

LIVING
IT OUT



**DAILY
BIBLE
STUDY**



CEDARCREEKCHURCH

Anchor of Peace - Finding Peace

September 21, 2020

Have you ever heard a song, and in that moment, it was exactly what you needed to hear? What about a church message? That's where I am with this series, *Finding Peace*.

As a teacher starting a hybrid school year, my work circumstances are anything but peaceful. I cannot put into words my conflicting emotions between how amazing it is to be back with students, and at the same time, how insanely difficult this format of teaching is. There is considerably more lesson prep, difficulties with managing students that are absent because of illness and/or quarantine, and constant uncertainty looming over each week. This timely message has been a reminder of the *anchor of PEACE* we have in Jesus. Last week, we saw how our *reactivity* is an indicator of anxiety in our lives. This week, we see how ***Jesus invites us to TURN DOWN the NOISE to increase HIS PEACE.***

Our theme verse for this series comes from [Isaiah 26:3](#): "You will keep in perfect **peace** all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you!" (emphasis added). Lead Pastor Ben Snyder described this type of *peace* as an internal peace that is holistic and provisional—not conditional or dependent upon circumstances. He further described peace as a non-anxious presence—*being fully aware of God, self, and others*.

This gift of peace is readily available to each one of us as we *trust* in Jesus (see [John 14:27](#)). As followers of Christ, we can do things our own way or we can do things his way. The following two verses urge us to give up our way and follow his:

Matthew 16:24

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me."

Galatians 2:20

My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

If we want to follow Jesus, we need to *give up our own way* and *turn down the noise* in our lives. For me, instead of turning to social media, complaining, or self-medicating with a milkshake when frustrations or anxieties arise at work, I can turn to Jesus, spend time in his Word and prayer, praise him through some worship music, or give space for the Holy Spirit to bring the gift of peace into my life.

Join us this week as we look at what hijacks the peace in our lives and how we can *die to self*—giving space to accept the gift of peace that Jesus has for each one of us.

Questions:

Have you been trying to handle your lack of peace all on your own? Is it working? What are some habits you can *turn from* so that you can *turn to* Jesus in the midst of your anxiety?

Next Steps:

Have an honest conversation with yourself about what may hijack the peace in your life. Seeing it on paper by journaling may be helpful as well. Take a step toward Jesus this week by replacing one action you would normally do in an anxious moment. Stop and pray, listen to a worship song, or open your Bible and let God speak to you.

Prayer:

God, we thank you for the gift of peace that you offer us in this chaotic world. Help us to turn from our normal way of dealing with things that rob us of peace and turn to you, allowing you to work in our lives. Open our hearts and minds to receiving your peace that is not dependent on our circumstances. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

The Shadow Side of Me - Finding Peace

September 22, 2020

As I was listening to Lead Pastor Ben Snyder define peace as a non-anxious presence, I thought, "Well, I am failing at that!" I don't know about anyone else, but ever since COVID-19 hit, I feel like I'm surrounded by moving targets: There are things that I should be doing. There are things that I shouldn't be doing. But those targets keep moving and changing. And this causes me (as an Enneagram 1, if any of you were curious) a lot of anxiety! I can't fix it; I can't problem-solve it. I can't hide in my routine because *there is no routine*. I am forced to be at the mercy of whatever the day brings.

Ben talked about the shadow of our strengths and how noticing this is so important, especially during trying times, so we don't damage our relationships. While I feel that I am capable of managing how I react to and love others well, I'm finding that I do not extend that same grace to myself.

This often shows up for me when I'm standing in my kitchen. That long list of things "to do" starts going through my head. I think to myself, in order to be a good wife, mother, and employee, these things need to be done today! And because I can typically get through my list in a day, I hold myself to that standard every day, which only elevates my anxiety.

Then the phone rings. One of my children needs me, and off I go in a different direction to take care of that.

At the end of the day, when I can't complete my list, the self-condemning thoughts come as soon as my head hits the pillow. It's almost like I can't rest because I don't deserve it. I become an anxious presence for myself, and if I don't catch myself from going down that rabbit hole, I fall in, and my peaceful sleep is gone.

I did not allow that list to get in the way of loving the people around me, but I did let it get in the way of loving myself. I have a deep-down need to be a good Christian and prove I'm worthy of God's love by doing a bunch of good things every day.

That need is a lie.

As I learn to surrender my lists and my expectations to Jesus, I receive the truth: He chose me, “even before he made the world ... to be holy and without fault in his eyes” (Ephesians 1:4). “God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure” (Ephesians 1:5).

And that has zero to do with my list!

Questions:

What expectations have you put on yourself that might not be yours to carry?

Have you allowed God to define your worth, or are you trying to be “good enough” for God?

Next Steps:

Get rid of your list and use that time to listen to what God is saying to you right now.

Share with a friend what God said to you and decide what your next step is going to be.

Prayer:

Lord, we need you more than you know right now. Please break through our walls and our anxieties and let us feel your peace in our daily walk. Teach us how to hear you more and lead us to freedom by growing our faith in you! Amen.

ME? WORRIED...? - Finding Peace

September 23, 2020

Fifteen years ago, I was diagnosed with an anxiety disorder ... I was shocked! I thought everyone was tied up in knots, trying to be all things for all people. Although I had been a Christ follower for 20 years at that point, I still had no idea how to tap into Jesus' "peace that surpasses understanding" ([Philippians 4:7](#) ESV). Sadder still, I didn't know what I was missing.

In that state of mind and spirit, I continued to be a control freak—I mean expert—honing my skills at being ever so "helpful" to everyone by interjecting myself into their every dilemma to give them what "they wanted." I did want to help provide answers to their problems, but what I *really* wanted was their approval. I was listening to that lifelong approval-addicted voice in my head and driving everyone nuts.

As Lead Pastor Ben Snyder pointed out during the weekend message, that is NOT what Jesus wants for us. Why? Because we make a mess of being in control. And what *we* want is not always what *he* wants. Fortunately, what God wants is for us to receive the true peace that can only come from living out his will.

Matthew 16:24

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your way, take up your cross, and follow me."

In other words, recognize this one eternal truth: God is in control, not us. Accept that there will be suffering, and live life as Jesus teaches us to. I learned this through the gifts of many emotionally and physically painful events and trials over the years. What a blessed gift they all turned out to be. God taught me two things:

1. Peace is not the absence of strife but the presence of Christ in my life every minute of every day as I go through strife.
2. God's ways are trustworthy. Putting every situation and fear into God's hands is the only way to maintain perfect peace through every failure, health issue, disappointment, and loss of life.

So, as the saying goes, “Let go and let God.” Because when you decide to go “Rambo” in response to situations or sit frozen in fear, you rob yourself and others of the blessings that come from turning off your reactivity and demands to have your own way. Why? Because these choices are only a means of temporarily escaping your fears of “losing the control” you never had in the first place.

Questions:

Are you allowing your own view of things to prevent you from living a life empowered by faith, grace, and God? If so, why?

Examine your thought process and how it affects your daily life. Are your life choices evidence that you believe **you** are the master of your earthly and eternal destiny and not God?

Do you trust God to provide what you truly need in every eventuality in this life? Do your choices reflect that? If not, why?

Next Steps:

Let go of your delusions that you are the greatest power in the universe and can plot your path better than the one true God. Then turn your life over to God by asking for forgiveness for your sin of pride (and all that comes with it) and acknowledging that your eternal life is safely in his hands through the gift of Jesus’ life, suffering, death, and resurrection. Then accept the gift of eternal life from God through the powerful, perfect work of Jesus.

Prayer:

Father God, thank you for a love so large and deep I cannot possibly understand but accept with open arms. I am a sinner, imperfect and unworthy. But I know you love me anyway or you wouldn't have sent your perfect son, Jesus, to save me from the cost of my transgressions. Lord, please use me to serve you and bless others as I grow ever closer to you. Please remove all the internal barriers I put up to protect myself from what “might” happen, and instead, help me turn the care of my life over to you. In Jesus' powerful name I pray. Amen.

This post was written by Martha Smith, a regular contributor and editor of the LivingitOut.

Turn Down The Noise - Finding Peace

September 24, 2020

Strive to be like Jesus! I think many Christ followers tell themselves that over and over throughout the course of their lives. At least, I have—many times. But can we really be *like Jesus*? And, more importantly, is that truly what God wants us to do?

Following Jesus does not mean we have to be like Jesus. We cannot do what Jesus did on this earth. We cannot turn water into wine, or walk on water, or bring the dead back to life. Jesus was perfect, and it is just not possible for us to be like him—we don't have what it takes. In fact, trying to be perfect like Jesus can create an internal anxiety in us that can negatively affect us and those around us. During the weekend message, Lead Pastor Ben referred to it as internal noise.

God does not expect us to be perfect, but he does want us to live in perfect peace. This does not mean that we will live in a bubble, and everything around us will be without conflict. It means that he provides a way for us to “turn down the noise” inside of us and be at peace when anxious moments arise.

So how do we turn down the noise inside? It starts with knowing that when we receive Christ into our hearts, we no longer have to strive to be like him because he lives in us.

Galatians 2:20

My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

You see, Christ died so we can stop trying to do it on our own. Is it always easy to trust in this? No! As humans, we still tell ourselves, “I shouldn't have made that mistake” or “I can do better” or worse yet, “I have messed up so many times, I don't deserve to be called a Christian.”

This is not true—we do not find peace through our works.

Galatians 2:21

I do not treat the grace of God as meaningless. For if keeping the law could make us right with God, then there was no need for Christ to die.

So what are the steps for turning down the noise and finding peace?

1. **See the noise:** Recognize that you are experiencing internal anxiety.
2. **Prayerfully name it:** For example, “God, I realize I am becoming overbearing with those around me.”
3. **Trust his victory over it:** Believe that *God’s got this*.
4. **Rest in his perfect love:** Experience the peace of giving God control.

Questions:

When was the last time you experienced that “internal noise” rising within you?
How did you handle it?

Do you know that Christ lives in you, and through him, you can find peace?

Next Steps:

Put the four steps to finding peace into practice.

Join a [group](#) and share with others your successes and failures in finding peace.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, I know that I am not perfect like you and can never hope to be. Instead, I give my life to you and believe that you live in me. Through you, I have the strength to turn down the noise of anxiety when it arises in me. God, please give me the wisdom to let go of the unattainable desire to be like you and the trust needed to relinquish my sense of control. I give it to you so that I might find the peace that you intended for me in my life. Amen.

This post was written by Ned Miller, a first-time contributor to the LivingitOut.

The Greatest Importance - Finding Peace

September 25, 2020

The apostle Paul wrote to the Colossians about the place Christ should hold in their lives—the greatest position of importance possible. And we, those calling ourselves Christ followers, would be wise to similarly apply the truths written by Paul. To be clear, a heart genuinely changed by a personal relationship with Christ will, in turn, reflect that changed life. Many Christ followers can speak to the challenges of choosing God first in every area of our lives. Doing so is not an easy nor perfect process, but it is necessary to become Christ-like.

Colossians 3:5-10

⁵ So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires. Don't be greedy, for a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world. ⁶ Because of these sins, the anger of God is coming. ⁷ You used to do these things when your life was still part of this world. ⁸ But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language. ⁹ Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds. ¹⁰ Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him.

I am confident Paul carefully (and intentionally) chose the words “put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you.” He makes it very clear that there is no place for anything in our lives that disconnects us from God. The sin and evil desires around us (and often in us) smack against the new life that God has given us. When we give them place in our lives, we miss out on the peace he has for us, too.

Yesterday, we talked about the danger in striving to be like God. This includes relying on our own strength to “put to death” our sinful desires. We don't have to do this on our own, though. Jesus has freed us from it through his death and resurrection.

This truth becomes the focal point of our new life. Now, when we read our Bibles, it reminds us of his grace. When we pray, it connects us to him. When we worship, we remember who he is and what he has done. We don't do these things to free ourselves from our sins, we do them to remember that we already are free.

This gives us strength to identify and name those sinful patterns in our life and remember they no longer have a grip on us. We are free to live the new life God has given to us. Free to identify those areas of sin in our life. As we name them and give them over to God, he takes his rightful position of importance in our lives.

Questions:

What are the areas in your life that hold a greater importance than God?

What sinful areas need put to death in your life?

Next Steps:

Read [Ephesians 6:10-18](#). Pray for spiritual victory in tearing down your identified strongholds. Ask God to reveal areas of weakness that need shored up.

Establish people in your life that you can talk to about your areas of weakness. Consider joining a [Group](#).

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for loving me as I am. Thank you for loving me as a precious child, not as a pathetic, lost kid—even though at times, I am pathetic and lost. Thank you for guiding me on the path you have prepared for me. Infuse me with your presence and your power to pull down the detrimental strongholds in my life, and surround me with your unconditional love and forgiveness when my weaknesses get the better of me. Help me to remember my sufficiency is in you and you alone. In Jesus' name, amen.

This post was written by Karen Peck, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut.