

DEVOTIONAL STUDY
WITH VIDEO ACCESS

NAMES OF

God

Knowing Peace

Grace Fox

Names of God: Knowing Peace is food for the hungry soul. Using real-life stories, insights, and godly wisdom, Grace Fox brilliantly illuminates names of God in a way that we can all relate to. Grab this book and savor each page as I did.

Debbie Macomber, #1 *New York Times* best-selling author

I highly recommend Grace Fox's newest book. It reveals how God our Father, who is peace, is with us in even the hardest of circumstances.

Janet Holm McHenry, best-selling author of 27 books, including *Looking Up! Finding Joy as You Read and Pray Through the Bible*

This book is so beautifully well-written, I did not want to put it down. It felt like love in my hands, filling my mind, heart, and soul. I will read this book many times and cherish the connection to God's love and peace.

Deborah M. Maxey, PhD, LPC, LMFT

In a world clamoring for peace, Grace Fox's new book gives readers a solid biblical connection to the Author of true peace. We all need *Names of God: Knowing Peace*, because the more we understand God's character, the more sure is our grasp on his life-giving peace.

Pam Farrel, best-selling author of 61 books, including *Discovering Wisdom in Proverbs*

Grace Fox writes with confidence and vulnerability as she shares the wisdom of a woman who has come to know God intimately and longs to see others experience the same profound peace Christ brought her.

Jennifer Slattery, lead host of *Faith Over Fear* podcast

Names of God: Knowing Peace is an incredibly powerful book that leads readers into a deeper relationship with the Giver of true peace.

Dr. Mel Tavares, DMin, pastoral care and counseling

Names carry profound meaning, especially the Name of the Creator of all things. This is an inspiring and enriching book for those seeking to experience the profound beauty of God's names in their daily lives.

Lee Ann Mancini, author of *Raising Kids to Follow Christ*;
founder of Raising Christian Kids

Whether you're navigating pain, loss, or uncertainty, *Names of God: Knowing Peace* will awaken your spirit to the richness of God's nature and guide you to engage with him in transformative ways.

Sue Detweiler, author; speaker; founder of Life Bridge Global

Reading this book feels like having a conversation with Grace as she gently walks us closer to Jesus. Her relatable stories, practical study questions, and video teachings are filled with encouragement and scriptural truth.

Susie Crosby, author of *Just One Word: 90 Devotions to Invite Jesus In* and *Lighthearted 100 Day Devotional*

Grace Fox's beautifully written devotional study invites readers to experience the profound peace of God amid life's challenges.

Susan Neal, RN, MBA, MHS, award-winning author and health-and-wellness coach

Peace is definitely not synonymous with a storm, but knowing these names of God certainly supplies peace in the midst of them.

Dr. Sharon Norris Elliott, founder/CEO, AuthorizeMe Literary Firm;
author of *After Him: A Widow's First Year Devotional Journal*

In *Names of God: Knowing Peace*, you will be inspired and equipped to move beyond fear and trust God in your most challenging circumstances.

Lori Wildenberg, author of *Messy Hope: Help Your Child Overcome Anxiety, Depression, or Suicidal Ideation*

NAMES OF GOD

Knowing Peace

DEVOTIONAL STUDY

GRACE FOX



AspirePress

Names of God
Knowing Peace: Devotional Study

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Published by Aspire Press
An imprint of Tyndale House Ministries
Carol Stream, Illinois
rose-publishing.com

ISBN: 979-8-4005-0256-9

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Cover design by Cristalle Kishi. Interior design by Cristalle Kishi and Caleb Weston.

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Printed in United States of America

March 2025, 1st Printing



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A Note from Grace

What does peace look like to you? Close your eyes and ponder this question for a few moments. Does a favorite place come to mind? Favorite colors? Certain sounds or smells?

If you're thinking on a global scale, peace might look like an end to war, when bird songs replace blaring sirens and when families have a safe place to live. Children can play in parks and ride bikes in the streets, their carefree laughter bringing smiles to all within earshot. Young men and women can look forward to a future filled with promise and hope.

Maybe concerns closer to home occupy your thoughts. If you're a mom of young children, you know the exhaustion that comes with parenting little ones. To you, peace might look like the freedom to take a shower undisturbed or enjoy a Saturday morning sleep-in. If you're raising teens bent on pushing boundaries, peace might look like no arguing when you ask them to do something.

For anyone struggling with chronic pain, peace might look like getting a good night's sleep. For those suffering loss or betrayal, it might look like a friend coming alongside and saying, "I'm here for you." For those struggling in a difficult marriage, it might look like a respectful, honest conversation with both partners fully present and engaged.

Whatever your pictures of peace, I'm guessing they contain no images of a storm. Neither do mine—and for good reason. Life brings us enough blusters without imagining more. Our souls crave quiet and rest. Our souls want peace.

My husband, Gene, and I live on a sailboat near British Columbia's coast. On one outing, we watched the sky turn an ominous gray. The wind

began to howl, and waves heaved our forty-eight-foot vessel to and fro. Rain and hail pummeled us. The storm lasted five long hours, and then, as quickly as the clouds had darkened, they parted to reveal the sun. The wind stopped, and the raucous waves turned to ripples. I grew up on the landlocked southern Alberta prairies, so a storm like we'd experienced was enough to turn me inside out. On that day, for me, peace would have looked like sunbathing aboard our boat-home as it bobbed on the sea.

No matter what my circumstances are when I envision peace, one specific image invariably comes to mind: a painting titled *Peace in the Midst of the Storm*, by Jack Dawson. It depicts a storm raging over mountain cliffs and cascading waterfalls. In the center, a nesting bird is tucked safely away on a ledge behind one of the storm-blown waterfalls.

I tend to think of peace as all things calm, but this artist paints it as tranquility amid chaos. And therein lies the tension. It's easy to feel at peace when we're healthy and get enough sleep, when the kids behave and our relationships flourish, when our physical and material needs are met ... but not so much when the storm sweeps in and ruffles our feathers. Yet isn't that when we need peace the most? Absolutely. We know this is true, but the problem is, we don't always know how to *find* peace.

If you read my first book in the Names of God series, *Living Unafraid*, you discovered how to move beyond specific fears by understanding the truth of who God is as manifest through seven of his names. In this book, you'll discover the peace your soul craves in life's crazy and hard places as you take a deep dive into seven more names of God.

You'll learn where the names first appear in the Bible and the context surrounding that initial appearance. You'll learn about how I've experienced God through those names, how other women have done the same, and how Jesus fulfills them. Your journey toward peace continues when you answer the "Points to Ponder" and watch the bonus video offered at the end of each session. Doing this study with friends and discussing your answers and insights together will give you maximum benefit.

Writing this book has been a colossal reminder that true peace is not found in circumstances. Neither is it found in possessions or people. True peace is found in one source alone—the Prince of Peace, Jesus. My prayer is that he'll become more real to you through studying these seven names of God, and as a result, you will experience a deep, lasting peace that surpasses anything your mind can comprehend.

Would you please help spread the word about this book to your friends, family, and church ministry leaders? Talk about it on social media. Post a selfie with the book in hand. Ask your local library to buy a copy. Post an Amazon review to help others learn about it, so they can benefit too. Together let's do what we can to satisfy the worldwide famine for inner peace.

Know you are loved,

Grace

grace@gracefox.com

PS: Be sure to enjoy the other resources I offer:

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SESSION 1

*Yahweh
Shalom*

The LORD Is Peace

EVANGELIST BILLY GRAHAM once said, “In Christ we are relaxed and at peace in the midst of the confusions, bewilderments, and perplexities of this life. The storm rages, but our hearts are at rest.”¹

For me, so many things about 2020 resembled a raging storm. Besides ushering in a worldwide pandemic, the year dawned with doctors discovering that my eighty-seven-year-old mother had an egg-sized benign brain tumor. Within seven months, she lost her ability to drive, live independently, and care for her own basic needs. I’ll always remember October 2, the day I received the call saying she’d suffered a setback and had only a few days to live.

Gene and I packed a suitcase and drove twelve hours to sit by Mom’s bedside. She and I held hands and shared memories deep into the night, knowing time was short and her strength finite. We laughed. We cried. She described the tension of wanting to step over the threshold of heaven while longing to linger on earth. I listened and hung on every word, lest it be her last. She finally dozed as morning dawned, and I stroked her forehead, grateful for every hour with her.

My mother stepped into her forever home early October 9, and life became a flurry of phone calls and funeral arrangements complicated by COVID-19 restrictions. Throughout this time of sorrow, I experienced a peace I could never have manufactured on my own. That peace carried me through the six days and nights at Mom’s bedside. It bolstered me while planning and holding her memorial service. And then it enabled me to do something extraordinary considering the circumstances.

A few years prior, a Christian camp in northern British Columbia booked me to speak at its 2020 women’s retreat. The event was only two weeks away when I learned that Mom had days to live. I felt torn—should I call the event planners and cancel? Or should I trust God in the details and rely on him to help me honor my commitment?

This wasn’t the first time I’d experienced a dilemma of this magnitude. In *Names of God: Living Unafraid*, I wrote about facing a similar situation

when my dad was seriously ill. I'd committed to doing a two-week speaking tour in Eastern Europe, and the event planners had already posted the advertisements, handled registrations, and translated my handouts for the attendees.

When my dad's condition nosedived a few days before my scheduled departure, I had to decide whether to cancel my trip or trust God with the details. Choosing the latter meant missing Dad's memorial service, but it revealed the reality of *Yahweh Shammah's* presence in unforgettable ways. That experience gave me the assurance to make the same choice once again.

Temperatures dropped on Thursday, the day of Mom's service, and the weather forecast predicted a blizzard blowing our way. Approximately 725 miles lay between us and the camp, so a couple of hours after the funeral reception, Gene and I packed up the car and headed out, hoping to outrun the storm.

We drove until 2 a.m., got a hotel room, and rose early Friday morning to complete the trip. The blizzard had passed us during the night and paved the roads with ice, but we pulled into the camp unscathed hours later. When Saturday arrived, I presented three messages God had placed on my heart. I did the same on Sunday.

Were it not for *Yahweh Shalom*, I would have melted into an emotional puddle while holding vigil at Mom's bedside. I would have collapsed in an exhausted heap after she left us. I would have crawled into bed for a long nap after the funeral reception. And I most certainly would have canceled my speaking event. But everything took a different turn, because *Yahweh Shalom* stepped into my situation. Some folks might credit adrenaline for my strength and presence of mind, but I beg to differ. I experienced what can only be described as inner calm amid outer chaos. It was the real deal.

Do you remember the painting I mentioned in my introductory note? That little bird, tucked on a ledge behind a roaring waterfall as ominous clouds blacken the sky, portrays me during that time. The storm raged,

but *Yahweh Shalom* was with me. Into my spirit he whispered, *I've got this, and I've got you, and everything's going to be okay.*

Perhaps you, too, identify with our little feathered friend. You've experienced—or are experiencing—a tough situation, but your heart is at rest. If so, I rejoice with you. Or perhaps your situation is the opposite, and the possibility of experiencing rest amid unrest feels unfathomable. I assure you that inner peace, despite outer pain, can become your reality. Keep reading, my friend, and let's explore the basis for this assurance together, okay?

Yahweh Shalom: What Does It Mean?

Yahweh Shalom (pronounced “YAH-way shah-LOHM”), one of God's many Hebrew names, appears only once in the Bible, in Judges 6:24: “Gideon built an altar to the LORD there and called it The LORD Is Peace [*Yahweh Shalom*].” We'll get to Gideon's story soon, but first let's explore the meaning of each word of this compound name.

Yahweh

In *Names of God: Living Unafraid*, I explained that the name *Yahweh* emphasizes God's personal nature, as opposed to his name *Elohim*, which stresses his might as Creator in Genesis 1:1–2:3. The name *Yahweh* first shows up in Genesis 2:4, when the focus turns from God's creative power to his relationship with his creation. We find the name *Yahweh* throughout the rest of Genesis, but we don't receive an explanation of its meaning until Exodus 3, when God calls to Moses from a burning bush and commands him to lead the Israelites out of captivity in Egypt. Moses expresses doubts about this assignment and tells God that the Israelites may want to know more about who God is—specifically, his personal name. God responds by introducing himself as *Yahweh*, prefaced by his “I AM” description:

Moses said to God, “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?”

God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

God also said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites, ‘The LORD [Yahweh], the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.’

*“This is my name forever,
the name you shall call me
from generation to generation.”*

EXODUS 3:13–15

When Moses asked God for his name, God could have introduced himself using titles such as *King of the Universe* or *Mighty Conqueror*. Surely those names would have met Moses’s felt need and inspired him to say yes to God’s assignment, having confidence that with God’s help, he could tackle it hands down. But God chose to introduce himself with the name *Yahweh* instead. Why did he do this?

One answer is that, based on *Yahweh*’s spelling in Hebrew, the name can be interpreted to mean either “I AM WHO I AM” or “I WILL BE WHAT I WILL BE.” These meanings declare that God is not some random, generic higher power. He is not a divine force out there somewhere, acting like an extraterrestrial traffic cop who is directing all that goes on in space and time. He is not a collection of cosmic gases or positive energies. God is a person who is alive and real and wants connection with his creation.

By using the name *Yahweh*, God also declares his self-existence. That is, he exists independent of anyone or anything. Nothing contributes to his being alive. You and I rely on oxygen, food, water, sleep, sunlight, and perhaps medicine for survival; but God depends on nothing because he sources everything. If all that is sustaining human beings suddenly vanished, the effect would be catastrophic for us, but it would not hurt God one iota.

The name *Yahweh* declares God's eternal nature as well. All things created are temporal and will someday pass away, but God is not a created being; therefore, he is not temporal. He *was* before the beginning of time, and he will *continue to be* when time, as we understand it, ends. Psalm 102:27 says, "You are always the same; you will live forever" (NLT). Because he is eternal, we never need doubt that he will always be there for us.

In essence, *Yahweh* means that God is who he is. Unlike us, factors such as relationships, education, and experience play no role in influencing who he is or who he becomes. Quoting from *Names of God: Living Unafraid*,

He didn't go to school to learn his creative skills. No one taught or mentored him. Circumstances didn't shape or refine him. He is who he is because he is God. It's vital to remember that God is not what we try to make him to be. He far exceeds the scope of our wildest imagination. He's holier than our minds can fathom. He is bigger, stronger, wiser, more compassionate, and more faithful than we can pretend to understand.²

Yes, God could have introduced himself as *King of the Universe* or *Mighty Conqueror*—or by any other name for that matter. But the name *Yahweh* reveals him to be so much more. By using this name, God is communicating his desire for relationship with his creation, and he thereby promises to be near us.

These truths about God's character, as manifest through the name *Yahweh*, were true for Moses and the Israelites—and they're still true for us today. They span all generations in every nation, language, and culture. But remember—*Yahweh* is only half of the compound name *Yahweh Shalom*. Watch—it gets better! Let's unpack the meaning of *shalom* and then put the two halves together.

Shalom

The Hebrew word *shalom* denotes wholeness, wellness, harmony, and balance. Not to be confused with *happiness*, which depends on

circumstances, *shalom* infers contentment regardless of circumstances. Author Ann Spangler says, “Shalom contains the idea of completeness. It is the sum of all the blessings God can bestow—healing, prosperity, soundness, well-being, good relationships, perfection. It is what happens when God shines his face on you, when he turns toward you in all his greatness and brings you good.”³

My finite mind can’t fathom something so infinite as the sum of all the blessings God can bestow. I can barely contain the blessing of a newborn grandchild nestled in my arms or the beauty of a sunset reflected on the sea. How, then, can I comprehend the totality of God’s blessings that touch every part of my life? Such is the beauty and scope of what *shalom* embodies.

Shalom is available to all, but not everyone chooses to embrace it. Throughout the Bible, we find a theological thread weaving *shalom* with the concept of reconciliation. First and foremost, it teaches that humankind can never experience true inner peace and harmony (*shalom*) apart from making the choice to be reconciled to, or at peace with, God.

Sin made us God’s enemies, but Jesus made reconciliation possible through his death and resurrection (Colossians 1:19–22). The apostle Paul wrote about it in his letter to believers in Rome: “Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1).

Placing our faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins gives us peace *with* God (I’ll talk more about this later in this session). This paves the way for us to experience the peace *of* God. As we bring our needs to him in prayer and thank him for what he has already done for us on so many levels, the result is that “the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard [our] hearts and [our] minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7).

Shalom is available to all, but not everyone chooses to embrace it.

Theologian J. I. Packer wrote, “The peace *of* God is first and foremost peace *with* God; it is the state of affairs in which God, instead of being *against* us, is *for* us. No account of God’s peace which does not start here can do other than mislead.”⁴ That said, placing our faith in Jesus doesn’t earn us a once-and-done dose of God’s peace. I wish it were so, but we ourselves play a role that determines the measure of peace we experience at any given time, especially when we encounter tough situations (I will explore our role in greater depth throughout this book).

Yahweh Shalom

When we combine the meaning of *Yahweh* with the meaning of *shalom*, this compound name of God declares God as our source of peace. All his other compound names suggest something he *does* for us, but this name reveals something he *shares* with us.

We can search for peace by building a great career, owning a lovely home, taking tropical vacations, enjoying a picture-perfect marriage, having the right dress size, and even serving God locally or abroad. Yet these things can never fully satisfy us, because only the living God understands our soul’s craving for rest amid unrest, and only a reconciled relationship with him ultimately meets that need.

Gideon Encounters *Yahweh Shalom*

As previously mentioned, Judges 6:24 contains the one and only usage of the compound name *Yahweh Shalom*. It happens during a tumultuous time in Israel’s history, when the people were going through cycles where they would rebel against God, experience his discipline, repent of their rebellion, and be restored to God.

At this point in one of the cycles, the Israelites are in the discipline phase, and it has lasted seven years. Enemy nations have descended multiple times upon the Israelites and have ravaged crops, livestock, and people. Gideon salvages a little wheat during one raid, but threshing it on the floor built for that purpose puts him at risk of being seen by the bad guys. To avoid being caught, he climbs into a cramped winepress

and sets to work. A desperate man in a desperate situation, he tries to keep his head low, literally.

To Gideon, everything must seem all wrong. And it is. This isn't the life God intends for his chosen people. He desires freedom and joy for them, but things never go well when they live by their own rules and disregard his warnings about the consequences. That's when the angel of the LORD shows up to set things right. Let's peek into the scene ...

*When the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon, he said,
"The LORD is with you, mighty warrior."*

"Pardon me, my lord," Gideon replied, "but if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our ancestors told us about when they said, 'Did not the LORD bring us up out of Egypt?' But now the LORD has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian."

The LORD turned to him and said, "Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?"

"Pardon me, my lord," Gideon replied, "but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasse, and I am the least in my family."

The LORD answered, "I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive."

JUDGES 6:12-16

Before going further, let's clarify the meaning behind Scripture's usage of the word *lord*. Notice the three different spellings:

1. *lord* refers to someone or something that has power or authority over another.
2. *Lord* refers to God.
3. *LORD* refers to *Yahweh*, the personal name by which God chose to be known.

Now take a moment to reread the passage above. As you do, circle every variation of the word *lord*, with these meanings in mind. Do you see what I see? Gideon greets the visitor respectfully (“my lord”), but he doesn’t recognize the One in whose holy presence he stands.

It seems reality begins to dawn when the angel says, “I will be with you.” In so many words, a dubious Gideon responds, “If you really are the LORD, then stick around while I prepare an offering for you.” The angel complies. When Gideon returns with an offering of meat, broth, and unleavened bread, the angel zaps it with fire from a rock and then disappears (verses 17–21). Poof!

Gideon must have felt scared in the winepress, but his fear probably rocketed sky-high when it became crystal clear to whom he’d been speaking—and with such a cavalier attitude. Using our sanctified imaginations, we can see his face flush and feel his pulse throb, but *Yahweh* speaks words to calm his chaotic thoughts: “Peace! Do not be afraid. You are not going to die” (verse 23).

Gideon memorializes the moment by building an altar he names “The LORD IS PEACE [*Yahweh Shalom*]” (verse 24)—the only instance where the name *Yahweh Shalom* is used in the Bible. Considering the context—warring nations ravaging the land and terrorizing the Israelites for seven years—it seems remarkable for the Lord to show up and announce peace at this time. But as always, his timing and purposes are impeccable.

In this story, God purposely appointed and empowered Gideon to deliver the Israelites from their enemies. Yet when Gideon declares that “The LORD IS PEACE,” his words have nothing to do with accomplishing victory in battle or bringing an end to his own panicked circumstances. He would indeed strike down the Midianites as the angel prophesied, but that event was yet to come.

Rather, Gideon’s declaration of peace has more to do with acknowledging God’s presence in that place. It seems he has an aha moment. A spiritual light bulb switches on, and he declares that peace is found not in circumstances but in the living God. He chooses, by faith, to believe

God's assurance to be with him and discovers the reality of a peace only the Divine can deliver (Hebrews 11:1–2, 32–34).

At that moment, things begin to happen, and Gideon begins to change. God's peace doesn't transform Gideon into a faith-hero in the blink of an eye, but it begins the process. It gives him courage to step out of his comfort zone—in this case, a winepress—and into his dad's backyard, where he destroys his father's monuments to false gods. From there he steps onto the battlefield, where he lives up to God's view of him as a mighty warrior.

Such is the power of God's presence and peace. After Gideon experienced it, he became a different person. Once we experience it, we, too, become different people. We are no longer fearful but faith-filled. We move from timid to tenacious, from panicked to peaceful. When we truly begin to understand the meaning of *Yahweh Shalom*, we can never remain the same.

Yahweh Shalom *Is* Peace

Understanding who God is as manifest through his name *Yahweh Shalom* effects change in us. His peace empowers us to face life's hard places with a calm we can neither fake nor muster. That's a guarantee with no expiration date. And here's another: Because God *is* peace—and because he is infinite—there is no limit to the peace he offers. Nothing disturbs or diminishes the perfect peace he embodies, no matter how many times he hears our cries, feels our sorrows, and carries our burdens.

It's hard to wrap my head around that concept because when my kids are in distress, worry tiptoes through the door of my mother-heart and sows fearful thoughts that disturb my peace. As I write this, my oldest daughter, Stephanie, is flying to Oklahoma to see a medical specialist. My other daughter, Kim, starts a two-month stretch parenting her three little ones alone while her husband completes his medical residency far from home. She called a few minutes ago and

mentioned that she and the kids are all sick—not a good way to begin a long haul on her own. To complicate her already stressful situation, her mother-in-law is in the hospital undergoing tests for a possible brain tumor. And as for my son? A moving van arrived this morning to load his family’s belongings. Their relocation will require resiliency so that they can transition well.

My kids have faced significant challenges in the past but never all on the same day. My thoughts feel a bit flustered: *What if the medical specialist can't find the answers Stephanie needs? How will Kim care for three sick kiddos when she's sick too?* (I would drop everything to help her, but she lives ten hours away). *What does the future hold for her mother-in-law, and how might that outcome affect her family? What does the future hold for my son and his family as they settle in a new community?*

I want to ensure my family’s well-being, but I can’t. Perhaps you’ve heard the chorus that goes, “I’ve got peace like a river, I’ve got peace like a river, I’ve got peace like a river in my soul.” In full transparency, it’s difficult to identify with those lyrics today. Between you and me, my tune sounds more like, “I’ve got peace like a trickle, I’ve got peace like a trickle, I’ve got peace like a trickle in my soul.”

We all have days that challenge the level of peace we possess, but thankfully, *Yahweh Shalom* invites us to come to him to refill as often as needed. Jesus, who walked this earth as God incarnate, said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:28–29). He is the source that never runs dry, so he never wrings his hands in despair when we tell him our concerns. He never shuts us down, saying, “Stop. I don’t want to hear about your problems when I’m dealing with larger matters. I have only so much peace to share before there’s none left.”

“[Yahweh] in His own person is perfect peace,” wrote Bible teacher Nathan Stone. “This He must be if He is to be the source of peace to mankind.... He could never give to others a peace that passes

understanding if He were not perfect, unfailing peace Himself. This is our hope and assurance.”⁵

How’s your level of peace today? Is it gushing like a river during spring runoff, or is it barely a trickle? On the days our inner peace runs dry, we can know with full hope and assurance that the Person who possesses perfect peace waits for us to run to him. His arms are open wide. Let him whisper calm over you despite the chaos around you. Let him enfold you and draw you close to his heart. There’s no better, no safer place to be when the confusions, bewilderments, and perplexities of this life rage like a relentless storm around you and those you love.

Kristen’s Story: Peace amid the If-Onlys

Life’s storms often descend with little or no warning. Such was the case for Kristen. She knew something was horribly wrong the instant she heard the thud and her baby’s scream. Only a few moments before, ten-month-old Liam had been playing at her feet while she prepared her family’s dinner, but now he was nowhere to be seen. The mother of three turned her head and saw her oldest child, Bryce, looking over the staircase railing.

Her heart nearly stopped. *No way! This can’t be happening!* she thought as she ran toward him. Sixteen-year-old Bryce was on the autism spectrum, and he enjoyed tossing objects over the railing to watch them fall past two flights of stairs. Sugar, jelly powder, cake sprinkles—you name it. He put to flight whatever he could find. He didn’t understand that dropping his brother to the tile floor below was different.

Kristen raced down the stairs, scooped her bleeding baby into her arms, and rushed back up to call 911. Bryce looked on, confused by her sudden panic. “Baby—eye,” he said, pointing at Liam’s eyelid, which had split open upon impact. “Baby—eye,” he repeated.

“Go away!” Kristen yelled. “Go away and stay away from us!” The only emotion she felt was anger. Anger at Bryce for doing what he did. Anger that Liam was hurt. Anger at the whole situation. If only she’d noticed

when Liam crawled away from where he'd been playing at her feet. If only Bryce wasn't on the spectrum. If only he hadn't picked up his brother. If only Liam hadn't been in the wrong place at the wrong time. If only things were different, this accident would never have happened.

Minutes later, Kristen's mom arrived to stay with Bryce, and Kristen climbed into the back of an ambulance to accompany Liam to the hospital.

**Let Yahweh
Shalom whisper
calm over
you despite
the chaos
around you.**

As the vehicle sped away, she caught a glimpse of Bryce standing at the door of their home. The sight of him there, helpless, broke her heart. She knew he hadn't meant to hurt his brother, and she regretted blaming him. Deep, gut-wrenching sobs escaped her as she cried all the way to the hospital.

Tears flowed for Bryce's sake and for Liam's pain. They flowed for the love filling her heart for both boys. They flowed for the forgiveness she knew Bryce deserved. They flowed for the poignant reminder of how God extends unconditional love and forgiveness to his children, even when they hurt others. They flowed from fear over Liam's injuries and how they might affect his life.

Upon arrival at the hospital, medical tests revealed cracks in Liam's skull and bleeding in his brain. Considering the circumstances, doctors expressed amazement that he didn't suffer other broken bones. They released him several days later with orders for frequent follow-up appointments and warnings to watch for potential developmental delays.

Liam's year-long recovery put Kristen on a path of discovering aspects of God's character she hadn't known in depth before. A few days after her son's return from the hospital, she prayerfully asked God where he was when Liam fell. He answered by giving her a vivid mental picture of Jesus's arms holding the baby to cushion his fall. "The image filled me with a peace I can't describe," Kristen says.

Peace that defies words quieted her fear for Liam's future. It flooded her with forgiveness toward Bryce, and it healed the broken places in her mother-heart caused by the if-onlys surrounding the accident. Even as the storm winds continued to blow about her, God's supernatural peace set things right and put her heart at rest.⁶

Yahweh Shalom embodies perfect peace, and he longs for you and me to experience the same, even when our world falls apart. "*Shalom* is a comprehensive expression of God's will for us in every situation we face," writes Chip Ingram.⁷

Did you catch that? God wants us to experience peace in every situation—not just when it's calm and when it's pretty and when it's serene. God wants us to experience *shalom* in the deepest valleys where darkness hides the light, for that's when we need it most. Read on to discover how he went to the utmost lengths to make this possible.

Jesus, the Prince of Peace

"God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). From before time began, God knew the fallout from sin would make life difficult for us on earth. His love for us compelled him to take drastic measures to ensure we'd have everything needed to not only survive but also to thrive when life's storms blow in unannounced with a force that knocks us to our knees.

On the night of Jesus's birth, an army of angels sang, "Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased" (Luke 2:14 NLT). "Peace on earth" wasn't an expression of global peace to come. It was a declaration that the Prince of Peace had arrived to make possible our inner peace, even while living on this earth wracked with war, where we wrestle daily with physical pain, mental stress, and emotional heartache.

But like I said earlier, there's a caveat. Not everyone experiences this peace; it's reserved for "those with whom God is pleased," or as the NIV

says, “those on whom his favor rests.” God longs to bless us with his favor, and he made this possible through Jesus—but he leaves the choice to us, and not everyone accepts the offer. On the day Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey’s back, he wept because the city’s inhabitants refused to acknowledge him as the Son of God:

As he came closer to Jerusalem and saw the city ahead, he began to weep. “How I wish today that you of all people would understand the way to peace. But now it is too late, and peace is hidden from your eyes. Before long your enemies will build ramparts against your walls and encircle you and close in on you from every side. They will crush you into the ground, and your children with you. Your enemies will not leave a single stone in place, because you did not recognize it when God visited you.”

LUKE 19:41-44 NLT

My heart weeps, too, when I read Jesus’s words. Imagine having the opportunity to experience inner peace while living on this earth—but rejecting the One who freely offers it. Let’s not become a source of sadness to Jesus by rejecting him as those in his day did. Rather, let’s become one of “those on whom his favor rests,” so we can partake of his amazing promise of peace.

We can do this by placing our faith in Jesus alone for forgiveness, knowing that human effort could never obtain our salvation. Believing in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, is the only way to change our status from being God’s enemy to being his friend (Isaiah 9:6; Romans 5:8, 10–11). His Holy Spirit then takes up residence in us and begins to change us (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). The Holy Spirit produces in us various character qualities, also known as fruit of the Spirit—and one of them is peace (Galatians 5:22–23).

It sounds so easy, doesn’t it? And it is. Even a child can do this, so let’s not allow overthinking and grown-up issues to get in the way. Let’s get this right before it’s too late, as it was for the people in Jerusalem.

But let's remember that placing our faith in Jesus for salvation doesn't instantly make us worry-free any more than Gideon realizing the angel's identity made him an instant superhero. Gideon had to take more steps before he was successful, and we, too, have a responsibility to take specific actions so that we can experience the peace of God—especially in crisis situations.

How Shall We Respond?

The level of God's peace we experience depends on *where we look for it*. Jesus revealed this truth to his disciples because he knew they would face extreme hardships after his departure. He counseled them about these coming events, then wrapped up by saying, "I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world" (John 16:33 NLT). He didn't promise them an easy life, but he promised to be their source of peace amid the trials coming their way.

Nothing's changed. Jesus remains the source of peace when we face sorrows of every sort. We can search for peace on social media, through a shopping binge, in a big dish of our favorite ice cream, or in a secret addiction, but we'll come up empty-handed. Jesus alone has the answers to our problems, and he alone gives us the strength we need to cope.

The level of peace we experience also depends on *the thoughts we habitually entertain*. On the day all my kids faced significant stuff, my peace flowed more like a trickle than a river because I entertained anxious thoughts on their behalf. The longer I let those thoughts linger, the less peace I experienced. Thankfully, the Holy Spirit nudged me to turn my thoughts around.

"You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you!" says the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 26:3 NLT). The Amplified Bible reads, "You will keep in perfect and constant peace the one whose mind is steadfast [that is, committed and focused on You—

JESUS—THE WAY TO PEACE

■ His sacrificial death ...

God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. (Romans 5:8 NLT)

■ Bought us friendship with God ...

Since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God. (Romans 5:10-11 NLT)

■ And the gift of the Holy Spirit ...

Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20 NLT)

■ Who brings us peace!

The Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things! (Galatians 5:22-23 NLT)

in both inclination and character], because he trusts and takes refuge in You [with hope and confident expectation].”

When we recognize that our thoughts are camped on anxious ground, let’s refuse to let them stay there. Let’s reposition them in the truth of God’s Word. If—or when—they return to the old campsite, let’s remind them they no longer belong there and turn them back to the truth again.

In the situation with my kids, realigning my thoughts with truth meant acknowledging that both of my daughters and my son were in God’s hands. It meant remembering that God knew their needs and could address them far better than I could. This lifted the burden of responsibility weighing on me, and peace returned.

Then I took things a step further: I expressed gratitude. I thanked God for his presence in my kids’ lives, for going ahead of them to prepare the way for appointments and new homes, for giving them strength to parent, and for giving comfort and wisdom when dealing with serious matters such as an aging mother-in-law. Expressing gratitude shifted my focus from my fears to God’s faithfulness and increased the level of peace in my heart.

Yahweh Shalom—The LORD Is Peace. Because he is who he is, we can experience peace in every situation. Know God, know peace.

Prayer

Yahweh Shalom, I praise you for being the only true and lasting source of peace. Thank you for sending Jesus to make a relationship with you possible.

Thank you that knowing you allows me access to your perfect peace. Help me put into practice the actions that will help me experience your peace in any situation. When anxious thoughts come, enable me to recognize them and realign them with truth.

Grant me the ability to express gratitude, even in the hard places. Fill me with your peace, so I might reflect it to those who do not yet recognize that you are the Prince of Peace. Above all, help me remember that you alone grant perfect peace.

In Jesus's name, amen.

