



week two

Fruit of the Spirit

‘PEACE’

- **Welcome** (5-10 minutes)

Noise or quiet?
 Company or solitude?
 Inside or outdoors?
 Windy or still?

Calm water or stormy sea?
 Few or many?
 Moors or town?
 Hill tops or valley bottoms?

- **Worship** (10-15 minutes)



pray

²²God's Spirit makes us loving, happy, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, ²³gentle, and self-controlled.

There is no law against behaving in any of these ways.

Galatians 5 (CEV)

- **Word** (50 minutes)

Peace is a much sought-after state of being in today's world. We crave 'world peace', we seek 'inner peace', we try to 'mediate for peace' among quarrelling parties. We try to 'create peace' through engineering our own ideas of peaceful minds and situations. As ever, the way of God is the way of perfection and True Peace is found in Him.

Read the passage:

Philippians 4 (NIV)

⁴Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think

about such things. ⁹Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me— put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Here, in Philippians 4, peace begins with joy! The rejoicing or expressing of joy to which Paul refers and encourages us, should be our default position. Remember that 'joy' is often the courage to face difficult times in God's strength rather than a 'fixed-grin' happiness.



- When do you find it easiest to rejoice?
- When is rejoicing far from your thoughts? How can your first answer help you to rejoice in this situation?

It is true that after a time of rejoicing in the Lord, there is a peace that lingers. This residual peace is from God and is for our benefit. Being with God is often its own reward, for there we encounter Him in His wonderful grace and peace. Homer Kent Jr suggests that:

(Paul) repeats the command (to rejoice) because in all the vicissitudes of the human life, whether in attacks from errorists, personality clashes among believers, persecution from the world, or the threat of imminent death - all of which Paul himself was experiencing at this very time - the Christian is to maintain a spirit of joy in the Lord. He (sic) is not immune to sorrow, nor should he be insensitive to the troubles of others; yet he should count the will of God his highest joy and so be capable of knowing inner peace and joy in every circumstance. (p 59)

We all experience times when God's peace is far away from us because we have lost the will to 'rejoice in Him'.

pray

- Pray quietly about times when you need strength to find peace in God.



Peace is a quality of God which his children inherit as they discover a Christ-likeness of character. Alongside an 'unspeakable joy' is the 'peace that passes understanding'. The world hints at what these 'fruit of the spirit' may promise, but only 'Christ within' delivers the real thing!

- How do you describe peace? Where do you most readily find it?
- Is peace an emotion or a fact?

Perhaps this fruit of the spirit is a contentment within yourself that comes from knowing yourself as totally loved and accepted by God. Peace is God's fruit for a more relaxed, 'chilled out' you!

- Talk about times when you have experienced this peace. How does it help with your 'rest of life' planning & decision-making?
- What advice would you give politicians and tacticians about 'peace-keeping' in troubled places, bearing in mind your understandings about peace from what you have previously discussed.

Read the passage:

⁵ Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up. ⁶ Ezra praised the LORD, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, "Amen! Amen!" Then they bowed down and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

⁷ The Levites—Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan and Pelaiah—instructed the people in the Law while the people were standing there. ⁸ They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read.

⁹ Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, "This day is sacred to the LORD your God. Do not mourn or weep." For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law.

¹⁰ Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." Nehemiah 8

The joy within us creates a place of calm and tranquillity. An inner strength that comes from the Lord's continual presence is steadily grown and developed. The consequences of worship are a more intimate knowledge of God.

- Talk about how this has been or could be true for you. Intimate communion with God through worship can lead to a deep peacefulness within you. How do/could you use this peace for God's glory?
- Philippians speaks of 'guarding your heart'. What does this mean for you? Are we sometimes guilty of guarding our hearts against God? What are the potential effects of doing this?
- How can things peaceful begin within you?



- **Witness** (20 – 25 minutes)

Look at the 'Whatever' section of the Philippians passage. 'Whatever' has come to have a meaning of shrugged disdain for (especially) a word of authority.

Devise an advert or message based on these verses to use 'whatever' to show God's promised peace to a cynical world!

Time for refreshments, you've earned them!



Bibliography

Kent, Vaughan & Rupprecht; *Philippians, Colossians, Ephesians*; Zondervan; 1996
Willard, Dallas; *The Divine Conspiracy*; Fount; 1998
Ziesler, John; *The Epistle to the Galatians*; Epworth Commentaries; Epworth; 1992