

# Peace

By Peggy Lively

**Core Verse:** Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

**Philippians 4:6-7**

**Creed:** I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

## Part One: Peace with God

The only way that we can have peace with God is through his Son Jesus Christ: “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.” **Romans 5:1**

Our sin alienated us from God and needed to be atoned for by a blood sacrifice. Jesus willingly offered himself as this sacrifice to restore us to a right relationship with God. Yet God does not force us into a relationship with Himself; He has given us the freedom to choose. We can accept his gift of salvation through his Son Jesus, being reconciled to him through forgiveness, or we can reject the gift, continuing to live alienated from God by our sin.

Read **Colossians 1:19-23**.

1. “For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through \_\_\_\_\_.” **Colossians 1:19-20**

2. Why were we once alienated from God? (verse 21)

3. Once we are reconciled to God through Christ, how are we presented before him? (verse 22)

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them.” **2 Corinthians 5:17-19**

When I trust Christ as my Savior, I become a new person, purified through his blood. Fully trusting my life to him also means I need to turn my fears and anxieties over to him. Our core verse tells us not to be anxious about *anything*. How can we do this?

4. “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, with \_\_\_\_\_, present your requests to God. And the \_\_\_\_\_ of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (**Philippians 4:6-7**, NIV)

An easy way to remember these is: *PRAYER, PETITION, PRAISE, PEACE*

When we pray and ask God for His help, praising him for his plan and purpose in our lives, we will begin to trust him and find peace in his presence. Then we will be able to yield our lives to His control, completely trusting him to do with it as He deems best, and peace will invade our soul.

**Bring it Home:**

\*Am I at peace with God? Why or why not?

\*Is there something I am anxious about that is robbing me of my peace? Explain.

\*What steps can I take to let go of my anxieties and put my trust in God?

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” **John 16:33**

**PartTwo: Peace with Others**

Not only does Jesus restore us to a peaceful relationship with God, but he offers peace in our relationships with others by making us all equal through his blood. When we acknowledge that we are all sinners saved by grace, then we should realize that without Jesus, none of us is better off than anyone else. The lyrics to the song “At the Foot of the Cross” by Chris Ferguson describe this well:

*The ground is level at the foot of the cross  
We all are equal in the light of the cross  
For the love of God is given freely to all  
The ground is level at the foot of the cross.*

*Men and women, younger and older,  
Every culture, every color, every tongue,  
No more labels, no separation,  
As we stand forgiven at the cross we all are one.*

*Doesn't matter, your social position  
Doesn't matter if you're rich or if you're poor  
Race or privilege, tribe or tradition  
At the foot of Christ it can't divide us anymore!*

We are all equal at the foot of the cross, so we need to set our differences aside and recognize that we are united through Christ. Let's look at two groups of people in the Bible that were divided, and how Jesus came to create peace.

Read **Ephesians 2:11-22**.

5. What two groups of people are discussed in these verses?

6. How was the "dividing wall of hostility" destroyed between these two groups?  
(Verses 14-16)

Jesus put an end to the hostility between the Jews and Gentiles by giving them equal access to the Father through his death on the cross. They even became fellow citizens and members together of God's household through Jesus (verses 19-20). Once enemies, they were now in the same family, on the same team, both part of the body of Christ. It is the same for us and all who have come to the Father through Jesus. When we accept this, it becomes easier to establish peace with those that are "with" us and not against us.

Even with those who are not of the same faith, Jesus challenges us to, "Make every effort to live in peace with *all* men ..." (**Hebrews 12:14**)

Read **Matthew 5:23-24**.

7. What do these verses say we need to do first before offering a gift to the Lord?

**Bring it Home:**

\*Is there someone that I need to make peace with? What steps can I take toward reconciling with them?

"A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones." **Proverbs 14:30**

**Part Three: Peace with Myself**

I am currently leading a group through "Celebrate Recovery," an 8-step recovery program to overcome hurts, habits and hang-ups. After the first few weeks of this program, I began to notice that no matter what an individual was struggling with, whether it is an eating disorder, alcohol/drug addiction, sexual abuse or divorce, underlying these other issues is a painful low self-esteem or even hatred of self. Many in this program

have admitted to regularly hurting themselves and/or attempting suicide. Why do we hate ourselves so much? How can I be at peace with myself?

Peace with myself comes from knowing that I am a child of God, and that I am forgiven and valuable to Him. This means I need to *know* who I am in Christ, *like* who I am (seeing my value in Him), and be able to forgive myself.

### **A. Know Who I am**

If I have accepted Jesus as my Savior from my sins, then I am a child of God, Abba's child. That means my identity is in him, and I am deeply loved by him.

*“The greatest gift I have ever received from Jesus Christ has been the Abba experience. ‘No one knows the Son except the Father, just as no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him’ (Matthew 11:27). My dignity as Abba’s child is my most coherent sense of self. When I seek to fashion a self-image from the adulation of others and the inner voice whispers, ‘You’ve arrived; you’re a player in the Kingdom enterprise,’ there is no truth in that self-concept. When I sink into despondency and the inner voice whispers, ‘You are no good, a fraud, a hypocrite, and a dilettante,’ there is no truth in any image shaped from that message. As Gerald May has noted, ‘It is important to recognize these self-commentaries for the mind tricks they are. They have nothing to do with our real dignity. How we view ourselves at any given moment may have very little to do with who we really are.’ Define yourself radically as one beloved by God. God’s love for you and his choice of you constitute your worth. Accept that, and let it become the most important thing in your life.”*

– Brennan Manning, Abba's Child, pp. 49, 62-63

Before coming to Christ, we must all recognize that without him we are hopeless; that's why we need a Savior.

Read **Romans 7:14-25**. Paul is wrestling with his sinful self and says, “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?” (v. 24)

8. What is the answer to this question found in verse 25?

The truth is that we are all wretched without Christ, but with him we are forgiven, accepted, valued and victorious! Satan would love to keep us thinking, “what a wretched man I am.” Then we would be defeated and unproductive for the Kingdom. In the book of Revelation, the angel of the Church of Laodicea reports, “You do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked” (Revelation 3:17). Yes, this is true when we are relying on ourselves, but when we depend on Christ we become a new creation empowered by his Holy Spirit. Don't let the enemy continue to whisper “you are pitiful, poor, blind and naked.” *Believe* that the old has gone, and the new has come.

(2 Corinthians 5:17-19)

## **B. Like Who I am**

I have to admit that most of the time I am my own worst critic. And if I don't balance this with recognizing my worth and value to God, then I will constantly be criticizing and defeating myself. I begin to understand my value when I acknowledge Him as my loving Creator who made me exactly the way that I am, in *His* image.

“Self-acceptance becomes possible only through the radical trust in Jesus’ acceptance of me as I am.” – Brennan Manning, *Abba’s Child*, p.165

9. “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.” **Psalm 139:13-14**

Plastic surgery is becoming increasingly more popular and accepted because everybody is dissatisfied with themselves. Everyone wants to change *something* about the way that they were created. But at some point, I must accept myself because this is the way that God created me.

When I accept myself for who I am and who He created me to be, I will have confidence in him to use me for his purposes. God thought that each of us was so valuable that he sacrificed his only Son so we could have a relationship with him.

“Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you ...” **Isaiah 43:4**

### **Bring it Home:**

\*Do I believe that I am fearfully and wonderfully made, that I am precious and honored in God’s sight? Why or Why not?

## **C. Forgive Myself**

If I have already made peace with God and accepted his forgiveness for my sins, then I need to forgive myself as well. There have been many times I’ve heard people say, “I’ll never be able to forgive myself for that.” All this does is lead to self-condemnation, when Jesus says, “There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). God has chosen not to condemn us, so if we have accepted his grace, we need to let it go.

Read **Ephesians 4:32**.

10. How can I apply this verse to myself?

It would read something like this, “Be kind and compassionate to *myself*, forgiving *myself*, just as in Christ God forgave *me*.” We are holding back from fully accepting God’s grace when we don’t forgive ourselves. He does not treat us as our sins deserve (Psalm 103:10), so we shouldn’t “crucify” ourselves.

**Bring it Home:**

\*Is there something that I need to forgive myself for, trusting that God’s grace is enough to cover my sin?

“Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you.” 2 Thessalonians 3:16

*Dear God,*

*Thank you that you took the initiative to establish peace with my soul. Thank you for the sacrifice of your Son that allows me to enter into a relationship with you, holy and blameless in your sight. Please help me to see my worth and my value through your eyes, so that I can understand you created me with a specific purpose in mind. Help me to tune out the voice of the enemy who tells me often that I am pitiful and unworthy. In my own power, Father, this is true; but, in Jesus I stand forgiven and victorious. Enable me to fully accept your grace, forgiving myself as you have chosen to forgive. Thank you for offering me peace, not as the world gives, but everlasting peace for my soul.*

*In the name of Jesus, Amen*