

Personal Peace in the Day-to-Day

■ by Katie DeYoung, MA, LCPC, LMHC

A few years ago, my friend challenged me to think about all the times that I have chosen to “keep the peace” in various relationships. I’m sure we all have been in situations where “keeping the peace” seemed like the path with the least resistance and therefore appeared to be the best choice to make. Why argue if we don’t have to, right? The purpose of my friend probing around this topic wasn’t to debate whether “keeping the peace” was a healthy, responsible choice to make. Rather, she wanted to reveal my motive in doing so. Was I avoiding conflict to care for others, or was I being too timid to speak my mind? It was during this conversation that I realized the choice to “keep the peace” can also be an intentional choice, on my part, to protect my personal peace.

The Bible talks about peace from a variety of different perspectives. Scripture encourages us to **have peace with God, inner (inward) peace, and peace with others**. I want to suggest that being at peace with God and others significantly impacts our ability to have inner peace. To that end, it’s important for us to consider three things: the cost/benefit of “keeping the peace”, peace as it’s influenced by the 21st century, and what God intended peace to be.

Cost/Benefit of Keeping the Peace

Have you ever been told any of the following? *Just keep the peace. Don’t start a fight. Hold your tongue and let the situation go.* Oftentimes these comments frustrated me growing up. Making the choice to keep the peace left me all worked up on the inside. I had thoughts I wanted to share. Why was it my responsibility to keep everyone happy? Doing so seemed to only benefit one person, and that person wasn’t me. The cost to keeping my peace could feel like losing my voice. However, it didn’t have to be seen this way.

It may have been frustrating to keep quiet and not say my piece while growing up. Let’s reframe this initial reaction, though. Choosing to maintain the peace can be an empowering decision, as we are choosing to not only care for someone else but ourselves as well. It can be a way of prioritizing our peace. Choosing to let go and not pursue something can bring peace to the soul.*

Peace in the 21st Century

The thought of peace sometimes gets a bad reputation in the Christian community, especially when associated with the hippie movement and their peace signs. The inner peace promised with yoga practices and the mindfulness movement is also brought into question within the church. I’m not going to address these items as good or bad. What I will say is that the **inner peace that is lasting is found in God and God alone** and that there is wisdom in seeking this peace out.

In the hustle and bustle of the 21st century, peace is something I find myself craving. At any given moment I can have a to-do list a mile long. Maybe you can relate. Society today is focused on productivity, on what we can accomplish during a 24-hour day. “The more you can do, the better off you will be.”

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In addition to busy lives keeping us from maintaining a healthy inner peace, depression and anxiety symptoms are so predominant in the world today, both of which rob us of peace in our hearts. In this busy season of life, I desire fewer tasks and more quietness, calmness, and peace. What changes do we need to make to protect the peace in our hearts?

Godly Peace

Looking through the Bible, we see that peace is something that God emphasizes and encourages us to seek out for godly living (Psalm 34:14). Again, Scripture talks about having peace with God, having peace with others, and having inner peace. How do we get inner peace?

First off, peace is a fruit of the Spirit. That means, as Christians, we can tap into the Holy Spirit's power in us to experience peace during times of chaos, anxiety, and depression. Secondly, in Colossians 3:15, we are told

to let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts. That passage goes on to tell us to be thankful and let God's word dwell in us. I believe these things are vital parts to experiencing inner peace as well—be thankful, be in God's word, be present with God. In doing these things, let's enjoy a life of peace that is given to us from our good God.

So, as we move forward in our jobs and relationships, let's not only prioritize peace with God and peace with others, but peace within ourselves. Let's recognize that we can benefit from "keeping the peace" as we show self-control and care for others. Let us not fall prey to the busy lives of the world around us as we seek out true, biblical peace in our lives. ■

***Editor's note:** The information in this article pertains to healthy situations and relationships. We are not encouraging abusive behaviors or "being a doormat". If you have questions regarding your relationships, we encourage you to consult with one of our therapists.

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