

Stress – rest

Matthew 11:29 NLT - 29 Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Often, we place a heavy yoke upon ourselves that we were never meant to carry. The remedy is to exchange it for Jesus' yoke. What would you say is your most frequent source of stress? How can you allow Jesus to take that yoke in exchange for His?

Unforgiveness - Forgive

*1 John 1:9 NLT - 9 But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.
Colossians 3:13 NLT - 13 Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.*

There are two remedies to unforgiveness. First, we need to seek God's forgiveness when we sin in order to restore our peace with Him. *What truth do we find in 1 John 1:9 that should encourage us in this?* After you have received God's forgiveness, offering forgiveness to others becomes much easier. *What does Colossians 3:13 tell us we need to keep in mind as we forgive others? Is there anyone God is prompting you to forgive?*

WRAP-UP

God gives us peace, but He also calls us to partner with Him and prepare the way for His access into our lives. Peace takes work. And that is especially true of our work to rid ourselves of the three common robbers of peace; fighting, stress and unforgiveness. We don't want to settle for knowing about peace. We should do the work to ensure that we become a people of peace because we know the Prince of Peace.

MEMORY VERSE

Isaiah 9:6 NLT - 6 For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life

Challenge- Identify what robs your peace and take action to combat it.

“The Promise of Peace”

Advent Promises #2

INTRODUCTION

In the second week of Advent, we light the candle of peace. When Christ was born, He made a way for us to experience peace. A path was opened between God and man through Jesus, and it is only through Jesus that we can have peace between us and God. But as we see in Isaiah's prophesy, we must prepare the way for the Lord. Even though God does the hard work for us, it requires our participation to experience God's peace.

Ice Breaker

What images come to mind when you hear the word peace?

Key Passage

Luke 3:3-6 NLT - 3 Then John went from place to place on both sides of the Jordan River, preaching that people should be baptized to show that they had repented of their sins and turned to God to be forgiven. 4 Isaiah had spoken of John when he said, "He is a voice shouting in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the LORD's coming! Clear the road for him! 5 The valleys will be filled, and the mountains and hills made level. The curves will be straightened, and the rough places made smooth. 6 And then all people will see the salvation sent from God.'"

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Peace Takes Work

In our key passage, Luke tells us that the prophecy of Isaiah 700 years earlier, had pointed to John the Baptist as the voice in the wilderness.

Isaiah's prophecy about the coming Messiah included instructions to do some work in preparation. What kind of work did he reference? John wasn't telling the people to build a physical road. In what way would repentance and baptism relate to the "work" of Isaiah's prophecy?

Isaiah 40:3-5 NLT - 3 Listen! It's the voice of someone shouting, "Clear the way through the wilderness for the LORD! Make a straight highway through the wasteland for our God! 4 Fill in the valleys, and level the mountains and hills. Straighten the curves, and smooth out the rough places. 5 Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all people will see it together. The LORD has spoken!"

Our peace begins with peace between us and God. It continues as we partner and participate with God in spreading peace between us and others.

In Jesus' sermon on the mount, who does He call the children of God?

Matthew 5:9 NLT - 9 God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God.

Hebrews 12:14 NLT - 14 Work at living in peace with everyone, and work at living a holy life, for those who are not holy will not see the Lord.

Romans 12:18 NLT - 18 Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.

In both Romans and Hebrews we are encouraged to actively seek to live in peace. The verb for living in peace is *eirēneuō* and means to cultivate harmony.

What are some ways you can cultivate harmony through your actions or your words with family, co-worker, neighbors, or friends?

2. What Robs Your Peace

We can know peace through Jesus, but sometimes our peace is robbed. If we are not vigilant there are circumstances in our lives that will prevent us from experiencing the peace God wants for us. Let's consider three common robbers of peace.

1) When we are fighting- our peace is forfeit when we quarrel with others.

What does James tell us is at the root of quarrels and fighting?

James 4:1-2 NLT - 1 What is causing the quarrels and fights among you? Don't they come from the evil desires at war within you? 2 You want what you don't have, so you scheme and kill to get it. You are jealous of what others have, but you can't get it, so you fight and wage war to take it away from them. Yet you don't have what you want because you don't ask God for it.

2) When we are stressed- the cares of this world can overwhelm us and rob us of peace.

What did Jesus warn us not to worry over?

Matthew 6:25 NLT - 25 "That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life--whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn't life more than food, and your body more than clothing?"

3) When we need forgiveness- A lack of forgiveness, either given by us or received by us, keeps us from experiencing peace. We need to seek God's forgiveness when we sin. And we need to freely offer forgiveness when we are sinned against.

What did Jesus tell Peter when asked about the limit of our forgiveness?

Luke 17:4 NLT - 4 Even if that person wrongs you seven times a day and each time turns again and asks forgiveness, you must forgive."

3. Restoring Peace

There is a remedy to overcome each of these obstacles to our peace. For each "robber" we have listed the action that you can take to restore your peace.

1) *Fighting- work*

Romans 12:18, 21 NLT - 18 Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone. ... 21 Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good.

You might think all you need to do to counter the robber of "fighting" is "not fight". But Paul tells us we must do all we can – in other words work at peace, and that we conquer evil, not by abstaining from fighting, but by doing good.

List a few simple "good things" you might do for someone you've been quarreling with.