

CAN WE DO BETTER?

Galatians 5:22-23 (NLT) - ²² But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

INTRODUCTION TO OUR STUDY

This series of discussions are intended to cause us to look at ourselves in the mirror of God. The standard God sets is simple. It is himself.

According to **Genesis 1:26**, God created man (mankind) to be in his image and likeness. Everything following in scripture is to help us to become more like him. This is why Spiritual Growth is mandatory and not optional. It is through the process of Spiritual Growth that we move from our natural, carnal selves into our Spiritual selves. We move from carnal minds to Spiritual minds equipping us for our Spiritual home.

The Holy Spirit speaking through the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Church in Galatia helps us focus in on the characteristics of God. As we consider these characteristics, the question we want to consider is, "Can we do better?"

The answer to that question for all of us is a resounding YES. Not only is it yes, it is yes to every characteristic. No matter where we are on the ladder of discipleship, there is another rung for us to step up to. To be pleasing to God, we must always strive for the next level.

Prayerfully at the end of our study and discussions, each of us will identify ways in which we can do better and be more like God. The ultimate goal is to become one with Christ (**John 17:21**), and when anyone interacts with us, it will be just as if they encountered Jesus Christ himself. Amen.

I. PEACE

Philippians 4:7-9 (NLT) - Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

There are four definitions of "peace" on dictionary.com, and each deals with peace between parties, a lack of conflict. The Peace that the Holy Spirit gives is different. The Greek word "**Eirene**" deals with the state of one's mind. This is an internal peace, a person's mindset.

John 14:27 (ESV) - Peace I leave with you; **my peace** I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

1) Inner peace

- a) If "Eirene" deals with the state of mind, is Jesus saying in John 14, I'm leaving you a state of mind? Let's look at this passage in the NLT translation. (Note: this is why we should always use several translations when studying God's Word.)

John 14:27 (NLT) - "I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give **is a gift** the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid.

- b) Where and how do we get this peace?

1) Yes from Jesus Christ, but how does he give it to us?

- c) Can the world receive this peace?

- d) What does a person look like when they have inner-peace? What are some of the characteristics?

1) Patient, gentle, slow to anger, soft responses, always giving the benefit of doubt, long-suffering.

2) The loss of peace

- a) Maintaining the peace that Jesus gives is about keeping our focus. When we lose our focus on Christ, we began to experience inner-conflict.

Matthew 14:28-31 (NLT) - Then Peter called to him, "Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water." ²⁹ "Yes, come," Jesus said. So Peter went over the side of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. ³⁰ **But when he saw** the strong^[e] wind and the waves, he was terrified and began to sink. "Save me, Lord!" he shouted.³¹ Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him. "You have so little faith," Jesus said. **"Why did you doubt me?"**

- b) If we are honest, what happened to Peter often times happens to us. We stop focusing on Jesus, and we begin to focus on something else.
- c) What do we focus on that takes away our peace? **Money** – we focus on our bills, and creditors, especially when they are calling us and we don't have it. **Relationships** – we focus on the OTHER person. Sometimes we don't take it to God in prayer because we know how to fix it. We know how to make them straighten up and fly right! **Health** – bad news from a doctor concerning us, or someone we love. We become anxious not knowing if it is going to be all right.
- d) When what we desire isn't in line with the Word and will of God, we have a civil war going on inside our hearts. Listen to the Apostle Paul's conflict within himself in **Romans 7:14-25**. Here is part of the conclusion he came to.

Romans 7:21-25 (NLT) - I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. ²² I love God's law with all my heart. ²³ But there is another power^[e] within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. ²⁴ Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? ²⁵ **Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord.** So you see how it is: In my mind I really want to obey God's law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin.

If an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ struggled with inner-conflict like this, what should we expect?

e) Many other things can cause us to lose our focus on Christ and lose our peace. We must remind ourselves DAILY that our God is on his throne. He sees everything, and like a loving and caring parent, he's watching our situations closely. We can never lose sight of this fact if we are going to maintain the Peace that he promised us.

3) Leading others to peace

a) Leading others to peace entails leading them to the person that gives peace.

b) Sometimes we miss an opportunity to give God the glory and honor when we attribute his characteristics alive in us, like peace, to something other than him. Have we done this? Why?

John 12:42-43 (NLT) - Many people did believe in him, however, including some of the Jewish leaders. But they wouldn't admit it for fear that the Pharisees would expel them from the synagogue. ⁴³ For they loved human praise more than the praise of God.

c) Do we seek acceptance into our various groups more than we desire to please God?

d) Notice in the text that God gives praise to us. The Greek word here is "doxa," and one definition is "opinion." So the Pharisees valued the opinion of men more than the opinion of God. Whose opinion matters most to us???

e) If we are going to share the peace that Jesus gives us, we must give him the credit. We must be willing to introduce him to someone.

f) We don't need to know everything about Jesus called Christ to introduce him to someone. We only need to be ready and willing to share how our friendship with Jesus brought us a Peace that passes all understanding.

g) If the fruit of God's Holy Spirit (Peace) is alive in us, eventually someone is going to ask, "How can you remain calm, or Why aren't you upset," or something like this. That is our opportunity to speak a word for Jesus. We cannot be afraid to say it is the Spirit of Christ in me. We don't have to speak a sermon, or try to get a bible class at that moment. We only need to give them the true and real reason for our response or lack of one.