

The Fruit of the Spirit

The Fruit of the Spirit Is Peace

Lesson #4 for January 23, 2010

Scriptures: Matthew 8:23-27; 11:28,29; Romans 5:1-11; 12:9-21; Hebrews 12:14; Colossians 3:13-15.

1. The focus of this lesson is on peace. As the third portion of the fruit of the Spirit, peace follows love and joy. If we have the love that God demonstrated, followed by the joy experienced in our relationship with Him, do we then automatically have peace? (Romans 5:1) How do you understand this verse? If we have a right relationship with God, does that bring peace? Or, do we need to do something more to strive for peace? That does not necessarily mean everything is comfortable!
2. On several occasions, Jesus demonstrated that His life was filled with peace. For example, even when a storm raged around Him, He was at peace and was sleeping. Read Matthew 8:23-27. When the storm got so bad that the fishermen-disciples were sure they were going to drown, the Carpenter was peacefully asleep in the bottom of the boat! Doesn't that make you smile? The life-long fishermen were asking the Carpenter to save them from a storm on the sea! When they awakened Jesus and He stood up and commanded peace, the sea was still. What does that tell us about what Jesus can do in our lives? There were other boats with other occupants that were also amazed at Jesus' abilities. What kind of stories spread abroad after that experience? Is it possible that the Devil himself was responsible for that storm? Wouldn't he have loved to wipe out Jesus and all of the disciples in one stroke? Think of how foolish the Devil's attacks against God and His faithful children have always been. But, he continues to believe that he will somehow succeed in his madness even to the point of organizing the forces to attack the New Jerusalem at the third coming! How capable are we of deceiving ourselves?
3. Read Matthew 11:28,29. Jesus invited us to come to Him and find rest. Is that the same as peace?
4. Romans 5:1 says that if we have the kind of relationship we should have with God, we have peace. If we could have that kind of peace, what would it do to our relationships at work, at school, and at home?
5. Are we actively promoting peace? During a *Voice of America* radio broadcast, Eleanor Roosevelt said, "It isn't enough to talk about peace; one must believe in it. And it isn't enough to believe in it; one must work at it." (*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for January 16, 2010) We may be in very difficult circumstances; we may find ourselves even in the midst of a war, but we can remember that when they are bravely endured, troubles help our characters to grow. Then, we will receive God's approval, and that certainly will bring hope. We sometimes hear people talk about "fighting for peace." Does that make any sense? One wisecrack said, "Fighting for peace is like committing adultery to promote virginity!" Or, is it that we want "peace" on "our" terms? Is there a difference between political "peace" and the inward peace that Jesus had?
6. Read John 14:27. What did Jesus mean when He said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." (NKJV) Didn't Jesus know that every one of those disciples except one was going to die a violent death? What kind of peace is that? What did Paul have in mind when he said, "And God's peace, which is far beyond human understanding, will keep your hearts and minds safe in union with Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:7, GNB) How could Paul have that kind of peace while he was in a Roman prison? Does the Christian need to fear even death itself so long as he has an abiding relationship with Jesus Christ? What kind of peace in your heart would One need to have to say, "Forgive them, Father! They don't know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34, GNB) Jesus faced Gethsemane and Calvary with the weight of the salvation of the whole world resting on the outcome. Although His humanity really struggled, He continued to trust in His Father's plan. So, how do we get that peace? Do we have to give up the fight to control our own lives? Is

that the problem? Psychologists suggest that the greatest fear is the fear of the unknown. Are we willing to let the One who knows the future take charge of our lives.

When the disciples realized who Jesus really was and that He had risen from the dead as proof that He was God, they went forth with absolute confidence and without fear because they knew who was in control of their futures. (See Acts 4:13)

7. Read Romans 5:1-11. As a summary of what he stated in Romans 1-4, Paul wrote that we can now have peace. Furthermore, that peace, that abiding relationship with Jesus Christ, is intended to change us from being His enemies into His friends. That is based on a correct understanding of why Jesus had to die. (Romans 3:25-27) Being saved by His life, we can rejoice in our salvation. But, do we have to do anything? How does the death of Jesus turn us from enemies into friends?
8. Read Colossians 1:20-22 and 2 Corinthians 5:17-21. Through Jesus, God even brought the angels back to Himself. How does the death of Christ make peace among angels? Were there questions that were perplexing them? Did the two-thirds of the angels who did not rebel possibly have some serious questions left? We have grown to be fairly comfortable with sin, and many of us are afraid of God. If we correctly understand the life and death of Jesus, we will come to be comfortable with God and deathly afraid of sin! The questions have been answered. God can be trusted. We can be at peace. At the cross the angels saw the truth about God's statement in Genesis 2:17. When the good angels saw what Satan and his evil angels did to Jesus, there was no question left in their minds about whether they would be better off under God's government or under Satan's government. They saw demonstrated right in front of their eyes the full results of sin: the second death. They also saw the devastating effects of "worshiping" God for the wrong reason. The Pharisees and the Sadducees thought they had the whole plan of salvation worked out; and when Jesus did not fit their model, they eliminated Him. The only solution to all of this is to let self die.
9. Read Matthew 5:9. Can you be a peacemaker if you do not have peace yourself? Why are peacemakers called the special sons of God? (NKJV)
10. Read Matthew 11:28,29. These verses do not precisely mention peace, but they talk about rest. Is there a difference between peace and the rest which Jesus was offering there? What does it mean to take on the yoke of Christ? Knowing that He is gentle and lowly in heart, how does that help us to find rest?
11. When Jesus talked about rest in those verses, was He speaking of a gift that He will give us? Or, was He telling us how to find rest ourselves by walking alongside Him as He bears the burdens with us?
12. It is the love of self that brings unrest. . . . Those who take Christ at His word, and surrender their souls to His keeping, their lives to His ordering, will find peace and quietude. Nothing of the world can make them sad when Jesus makes them glad by His presence. In perfect acquiescence there is perfect rest. The Lord says, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee." Isa. 26:3.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 330,331.
13. Why is it that selfishness leads to unrest and unhappiness? Is it that selfishness is just the opposite of the way God designed us to work? Is it truly possible for Christians to learn to die to self? Do we have to die to self before we can experience the rest and peace that Christ wants to give us? What is it that we are doing or not doing that keeps us from having the peace that Jesus offers? (Colossians 3:2) Why aren't we at peace? If we were at peace with God, would we be at peace with ourselves and with others? What keeps us from being at peace with God? Surely, the problem is not on God's side! God says He would like us to be peacemakers. (Matthew 5:9) If even one of the disciples in that boat that was sinking on the Sea of Galilee truly had the peace we are talking about, how different would his attitude have been? Did they really understand who was sleeping in the bottom of the boat? Should they have rowed harder? Should they have just relaxed and said, "Jesus is with us, nothing serious can happen to us"? Or, should they have

gone to Jesus sooner, recognizing that He was the only answer to their problem? Do we ever act like that? With such an accurate prediction of what was coming, (See Deuteronomy 28-31) how could the Israelites have just marched right down the path of destruction as they did? How much instruction do we have?

14. It seems that as a world, we are perpetually at war. Is that true of us as individuals as well? Are we perpetually at war with one or another of our associates or family members? What factors keep that war going?
15. Read Mark 4:35-41. (Compare Matthew 8:23-27; Luke 8:22-25) How could Jesus sleep through such a storm? Why do you think that sudden storm came up? Is it possible that the Devil himself sent the storm? Wouldn't he have loved to drown Jesus and all the disciples at one time?
16. When Jesus stood up and spoke peace to the storm, the clouds disappeared, the violent waves ceased, and there was peace. The disciples and those in other boats around them were totally amazed.
17. Try to imagine being in the presence of Someone with that kind of power. Are we more like the disciples—panicking at circumstances in which we find ourselves—or are we more like Jesus—able to be at peace in the midst of the roughest storm?
18. What kind of storms do we face on a day-by-day basis? Isn't Jesus capable of calming our storms? In Deuteronomy 28-31, God spelled out for the children of Israel what would happen if they obeyed Him, and He also spelled out what would happen if they disobeyed Him. In essence, obedience would lead to peace while disobedience would lead to constant problems.
19. The history of the Old Testament clearly demonstrates how seldom the children of Israel had complete peace. Nations around them were always looking for opportunities to conquer them in war, etc.
20. In many countries in the Middle East, common greetings include some form of the word *peace*. In the New Testament, Jesus often spoke to the people upon whom He performed miracles with expressions such as, "Go in peace." Paul and the other New Testament writers often began and ended their letters with prayers for peace.
21. The word for *peace* in the Old Testament is *shalom*. This word implies not just an absence of war but a complete state of physical, mental, social, and spiritual wholeness or well-being. It meant to be comfortable with oneself, with others, and with the environment.
22. In the New Testament, the word for *peace* in Greek is *eirene*. In general use, this word had considerably more limited meaning than the Hebrew *shalom*. But, New Testament authors, the disciples, and the apostles, used the Greek word in the larger sense of the Hebrew *shalom*. There have been more wars fought in the name of religion than for any other cause! Don't we expect the Devil to do everything he can do to prevent Christians from having peace?
23. Christian homes should be small islands of peace in a world of turmoil. Is that what actually happens? Does the Devil want Christians to be at peace? What are the most common reasons for "war" in the home? Isn't selfishness in one form or another almost always the cause of conflict?
24. Has the Christian church at large been at peace for most of its history? Why is it that in times of persecution, the church grows much faster than in times of peace? Why is it that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church"?
25. What would it be like to have Jesus living in your home? If fact, He is there all the time. How many of the conflicts that arise would simply not take place if we were to recognize that Jesus is there? What would happen if one or more of the family members chose to act like Jesus in any given conflict? At the third coming, every person who has ever lived will be in the visible presence of God. How will that affect them? Some will choose to stay away from God while others will recognize that God is their only safety.
26. Read Romans 12:9-21. If we practiced those principles, would virtually all conflicts disappear?

If we actually experienced the kind of peace that Jesus is offering us, wouldn't our homes be a little bit of heaven here and now?

27. Read Matthew 5:43-48. Would all conflicts end if we practiced loving our enemies?
28. Read John 14:27. Jesus stated that He was leaving peace to His disciples. Think of their subsequent life stories. Every one of them except John died a violent death. Does that sound like Jesus left peace? They were in nearly constant conflict with the Devil, his angels, many of the Jews, and many of the Romans. There were times of terrible persecution. Was Jesus being deceitful when He said He was leaving them peace? Or, was that peace an inward peace despite the conflicts around them? Were they able to rise above even threats on their lives to lay hold of that peace which Jesus promised?
29. Read Matthew 5:23-26. What would happen if all church members reconciled all their differences with family members and other members of the church before they went to worship together each week? What would it require for us to actually accomplish that?
30. Matthew 5:9 calls us to be peacemakers. Are Adventists known for that role?
31. Colossians 3:13-15 mentions several things that could help us in our efforts for peace. If we were prepared to set ourselves aside, to forgive those who wrong us, to love those we live with, work with, and worship with, wouldn't that bring peace? Compare James 3:17.
32. How many Christians do you know that make a sincere effort to live at peace with everyone around them? Why does it sometimes seem so difficult? Certainly, we would recognize God's desire for us is to live in peace. But, how do we explain Matthew 10:34-36? Jesus Himself said that He would bring not peace but a sword. Isn't that a contradiction to everything we have said? What kind of peace was Jesus talking about?
33. Read Philippians 4:7 and Romans 12:18. Paul recognized that it would be impossible for us always to be at peace. But, as far as it is possible within our control, we should live at peace.
34. Be honest. What percentage of the conflicts that you face on a day-by-day basis either at home or at work are a result of your own personality or wishes? How many of those conflicts could be resolved if you were more Christlike?
35. Shortly before His crucifixion Christ had bequeathed to His disciples a legacy of peace. "Peace I leave with you," He said, "My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." John 14:27. This peace is not the peace that comes through conformity to the world. Christ never purchased peace by compromise with evil. The peace that Christ left His disciples is internal rather than external and was ever to remain with His witnesses through strife and contention.—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 84.
36. Think of steps that you as an individual or perhaps you as a family can take to try to produce peace. Could you help to reduce conflicts in your local church? What could you do to make your work environment more peaceful?
37. We must recognize that we are living in a time of great conflict in the great controversy. Satan does not want us to be at peace. He will throw temptations, trials, troubles, conflicts, and whatever else he can think of at us to prevent us from being peacemakers and living in an attitude of peace. Are we going to allow him to win that battle?

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Info@theox.org

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