacrifice; “peace of God”, the inner tranquility of the Christian who has committed his anxieties to God; and “peace on earth”, the absence of conflict between nations, groups and individuals. In Gideon, we see a character lacking peace on all three levels but who finally discovered “Jehovah Shalom” – The Lord is Peace.

Judges 6:11-24

11 Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. 12 When the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon, he said, "The LORD is with you, mighty warrior." 13 "But sir," Gideon replied, "if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our fathers told us about when they said, 'Did not the LORD bring us up out of Egypt?' But now the LORD has abandoned us and put us into the hand of Midian." 14 The LORD turned to him and said, "Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?" 15 "But Lord," Gideon asked, "how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family." 16 The LORD answered, "I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites together." 17 Gideon replied, "If now I have found favor in your eyes, give me a sign that it is really you talking to me. 18 Please do not go away until I come back and bring my offering and set it before you." And the LORD said, "I will wait until you return." 19 Gideon went in, prepared a young goat, and from an ephah of flour he made bread without yeast. Putting the meat in a basket and its broth in a pot, he brought them out and offered them to him under the oak. 20 The angel of God said to him, "Take the meat and the unleavened bread, place them on this rock, and pour out the broth." And Gideon did so. 21 With the tip of the staff that was in his hand, the angel of the LORD touched the meat and the unleavened bread. Fire flared from the rock, consuming the meat and the bread. And the angel of the LORD disappeared. 22 When Gideon realized that it was the angel of the LORD, he exclaimed, "Ah, Sovereign LORD! I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face!" 23 But the LORD said to him, "Peace! Do not be afraid. You are not going to die." 24 So Gideon built an altar to the LORD there and called it The LORD is Peace.

Philippians 4:4-9

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Matthew 10:34-39

34 Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. 35 For I have come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—36 a man's enemies will be the members of his own household. 37 Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; 38 and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. 39 Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Questions

1. In Judges 6:17, Gideon’s lack of inner peace led him to look for a sign from God. What does this passage speak to you about your own struggles with decisions and how do you go about looking for inner peace when you are conflicted about something?
2. In the passage from Matthew, Jesus describes the certainty of conflict between Christians and others. How do we reconcile his words with “Jehovah Shalom”? What can we glean from this passage that tells us how we should effectively deal with this kind of interpersonal conflict?
3. How does understanding “The Lord is Peace” influence your feelings and attitudes towards the war that is being fought against terrorism and in Iraq?
4. In this series, we have studied the different names of God – The Creator, God Most High, The Lord, The Lord is My Banner, The Healer and The Lord is Peace. Which of these personas of God do you relate to the best and which one is the most difficult?

Discussion Guidelines:

1. Allow everyone a chance to speak. If you are bursting with ideas and tend to share a lot – great – but occasionally pause a bit before you go, sometimes the quieter ones are just waiting for their chance and they need a little space before they go.
 2. Respect the opinions of others, and refrain from giving advice.
 3. Keep discussion focused on the material being studied.
 4. Maintain the confidentiality of personal things shared within the group.
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