



**Educate
+ Engage**



REDISCOVERING
CHRISTMAS



Rediscovering
Peace

OVERVIEW

Struggles with mental health have risen to the forefront of cultural conversations more in recent years than in any other prior generation. Anxiety and depression are on the rise with no decline in sight. During the holiday season these challenges seem to be amplified. However, peace is part of the fruit of the Spirit, and Spirit-filled believers have hope in salvation that is revealed in a baby boy named Jesus.

Scripture Passage

Isaiah 9:6 (NKJV)

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

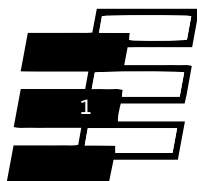
EDUCATE

In the previous lesson we talked about the joy of this season, and how if we're not careful, we can let this season become more about us than the actual one we should be celebrating. Now we will discuss another element that Jesus' birth brought to the world: peace.

Jesus' Birth Fulfilled a Promise of Peace

When Jesus was born, wise men visited Him and brought Him lavish gifts, but a profound significance of this moment is often overlooked. The arrival of the Magi fulfilled prophecies from the Old Testament that foretold the Gentiles would come to worship the Messiah. For example, Isaiah 60:3 (ESV) promises: "And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising."

The Magi were not Jews; They were Gentiles from a distant land. Their presence following Jesus' birth foreshadowed that the gospel would not be limited to a particular ethnic group or nationality but was intended for everyone. Imagine the peace these promises must have brought to those who initially realized what was happening! God's promises today are just as true as they were in the Old Testament.



Many of the prophecies regarding the Prince of Peace were given during times of incredible darkness and despair for God's people. The promise of a deliverer gave them immense hope and assurance that God had not forgotten them. This promise reminded them that a brighter future was ahead. This promise of peace also rings true today. No matter what trial or tribulation you're dealing with, God's comfort and peace are available to you. Are you in a dark place? Are you experiencing a season where the voice of God seems distant? Know this: God's promise of peace is just as true today as it was on the day of Jesus' birth.

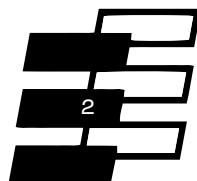
Discussion Questions: In what areas do you need peace? How can you find peace from God for those areas?

Peace Was Pursued

Sometimes the feeling of sitting down on the couch to open our presents at a birthday party is nice. We get things we didn't really do anything to earn—we were just born! However, an even greater emotional reward results when receiving something after you've worked for it. The wise men journeyed from afar to pursue the opportunity to worship Jesus. Now, that's an example of effort!

The fact that peace had entered the world also threatened people who thrived on leading by fearmongering. King Herod's reaction to the news of Jesus' birth showed just how insecure he was. He saw Jesus as a threat to his own power and authority, seeing Him as a potential rival for the throne. Completely paranoid, King Herod desired to kill Jesus by ordering the massacre of all male children in Bethlehem under the age of two (Matthew 2:16–18). This act of brutality evidenced King Herod's desperate attempts to maintain his control, even at the cost of innocent lives.

Sin behaves violently in the presence of true peace. When peace is offered, sin squirms and tries to complicate the situation. Of course, mental health issues are another factor and should never be oversimplified, but God can heal our minds just as much as He can heal our bodies. King Herod's ruthless pursuit of power led to the suffering and death of many innocent people, causing immense pain and sorrow in the community. King Herod's blind ambition stands in incredible contrast to the peace Jesus offers, which is rooted in love, compassion, and righteousness.



Had King Herod been aware of God's true motives, perhaps he would have surrendered and bowed his knee to the real King. In the presence of the real King, every single one of our problems is without authority. The Magi recognized true peace, so they pursued it. King Herod was self-centered and pursued violence. We would be wise to take inventory of our own motivations, taking care not to pursue God's plan in a negative way and destroy it, but to truly surrender to His plan.

Discussion Question: Why is sin so uncomfortable in the presence of the peace of God?

Peace Is Still Available Today

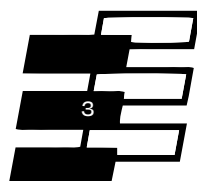
What are you overwhelmed by? What has caused anxiety in your mind? What lingering, spiraling thoughts have caused tension recently? Regardless of what troubles you, God's peace is available for you today. God's peace surpasses our understanding (Philippians 4:7) in ways that may not make sense to those around us. Your home may be chaotic, but God can give you peace in the middle of it. You may be facing sickness, but God can give you peace in the middle of it. You may be experiencing turmoil with your family, but God can give you peace—peace that doesn't seem to make sense—in the middle of it.

If you have not been filled with God's Spirit yet, know that He gives His Spirit as a free gift, and He wants to fill you today. In a world plagued with anxiety and depression, regardless of your situation, you can experience peace instead of chaos. Why? Because you have peace living inside of you.

Closing

Peace is not something God will simply inject into your life without you asking. Just like the Magi, we must walk toward Jesus and seek Him. And Scripture promises when we draw near to Jesus, He draws near to us (James 4:8). Getting closer to Jesus is something we can all do. Don't become threatened by God's peace like King Herod was. We may need to give up so things in order to accept God's peace. We may need to let go of some drama when we surrender to Him. Psalm 34:14 advises us to turn from sin and pursue peace. That decision is worth it every time. Pursue God's perfect will and He will work miracles in your mind. James 3:18 promises that when we sow in peace, we will reap a harvest of righteousness.

Discussion Questions: What types of behavior do not align with the peace of God? What drama or sin must we let go of to pursue the peace of God?



ENGAGE

This week identify three ways you can intentionally pursue peace. Remember that God's peace is a free gift. Ask Him to help you live your life in a way that glorifies Him and brings His perfect peace, both for you and for others.

