

The Path of Peace

A hiker with a backpack stands on a dirt trail overlooking a vast mountain valley under a cloudy sky. The hiker is seen from behind, wearing a light-colored long-sleeved shirt, dark pants, and a green backpack. The trail is surrounded by green shrubs and pine trees. In the distance, there are rolling mountains and a valley with a small town. The sky is blue with white clouds.

Cassondra Windwalker

The Path of Peace

Helps and hindrances in achieving the “peace that passes all understanding, that will guard your hearts in Christ Jesus.”

By Cassondra Windwalker

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Seeking Peace

What is peace? Some might define it as the absence of conflict, but the true meaning of peace goes much deeper than that. To be at peace is to be safe in mind, to be complete, to be at one with myself. Peace or its absence is not a consequence of my interactions with others; rather, I am at peace *in spite of* whatever conflicts surround me. While Christ is called the Prince of Peace, He plainly states that the peace He brings is not peace between people, but rather peace within the person: “I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household,” Matthew 10:34–36. But then later He promises, “Peace I leave with you, 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. What can this mean?

Whether we are followers of Christ or not, conflicts will dog us throughout our lives.

Whether we are followers of Christ or not, conflicts will dog us throughout our lives. Our ability to control the actions and behaviors of those around us is limited; our only means of changing the world is to change ourselves. If we can arrive at a state of peace, of oneness with ourselves and with God, then the trials through which we must pass will never reduce us. However, we all have conflicts within which we must overcome before we can achieve this. The aim of this book is to help us address these conflicts within so that we have the strength to face the conflicts without.

Some of us endure terrible stresses in our daily life. Abusive relationships, health problems, substance abuse, bullying, unrealistically high expectations of parents or teachers or peers, etc., are all examples of situations which

many young adults encounter on an everyday basis. For others of us, the battles we fight are battles with ourselves, as we may feel overwhelmed by depression, rage, or self-loathing. And all of us have probably felt that we are split into different personas: I may be one person with my friends, another with my parents, and still another when I am alone with myself. To be strong is to find a way to bring all these parts of myself into peace with each other and to move forward with my life. “For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: let him [turn away from] evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and pursue it,” 1 Peter 3:10–11.

Ultimately, the only way to achieve this inner peace is through God. He who created us and breathed into us our very souls, knows us as does no other. He knows the magnitude and the depth of the conflicts we face, because He knows the magnitude and the depth of the gifts He has given us with which to combat them. There is no obstacle we cannot overcome when relying on Him. When Jesus was bidding His disciples farewell shortly before His crucifixion, He warned them of the terrible things they were soon to face: persecution, torture, their own deaths and the deaths of those they loved. But even in the face of such knowledge, the great gift He had to leave them was peace, and He told them, “These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world,” John 16:33.

Whatever struggles we face in the world, if we stand with Jesus, then we know already that we are the victors, however things may seem in the

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moment. Likewise, if we choose to turn our back on Jesus and become a part of the world, working to tear down that which is good and true and pure, then we may also know that we are already defeated. Jesus is victorious because He has robbed sin and death of their lawful prey by giving Himself in our stead. He took our place, so that

we can approach God as His children, eating at His table and claiming His protection. By overcoming sin through Jesus Christ, we are at one, at peace, both with ourselves and with our Creator. “But now in Jesus Christ ye who

sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enemy thereby: and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh,” Ephesians 2:13–17.

To be at peace is to always be the same person, no matter who we are with or what we confront. Right now that may seem impossible. It also means that wherever we walk, Jesus walks with us. We cannot bring Him in and out of a closet at will or use Him as a band-aid when something hurts too badly for us to fix on our own. In Exodus 20:5, God describes Himself as jealous. He will not tolerate being treated like a rabbit’s foot. When we are at peace with God, He is an integral part of our lives, the golden thread weaving together all the patterns in the tapestry of our lives. “And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall [guard] your hearts and [thoughts] through Christ Jesus,” Philippians 4:7.

Trail Markers

1. In your own words, what does it mean to be at peace?
2. List the major conflicts in your own life and identify them as conflicts either within or without. This may be difficult, but try to choose at least one that you feel comfortable sharing with the class.
3. Think of your life at home, at school, with your friends, and alone. In what aspect of your life does your spirituality reflect itself most? Least?

4. Why, in both cases?
5. When are you most yourself?
6. Christianity is a journey that involves a lot of personal growth. Hopefully by the end of this book you will feel closer to God and more at peace with yourself. How would you describe your relationship with God now, today?
7. Describe the relationship you want to have with God.

Faith: Beginning the Ascent

BUT HE THAT IS JOINED UNTO THE LORD IS ONE SPIRIT.

1 Corinthians 6:17

In the last chapter, we discussed the need for our relationship with God to be a part of who we are, not merely an occasional diversion. The journey to peace begins in God's footsteps. By allowing ourselves to become one with Him, we will gain the strength and courage we need to rule ourselves. In order to be "joined unto the Lord," however, we must first know Him and put our faith in Him.

Faith is a deep, abiding trust, a sure, unfailing knowledge of a reality we can neither see nor touch, a willingness to give over our very lives to the power of God.

Faith is much more than mere belief. Faith is a deep, abiding trust, a sure, unfailing knowledge of a reality we can neither see nor touch, a willingness to give over our very lives to the power of God. It is not enough to simply believe that God is. Many people call themselves Christians; many more believe that there is a God of some sort, a higher power at work in the universe. However, very few have found the peace that they hope for in claiming some god as their own. In James 2:19, the Bible reads, "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble." But there can be neither peace nor hope for the devils.

The first step in faith is knowledge. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," Romans 10:17. God has revealed Himself to us through His word. It is His letter to mankind. Everything it contains—history, poetry, philosophy, dialogue, prophecy—are all a means to an end, and that end is guiding mankind back to the light and love they left behind