



## PREFACE

I would imagine that women have been collecting recipes for as long as there have been cooks. Our favorite dishes tend to become associated with the good friends who first prepared them and shared the results with us. Many of us have binders or boxes filled with cards and scraps of paper on which we have saved the carefully recorded directions for someone's specialty – like my Aunt Mary's Jam Cake or my mother-in-law's boiled custard.

Like me, you may collect cookbooks. And now that the Internet also provides access to recipes of all kinds, we have the tools needed to become successful cooks. What we often lack is the practice.

Many years ago I discovered a recipe for homemade yeast rolls that has become a favorite in our family. It appeared in a local newspaper, but since then I have seen similar recipes for Butternut Rolls in other publications. This one calls for seven basic ingredients that are common to most bread recipes: milk, shortening and eggs combined with sugar, yeast, salt and flour. Couple these ingredients with a careful adherence to the instructions,

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and the result is a homemade roll that is perfection itself!

It occurs to me that the teachings in the Bible are similar in some ways to the recipes we consult over and over again because we know they work. The Bible's 66 books make up a collection of spiritual recipes that are proven to be reliable. We are assured that when we put these instructions into practice, using the particular ingredients called for (no substitutions!), the result is going to be heavenly – a peace that “surpasses all understanding” (Philippians 4:7). So put on your aprons, and join me as we explore God's recipe for perfect peace. Once you've tasted it, I hope you'll be eager to share this one with others.

– Janie Craun



# THE SEARCH FOR PEACE

**T**he desire for peace must be as old as man himself. After Adam and Eve were driven from their home, life became extremely difficult. The Garden of Eden became a distant memory – a haven of serenity almost forgotten. Within a few generations, the earth was so filled with violence that God chose to destroy what He had created, preserving one man with his household (Genesis 6:13, 17-18). From then on, being able to live out one's life in peace would be considered a great blessing (15:15).

Since the earliest times, people of Hebrew descent have greeted each other with the word "shalom." Loosely translated, it means "Go in peace, and may you prosper." The thought, to this day, serves as a benediction among people of goodwill.

Aaron, the Lord's high priest, blessed those who came to worship God with the beautiful prayer found in Numbers 6:24-26: "The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace."

This is our prayer for all who begin this study today: "May the Lord give you peace."





# PEACE ON EARTH

I was born in 1945, just months before the end of World War II. Many of my family members had served the country in some way during the war effort. Several uncles were in the army, my dad and other relatives worked at the DuPont Co. making war materials, and my mom and an aunt worked briefly in Washington, D.C., as legal stenographers for the government.

The end of that conflict was cause for tremendous celebration. American servicemen came home, and a flood of baby boomers was born the following year. Expectations were high that ours would be a generation blessed with peace.

## The Fabulous '50s

The decade of the 1950s followed, sometimes referred to as the Nifty Fifties or the Fabulous Fifties. The country was riding a wave of patriotism, and people were proud to be Americans. Many families enjoyed a degree of prosperity that allowed them to afford luxuries such as cars and televisions for the first time. Folks were going to church in record numbers, and most women were still stay-at-home moms.

But life was not as ideal as some remember. In 1952 the worst outbreak of polio in the nation's history claimed thousands of lives, many of them children. And once again U.S. citizens were being deployed – this time to Korea. An escalating Cold War with Russia created the threat of a nuclear attack and the spread of godless communism to America. This fear prompted Congress to amend our Pledge of Allegiance to say that we were “one nation *under God*.”

## **The Turbulent '60s**

By 1960 a new crisis had arisen – this time in Cuba. My generation had never experienced war on our continent, and it was a frightening possibility. The crisis ended under the leadership of our 35th president, John F. Kennedy, and the country celebrated again. We had dodged another bullet and hope was running high.

All that changed in November 1963 when President Kennedy was killed by a gunman as he rode through the streets of Dallas. The nation went into shock.

A new president took office, and another problem surfaced. This one was the practice of segregation, especially prevalent in the Deep South where it had existed since the Civil War. Inequities that needed to be corrected brought about the Civil Rights Movement in America. Legislation ultimately resulted in changes for the better, but they didn't come about peacefully. The movement's leader, Martin Luther King Jr., was assassinated in April 1968.

## **The Psychedelic '70s**

By the 1970s the public was weary of war and conflict, and the “peace” emblem became symbolic of Americans' frustration. The country's involvement in Vietnam was especially unpopular. By the time U.S. servicemen had finally returned home, we were a nation divided and disillusioned. The catch phrase of a new generation became “make love, not war.” The result was a “sexual revolution” in America, due in part to the development of the birth control pill (1960), legalized abortion (1973) and

no-fault divorce that gradually spread throughout the country. The nation saw a significant increase in the number of broken homes and growing social problems in our society. Many of the biblical principles that had guided our nation in the past were openly challenged. And with the publication of Joseph Fletcher's *Situation Ethics* (1966), some were echoing Nietzsche's sentiment that "God is dead."<sup>1</sup>

Fast forward 50 years, and our world has seen many changes – both good and bad. Industrialization has come to many backward nations, and modern technology is reshaping the way people live and think. To date, Christianity – despite the predictions of naysayers – has spread into almost every country in the world. But conflicts continue around the globe, with the threat of another world war always present.

At home other problems persist. Unemployment, inflation and deficit-spending pose economic challenges that will affect generations to come. Now a senior citizen, I can see the truth of Solomon's observation so long ago: "That which has been is what will be, That which is done is what will be done, And there is nothing new under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:9).

Lyrics from one popular song of the 1950s keep coming to mind: "Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me. Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be."<sup>2</sup> Decades later, the words are still relevant.

But Solomon was right. Wars and disease will continue, and sin will always be present. Our Lord knew that. Yet He left the beauty of heaven and entered into this troubled world to become the Prince of Peace.

## **Peace, Perfect Peace - Is It Possible?**

Every generation has known its share of hard times. The Old Testament scriptures record periods of famine, pestilence and horrendous brutality. Faithful prophets of God were often tortured and silenced for speaking the truth. And basic morality, even among God's chosen people, was always fluctuating.

Against this backdrop of unrest and depression, the prophet Isaiah

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foresaw a time of “perfect peace.” He wrote about a day when men whose minds were stayed on God would sing about it (Isaiah 26:3). Eventually, the prophet was put to death for his outspoken views. But he understood that true peace can live within the heart of a person even when things in the world are at their worst.

Before his death, Isaiah was given a glimpse of the One who would usher in that promised peace. He wrote:

For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given;  
and the government will be upon His shoulder. And  
His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty  
God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).

Isaiah’s vision was realized some 700 years later – on a night when the angels of heaven proclaimed “on earth peace, goodwill toward men” (Luke 2:14). That was the night when the Christ was born. But even that wonderful event was accompanied with unbelievable sorrow. News of His birth prompted the cruel tyrant Herod the Great to massacre innocent babies in the town of Bethlehem because that was where the prophet Micah had prophesied the Child would be born. The murders of all those precious and innocent infants fulfilled another chilling prophecy:

A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation, weeping,  
and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children,  
Refusing to be comforted, Because they were no more  
(Matthew 2:18).

Where was the perfect peace for the mothers of Bethlehem? Where was it for Mary, the mother of Jesus, when a sword pierced her soul at her Son’s death (Luke 2:35)? Where is it today when mothers’ hearts are broken by grief and loss? The sad truth is that such peace will never be found *in this world*. Jesus acknowledged that fact, saying, “Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword” (Matthew 10:34).

The peace Jesus brought was of a different sort than some were expecting. In John 14:27, He described it this way: “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." His perfect peace would come to dwell within the hearts of His disciples and would fill the early church with boldness in the face of persecution.

## **The Problem of Suffering**

It was necessary for God's Son to know suffering so that He could identify with ordinary people. The Hebrews writer wrote about the things Jesus endured, pointing out that they were for our benefit:

For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15).

Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey him (Hebrews 5:8-9).

In the hours before His death, Jesus was in anguish. His sweat fell to the ground as great drops of blood (Luke 22:44), and He prayed with "vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death" (Hebrews 5:7). Nevertheless, He submitted to the Father's will, saying, "[N]ot as I will, but as You will" (Matthew 26:39). He endured the cross because He was able to look beyond it and see the bigger picture. The Hebrews writer said, "[Look] unto Jesus ... who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (12:2).

How we long to experience a peace so strong that it could carry us through our own valleys of depression. We wonder – does such a peace exist?

## **No God, No Peace**

Sept. 11, 2001, was one of those valleys. On that day some 3,000 unsuspecting people in this country died from terrorist attacks,

proving that life is uncertain and disaster can strike any of us without warning. It happened that way for the patriarch Job, a righteous man who worshiped God.

People sometimes question how men can believe in a loving God who would allow pain and suffering to exist in the world. They reason that if God is real, He must be incapable of preventing evil. Otherwise, they argue, He is simply unwilling to prevent it, thus proving that He is not a *loving* God after all. By this kind of reasoning, skeptics attempt to make the case that a just and caring Creator does not exist.

But we were created by God in His image as intelligent beings with the ability to reason and make choices. The fact that suffering exists serves to illustrate that point. People can choose to be guided by evil rather than Truth. If they choose not to live by the rules of peace, they create problems for themselves and others.

Isaiah wrote that such people are like the waves of the sea, always tossing up refuse and mud. "There is no peace," said God, "for the wicked" (Isaiah 57:20-21).

Their works are works of iniquity, And the act of violence is in their hands. Their feet run to evil, And they make haste to shed innocent blood; Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; Wasting and destruction are in their paths. The way of peace they have not known, And there is no justice in their ways (59:6-8).

Wicked people are still with us. Motivated by violence and terror, they attempt to undermine the peace that others enjoy, thereby making the world a dangerous place.

In words we have come to love, C.B. McAfee described the only haven where true peace exists:

*There is a place of quiet rest, near to the heart of God;  
A place where sin cannot molest, near to the heart of God.  
O Jesus, blest Redeemer, sent from the heart of God,  
Hold us who wait before Thee, near to the heart of God.<sup>3</sup>*

## Know God, Know Peace

The world is shrinking. With so many different beliefs and practices, how can our many cultures ever hope to coexist peacefully? For some, the answer is pluralism. Pluralism is a “live and let live” approach that accepts all belief systems as equal: “You have your truth; I have mine.” This view contradicts biblical teaching that it was God’s eternal plan to reconcile people to Himself *through the cross of Christ* (Colossians 1:20).

In the first century it was the gospel that “preach[ed] peace through Jesus Christ” and broke down enmity between Jew and Gentile (Acts 10:36).

For He Himself [Jesus Christ] is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace (Ephesians 2:14-15).

Some religions want to eliminate those who disagree with them. Only the gospel can hope to bring people of all backgrounds together as one through a message of love.

## The Recipe

The peace of God requires a divine recipe. In this study we will search the Scriptures for the ingredients needed and the instructions provided in His Word. Each chapter will include questions to chew on and a passage to provide food for thought throughout the week. Our world is hungry for peace; the recipe is free, and God wants us to share it.

## Questions to Chew On

1. Discuss the implications of Ecclesiastes 1:9. Is this encouraging or discouraging?
2. What is the most difficult challenge you have ever faced? That your parents faced? That your children are likely to face?
3. Does suffering disprove the existence of God?
4. How did Isaiah account for violence in the world (Isaiah 59:6-8)?
5. Is “world peace” possible militarily?
6. What is the source of perfect peace according to Isaiah 26:3?
7. How can people of different backgrounds come together in perfect peace?
8. Read God’s invitation, extended in Isaiah 55:1-2, 12. List four points you can learn from this reading.
9. What is “pluralism”?
10. What was Isaiah’s recipe for perfect peace (26:3)?

### **FOOD** *for* **THOUGHT**

*“You will keep him in  
perfect peace, Whose mind  
is stayed on You”  
(Isaiah 26:3).*



