

October 4, 2020

“Finding Peace in a World of Turmoil”

How do we find peace in a time of turmoil? What does God think about it? We live in a time of extreme tension with extensive anger being the norm.

1. Information explosion

- 100 billion emails sent each day
- 5,000 new books published each day
- Knowledge doubles every 12 months
- (=) we can't keep up

2. Technology is constantly changing

3. COVID-19 (Pandemic)

- Affects everyone
- Death in USA and the World
- Masks and social distancing
- Social routines gone / replaced with fear and anger

4. Record unemployment and business closures

5. Protests, shootings, elections and social unrest

6. Natural disasters (fires, hurricanes, tornadoes, drought)

Is it any wonder that we are tense and worry?

Studies show we spend 5.2 years of our lives worrying.

- Trouble sleeping
- Too much pressure
- Ready to explode
- No inner peace

Internal Personal Challenges:

Our greatest challenge is not over external events which we have no control but it inner challenges (mine and yours). What we are on the inside matters more than what happens on the outside.

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The book of James speaks to us and is incredibly relevant to today. It was written 2,000 years ago to beleaguered and oppressed Jewish believers. James tells us the right way to respond to the pressures of life (even in the 21st century). This tells us how to respond properly when the pressures of life are great and we're about to lose it.

James 1:19-20 (1984 NIV)

"¹⁹My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, ²⁰for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires."

These simple verses challenge us to put them into practice. There are three commands.

Command #1: Listen More

"Be Quick to Listen" (James 1;19)

Wisdom begins when we listen more and talk less. Listening to what God's word says is the point. The book of James may have been the first book of the New Testament.

- Oral tradition up to then
- Meeting with other believers and listening to the word being taught
- Hearing, memorizing and meditating on what they heard

Because of these steps, first century believers probably knew the word better than we do. We need to be quick to hear God's word.

Proverbs 8:1-6 (NIV)

"Does not wisdom call out,

Does not understanding raise her voice?

² On the heights along the way, where the paths meet, she takes her stand;

³ Beside the gates, leading to the city, at the entrances, she cries out:

⁴ "To you, O men, I call out; I raise my voice to all mankind.

⁵ "You who are simple, gain prudence; you who are foolish, gain understanding.

⁶ "Listen, for I have worthy things to say; I open my lips to speak what is right."

What is Proverbs 8:1-6 saying?

God's wisdom is not hidden. You just have to listen to God's word. No one gains wisdom by chance (it does not fall from the sky like mana). Wisdom says, "If you seek me, you will find me."

We are too worried, preoccupied, distracted to seek God's wisdom provided in His Word. The first steps to God's peace is to spend more time in God's Word and less time watching TV, computer, phone and other distractions. Make plans and alter our lives to hear God's Word.

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Command #2: Talk Less

"Be slow to speak" (James 1:19)

God is in charge, you're not, listen and don't speak.

Ecclesiastes 5:2

"God is in heaven and you are on earth. therefore, let your words be few"

- We are not as smart as we think we are.
- We are not as clever as we think we are.
- We are not as wise as we think we are.

There is a time to speak and a time to be silent.

Proverbs 29:20

"Do you see a man who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for him."

Social media encourages quick feedback. Don't fall for it. Slow down, wait and think about your response. What effect will your response have on others? Is your comment correct or just mean? Remember, it is easy to kill a marriage or a friendship with unkind words.

When James say, "be slow to speak" he is thinking about our tendency to speak when we are angry and frustrated.

An old nursery rhyme, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." is wrong. Unkind words don't break bones but they will break our hearts.

Command #3: Calm Down

"Be Slow to Anger." (James 1:19)

James is not saying don't get angry but is referring to deep-seated rage (we see this everywhere). Anger is an emotion we can control.

Think about this: If we are slow to hear, we are quick to speak, but if we are quick to hear, we will be slow to speak.

Do you see the progression?

- Quick speaking leads to quick anger
- The angrier we get, the faster we speak and the less we hear.

We have an issue with this third command, "be slow to anger."

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James 1:20

"For the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God."

If you are angry, you cannot do any of the good things God wants done. Anger only destroys, it never builds up. We need to move away from anger, bitterness and hurtful words.

Ephesians 4:32

"Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."

We are to extend grace to others as God has extended grace to us. His plan is simple. He extends grace to us and we are to extend grace to others even if they are undeserving. You cannot understand God's love unless you go to the cross. You don't understand the cross unless you see in it God's love (compassion).

1. Man's murder became God's sacrifice.
2. A heinous crime paid an impossible debt.
3. The death of an innocent / righteous man, allowed the guilty to go free.

Jesus didn't come to make nicer people, He came to make us a new people. We need to allow Jesus to live within us. When we get angry we need to ask Jesus for the quality and characteristics needed at that moment.

The following allows us to drive out anger:

1. Compassion
2. Kindness
3. Love
4. Courage
5. Wisdom
6. Joy
7. Patience
8. Give us the right words.

When we are living in Christ and Christ is living in us, then with God's grace we will be:

- Swift to hear
- Slow to Speak
- Slow to Anger

Then and only then will we experience God's peace.

Read the lyrics from **"It Is Well With My Soul"**

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How do we deal with the turmoil of our day? How do we get peace?

The news is horrible with no good news in sight. Where do we get peace? Look to God's Word.

Look at the words of Habakkuk (600 years before Jesus):

The times were horrible, injustice reigned, oppression everywhere, crops failed, no relief in sight, they cried out to God, God did nothing, they cried out again and God's response was not rosy and good. God promised he would send the Babylonians. What did they do?

Habakkuk 3:16-19

¹⁶ I heard and my inward parts trembled, At the sound my lips quivered. Decay enters my bones, And in my place I tremble. Because I must wait quietly for the day of distress, For the people to arise *who* will invade us. ¹⁷ Though the fig tree should not blossom And there be no fruit on the vines, *Though* the yield of the olive should fail And the fields produce no food, Though the flock should be cut off from the fold And there be no cattle in the stalls,

¹⁸ **Yet** I will exult in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.

¹⁹ The Lord God is my strength, And He has made my feet like hinds' *feet*, And makes me walk on my high places."

Trust in the Lord. He is in control and the only source of your peace.

Jim Shepherd