

Explore the Bible: Joy Through Peace

September 13, 2021

- *The Explore the Bible lesson for Oct. 3 focuses on Philippians 4:1-9.*

C.S. Lewis wrote that just as a car is made to run on gasoline, God is “the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other. That is why it is just not good asking God to make us happy in our own way without bothering about religion. God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing” (*Mere Christianity*, p. 50).

In the same manner, Jesus warns, “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:19-21).

The Christian’s happiness is not determined by obtaining material possessions. Society considers one successful when graduation occurs or when a person lands the perfect job, opens a business, or buys cars, houses, yachts and property. These are just temporal things. “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well (Matthew 6:33).

A survey was conducted in January 2019 in the United States and more than 10 other countries, to determine if religion makes people happier. The findings revealed that in the United States, 36 percent of the actively religious describe themselves as “very happy,” compared with 25 percent of the inactively religious and 25 percent of the unaffiliated.

People will decide to form their own opinion about the survey, but I believe something, or someone is driving the actively religious to describe themselves as “very happy,” and that someone is the God of peace. We can find satisfaction in having material things, but only God can give us the kind of satisfaction in knowing that he is the giver of all good gifts.

One Accord (Philippians 4:1-6)

The disagreements between two women in the Philippian congregation caused chaos and division. Paul urges Euodia and Syntyche to agree in the Lord (v. 2). Disagreements have been part of the church life for centuries as noted in this lesson. Christians who once worked closely and diligently together to further advance the kingdom somehow allowed the enemy to destroy the work. “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the full” (John 10:10).

It is unsettling to know when Christians are challenged with making the best decisions regarding troublemakers in the church, most times they make decisions based upon relationships and emotions. It becomes important to have strong believers who can settle divisive matters of the church quickly, but gently.

In addition to strong leadership, prayer is the key to solving major problems and restoring fellowship. Through my experience as a preacher’s wife, I have seen God move mightily in the lives of the members when trouble and confusion arose. Fervent prayers, without wrong motive, were offered to God with thanksgiving (v. 6). Although some members left, God strengthened those who remained. Because of the grace of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ is preached, leadership and congregation are more aware of the enemy’s tactics, and many have matured in the faith.

God of Peace (Philippians 4:7-9)

How is it possible to have peace in the midst of the storm? Believers may not have all of the answers and understand the ways and mind of God. However, it is assuring that the God of peace will give us his peace and will guard our hearts and mind in Christ Jesus (v. 7).

We all love the story about when Jesus was asleep in the lower part of the boat and a storm arose. The frightened disciples proceeded to wake Jesus: "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!" Jesus answered with these words, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves and it was completely calm (Matthew 6:23-26). Baffled about the power of God, the disciples began to wonder what kind of man is in their presence (v. 27).

Paul loves the Philippians enough to instruct them in moral virtues. In order for Christ to guard the hearts and minds of believers, they must meditate on whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely and commendable, as well as dwell on moral excellence and anything praiseworthy (v. 8). These virtues are necessary to transform the Christian to be more like Christ.

If we want to experience the peace of God, there has to be an observable change in our lives. Paul modeled the virtues and desired to pass it on to the Philippian believers so that the God of peace will be with them (v. 9).

Margie Clayton is minister of education at Berean Tabernacle Baptist Church in Liberty, Texas.