

Whose Voice Are You Listening To?

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Day One

Have you ever had your peace disrupted? You know that was really a leading question. We have all experienced numerous times in our lives when our peace has been jolted. There are times where you cannot control what comes your way and attempts to disrupt your peace. There are other times when we ourselves are the culprits of forsaking our own peace.

The other day I woke up to do my typical morning quiet time. It's a routine of reading the Bible and sitting in a time of stillness with Jesus. But instead of digging right into the Word I did something I had done more times than I would like to admit. I picked up my phone and started scrolling. Within seconds I felt my peace leak out being replaced with anxiousness, and a feeling of uneasiness creeping in. As I was "harmlessly" flipping through people's social media updates I inadvertently started comparing my life with theirs. It was unconscious but I became astutely aware when my barometer of peace dropped, and negative thoughts started pelting me like hail on a stormy day. Thoughts of unworthiness and inadequacy flooded my mind. "Who do you think you are?" "You are not good enough or qualified enough." "That person is way farther along and more accomplished than you. "You do not have what it takes." I could feel myself sinking fast and it was my fault. I did not guard my mind. I sacrificed my peace for a few minutes on my phone. I let the enemy have a foothold in my mind and disparaging thoughts ran rampant.

Proverbs 4:23 warns about being intentional about protecting your peace when it says, "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.."

The Passion translation says it this way: "So above all, guard the affections of your heart, for they affect all that you are. Pay attention to the welfare of your innermost being, for from there flows the wellspring of life." The word heart is translated from the Hebrew word meaning mind, knowledge, thinking, consciousness.

If your mind and heart are infiltrated and polluted with comparison and thoughts of incompetence, insufficiency, or inferiority, the enemy will have a field day force feeding you lies, and your peace will be compromised. You have a choice on what you fill your mind with. So, the next time you are tempted to grab your phone instead of meditating on the Word of God remember this: Scripture before screen time! Let the Word of God dwell in you richly before compromising your peace with comparison and social media.

Day Two

Have you ever felt like you just don't belong—like an outsider, overlooked, dismissed or maybe even abandoned?

The other day I was at church. After the service I saw a friend of mine I had not seen in several weeks. We caught each other's gaze and started up a conversation when within seconds someone else came by and my friend turned to them, mid-sentence mind you, and started to chat them up. I thought for

sure it would be a brief hello and then she would circle back to me, but minutes passed by as I stood there and it was clear that her conversation would not be ending anytime soon.

First, I will admit that one of my pet peeves is when people do not pay attention to the person in front of them. It bugs me when people are easily distracted and clearly not present. But the situation this particular morning went deeper for me because instead of chalking up the encounter as no big deal and moving on, my mind started to wander and ruminate on thoughts of unworthiness. I know that may sound weird or overly sensitive. And I do not consider myself to be an overly sensitive person.

One of the old wounds and lies that the enemy tries to dig up and poke at is one I grew up believing that had stayed with me for a very long time. “You aren’t really likable. You will never be part of the popular crowd. Nobody really wants you or desires to be around you.” While Jesus has done a lot of healing for me in that area, if I am not diligent, the devil will take old thoughts and lies and serve them right up on a silver platter trying to get me to feast on them. And that is what was happening that morning at church. Thank the good Lord, literally, that I was able to discern the devil’s deception in those moments, reject the lie and turn my mind to truth. I am chosen in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 1:11). You are chosen!

1 Peter 5:8-9 beckons us; “Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.”

Be alert. Stand firm. Don’t buy into falsehoods but anchor yourself firmly in your faith, in what is true.

Studies show that addressing our dysfunctional thinking, or in other words, rejecting the lies of the enemy and replacing them with truth, is the single most effective intervention to overcoming that dreadful feeling of not belonging.

So, whose voice are you listening to? (The enemy wants to destroy your peace and he will go to great lengths to find the weak spot of your wounds and use them to manipulate your thoughts and feelings.)

The only one who deserves any airtime in your head is Jesus so turn your thoughts over to him.

Day Three

Are you a peace-filled person? When you enter a room do you bring a sense of peace?

The Holy Spirit can often be the most neglected part of the Trinity. Many churches don’t acknowledge the Holy Spirit or his power in our lives and there are many Christians that have few if any real encounters with him.

Jesus signaled the significance of the Holy Spirit as he was preparing the disciples for his departure from earth. As the book of John recounts in chapter 14:15-17, Jesus told his disciples, “If you love me, obey my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth.”

Jesus wanted them to know—he wants you to know—that he is with you always because his Holy Spirit dwells in you. And that the Holy Spirit amongst many things acts as your Advocate. Other versions of the Bible say, your Counselor, which translated from the Greek word *paraklētos* means, “Called to one’s side; helper; aider.” Jesus says that The Holy Spirit was destined to take his place after his ascension to the Father, to lead the disciples to a deeper knowledge of the Gospel truth, and give them divine strength needed to enable them to undergo trials and persecutions on behalf of the divine kingdom.” (Strong’s Bible Concordance).

This matters to you because as a follower of Jesus the Holy Spirit is *your* counselor and you have been given that same divine presence, peace, and power.

When we think of the Holy Spirit our minds often picture a dove which has become a symbol of peace. The Holy Spirit, pictured as a dove at Jesus' baptism, symbolized peace with God. (Matthew 3:16)

In John 20:21-22, Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

As you abide in Christ, the Holy Spirit produces peace in your life. Peace is the byproduct of walking and being filled with the Holy Spirit. Peace resides in you, and you have full access at all times. And, as you carry the Holy Spirit with you and acknowledge his presence, any time you enter a room, you change the atmosphere. His presence in you has the power to impact those around you.

The Holy Spirit is the presence of God in the life of a believer. Don't settle for a life that lacks peace and divine power. Ask God to awaken and increase your sensitivity to the divine power of his presence, his Holy Spirit within you.

Day Four

I once read a quote that said, "Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is the power to choose our response. In that response lies our growth and our freedom."

You may be wondering what peace has to do with pausing. Well let me ask you this. How many times have you given your peace away or broken peace by being reactive? Something happens or someone says something that you do not like or agree with, and you fire back in a not so calm and peaceful way. You shoot an arrow or throw a grenade with your words.

I see a lot of this on social media platforms. It's embarrassing really. Especially between people who say they love and follow Jesus. What a terrible witness we give to the world when we cannot even get along with each other. Unity amongst believers matters to God. And that does not mean we will always agree with each other on everything, but it does mean instead of letting our fangs come out in the heat of moments we steward our words and actions to bear the spiritual fruit of peace.

"As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:1-3). In his letter to the Ephesians Paul is calling believers up to a higher standard when disagreements surface.

Romans 12:17-18 admonishes, "Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone."

Do all you can. This will take humility and Holy restraint! But you have it in you fellow believer. Better yet, you have him in you who is greater than your rapid fire words of retribution. Galatians 5:16 reminds us of this, "So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves."

So, bite your tongue and usher in the presence of Jesus. Practice the pause and make the choice to tap into your source of peace, the Holy Spirit, who will guide you to speak in the tongues of angels, divine love, and not in destructive words like a noisy gong or clanging cymbal. We can respond thoughtfully and passionately disagree without being hateful. The world is watching how we treat one another. Show them who you believe in by the way you love. Before your lips leap, practice a holy pause.

And from the very mouth of Jesus, “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:34a-35).

Day Five

We have been exploring what God’s Word has to say about peace and another aspect of peace is the peace of obedience.

Proverbs 3:1-2 says, “My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments, for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you.”

King Solomon’s words of wisdom are a discerning guide for us to follow in our own lives. When Solomon says “my teaching” and “my commandments” he is not talking about his own personal decrees. He is pointing to God’s Word that he made personal by following. And remembering God’s laws are more than a mental exercise; it is connected to a life of obedience, internalizing them and living them out daily.

When you walk in step with God’s Word you will experience union with him, and this obedience adds peace to your life. Sometimes we can be tempted to look at God’s Word as a burden or list of “to do’s” but that is not the sentiment. God’s Word is not a list of rules; they are an invitation to an intimate relationship with Jesus. Jesus came so that you would have a rich and satisfying life and this can only be found in him. When you abide in Jesus and obey God’s Word you will be as Psalm 1 says like a tree planted by streams of living water bearing fruit in your life.

A lack of obedience in your life, sin, leads to death. It looks tempting at the time but as proverbs 14:12 says, “You can rationalize it all you want and justify the path of error you have chosen, but you’ll find out in the end that you took the road to destruction.”

We’ve all been there. We all sin and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). And praise God for Jesus who covers our sin and for His Holy Spirit that leads us (Psalm 143:10).

When we sin Psalm 32:3-7 gives us a glimpse into the power of confession as King David prays to the Lord. The Psalm itself does not tell us the specific occasion in David’s life which prompted this song but from his words we can surmise that he had strayed from obeying God when he says, “When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.” And you forgave the guilt of my sin.”

Sin robs your peace, confession restores it as you receive the forgiveness of Jesus. Shame will never transform you, the love of Jesus will. Obedience leads to peace.

As we wrap up today receive this blessing from 2 Thessalonians 3:16. “Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way.”