

ISAIAH 52:7



A Themed Devotional Series on Peace

For CVF Students

By CVM Staff

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This series of devotionals was created around CVM's annual theme of "Peace" from Isaiah 52:7. We hope you enjoy getting to know the CVM staff better while learning to find peace in Christ. We encourage you to prayerfully journey through the study together as a CVF group with your Bibles open, looking up the *scriptures* (in italics) and discussing the **questions** (in bold). The devotionals are really just intended to be a jumping off point for your group to go deep in conversation about God's Word.



Peace

Bringing His Peace to a Hurting World

“How lovely on the mountains are the feet of Him who brings good news, who announces peace, and brings good news of happiness, who announces salvation, and says to Zion, “Your God reigns!””

-Isaiah 52:7

Think back to who are “the feet of those,” who have been a part of God’s work to bring peace, happiness, salvation, and a heart of worship to you. I can only imagine the images that come to your mind. My mind quickly fills with so many who have been faithful to God and His work in my life. How about you? Maybe it was your mother or father who faithfully led you to know the peace of God. Maybe it was a Sunday school teacher, a pastor, or a ministry worker at a camp. For many, it was a friend who reached out with His love and message of hope. For me, I clearly remember as a seven year-old boy, accepting Christ as my Savior at a Christian camp. However, I am not able to recall a specific person who gave the call to respond to the good news of Jesus Christ. Yet I know that at that moment I was lost and needing a Savior, and that God had brought me the message of good news, peace, happiness, salvation, and worship!

- **How about you? Do your memories of these special people stir your heart to worship, to say to the body of Christ, “Your God reigns!”**

As we take time to remember and reflect on these special servants of God, we will be brought to a place of thanksgiving and praise! They clearly demonstrated His love for us and helped us to find good news and salvation. From that foundation, these same people and others have been instruments in His process of transformation in our lives. We should have this foundation. We, in turn, should also understand our calling to be “the feet of those” who in turn serve to His glory and kingdom purposes in the lives of others.

Where did you discover His good news? It is really important to know this. For some it is a dramatic memory of an event, a particular pastor or message. For others, it is a sense of something they gradually understood and accepted. Our hearts should be stirred as we hear these words; good news, salvation. Are you prepared to bring that good news to others?

What do people see when you come to them? Does your presence announce peace? What does the word peace mean to you? For me, the first thought of peace is that it is the absence of conflict. But the word peace, or shalom, used here in Isaiah means so much more. Here is a definition to consider:

“Shalom means completeness, wholeness, health, peace, welfare, safety soundness, tranquility, prosperity, perfectness, fullness, rest, harmony, the absence of agitation or discord.”

(<http://www.therefinersfire.org>)

As we find good news, accept Christ, allow His Spirit to live in us, we begin to experience and be transformed into the place of shalom. What an incredible calling! What a special vision for where we are headed! What a wonderful Savior who gave His life that we find forgiveness and renewal each time we fail in the journey. Your journey is the message. Do you seek to find

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Bringing His Peace to a Hurting World

others whose journey is a testimony or encouragement to you in yours? Some just seem to ooze good news, happiness, salvation, and shalom. Others seem to have to work harder at it.

You are investing a significant part of your life in the journey to serve in the profession of veterinary medicine. As you vision what that will look like do you frame that vision in the concept of shalom? This is our calling. We start that journey by watching others walk that journey. We learn from them. We live our lives today with a purpose to be instruments of His message of good news, but do so with a purpose to announce His shalom in our life example and in our words. We are disciples of Christ, cleverly disguised as veterinary professionals. We are those who come with “beautiful feet, announcing, good news, happiness, salvation, shalom, and praise to His glory!

- Share the story of someone whose life was/is a reflection of shalom to you?
- Do you sense a calling for sharing the good news, being a minister of shalom, bringing happiness and announcing salvation?
- How can you encourage one another on this journey?



Dr. Kit Flowers is a 1978 graduate of Colorado State University. He served as a veterinarian in the US Air Force and in private practice in Panama City, FL before going with his wife Jan and daughters Molly and Missy to serve with CVM in Kenya from 1985-1990. Kit then returned to Seattle to serve in the CVM home office and has served as the Executive Director since 1993. He and Jan are the proud grandparents to seven grandchildren and are blessed to walk their calling out in the CVM family.

Peace

Peace in Rest

Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.

Unless the Lord guards the city, the guard keeps watch in vain.

It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest,

eating the bread of anxious toil;

for he provides for his beloved during sleep.

-Psalm 127:1-2 (NRSV)

“Daddy! Daaaaaddy! Daaaaaaaaaddy! DaDDY! DADDY!”

I slink into my daughter’s room, twenty minutes after my wife and I gently sang her lullaby and closed her door. The lullaby didn’t work. “What do you need, dear?” I ask her.

“Ummm... I’m thirsty.”

“You had a drink just before bed. You need to go to sleep.”

“Oh, okay. Goodnight Daddy.”

I can tell she’s determined to avoid sleep, so I brace myself for a barrage of excuses. And sure enough, five minutes later I hear, “Daddy! . . . I need to use the restroom.”

I begin to ponder the fact that children are experts at putting off rest, and the way they do it is one excuse at a time: “Daaaddy! I had a scary dream.” “Daaaaaddy! I have toots in my belly.”

“Daaaaaaddy! I’m not sleepy.”

But we do the same thing, don’t we? Too many times have I tried to persuade myself that I’ll rest after work. I’ll rest after supper. I’ll rest after the kid goes to bed. I’ll rest after this television episode. I’ll rest after I do a bit more work. I’ll rest after I read another chapter. I’m late to bed, but I’ll get some extra rest tomorrow.

Resting is a hard practice. The idols of our society—work, exertion, self-dependence—persuade us that our productivity will free us from the world. “Lazy” and “freeloader” are curses we call down upon the heads of our enemies, and we dare not rest for fear that others will see us as weak or irresponsible.

All of this is a big fat lie.

Scripture shows us again and again that rest reflects—and fosters—an abiding faith in God. In Exodus 18, Moses explained to his father-in-law his great godly responsibility as judge in every dispute among his people. I suspect Moses was both shocked and relieved when his father-in-law replied, “*What you are doing is not good. You will surely wear yourself out, both you and these people with you. For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone*” (NRSV).

Jesus, too, encouraged his apostles to “*Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while*” (Mark 6:31 NRSV). He extends the invitation to us: “*Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light*” (Matthew 11:28-30 NRSV).

Rest is a physical and mental necessity. Even more than that, it is a spiritual necessity, an area in which my faith in God guides my daily life. Sometimes God calls me to participate in his

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Peace in Rest

work, but he calls me to trust his love and power at all times. By making time to rest from work and play, I acknowledge my helplessness and put into practice my belief that God is sovereign and good.

Resting also holds a huge bonus for relationships: It facilitates communion. My best communication with my wife does not happen when we're working, cooking, shopping, or entertaining our daughter. Our deepest and most honest discussions happen when we are at rest, when we are away from busyness and distractions. Likewise, my best times of reflection and of conveying my thoughts and feelings to God occur when I step out of my blur of activity and choose to rest. And most of the time that is also when I perceive God speaking to me.

I encourage you to evaluate your habit of rest (or your habit of avoiding it). Let me offer five questions for reflection:

- How can you fight the lie that unceasing productivity creates freedom?
- Consider that busy people encourage busyness, and restful people encourage restfulness. Which sort of people are around you, and how do you affect others?
- Understand that life has seasons of busyness, but be honest with yourself: Are you simply having a busy season or have you cultivated a busy lifestyle?
- How can you plan regular times of rest and then plan your activities around those? When planning, beware of busy activities disguised as restful ones. Rest needs to be rest, and it needs to allow room for spontaneity.
- What can you do to make God the center of your rest, and rest with faith in his power and goodness?

Remember the words of Jesus: *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid"* (John 14:27 NRSV). Rest in the peace of God.



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Peace

Peace of Christ

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” –John 14:27

What does it mean to have peace, or to live in times of peace? There are many entries in the dictionary to define peace. Tranquility, quiet, freedom from unrest, lack of war, a state of security, and the list goes on.

My family is currently preparing to move to South Sudan to serve the people of the town of Torit. I am faced with the reality that the people of South Sudan have not had much opportunity to experience peace. The country has been in war of one type or another since 1950. While there have been short periods of “quiet”, those are rare. And currently, South Sudan is deeply embroiled in a civil war. How can believers have peace when our lives are in turmoil?

It seems too trite to simply say, “The peace of Christ should be enough.” Yet, it is true. If we calm our hearts and listen to His words, we can find that peace and live victoriously in it. Jesus clearly states in verse 27 that our hearts should not be troubled, and we should not be afraid.

So how can we really do that? How can we not be afraid when the world around us is crumbling? Maybe your parents are getting a divorce, you are failing one of your classes at school, or perhaps you have a loved one whose health is declining, is it possible to have peace, especially in situations that are completely out of our control?

Now, I do not think this is necessarily a simple task. Like many spiritual disciplines, seeking the peace of the Lord takes practice. We will not always succeed, but we need to continue to seek His peace. For myself, I found comfort in the verses that came right before 14:27.

“All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” –John 14:25-26

God has given us the Holy Spirit, who certainly enables us to have peace. Our advocate, the Holy Spirit is there to remind us of what Jesus has taught or said. Have you been in a situation where you weren't sure what to think or do, and all of the sudden a verse from scripture pops into your mind with the answer? That has happened to me numerous times, and I like to give thanks to the Holy Spirit at those times for reminding me.

You may be familiar with the hymn “It is well, with my soul”, written by Horatio Spafford. Once I learned the story behind the hymn, it came to mean even more to me. Horatio's wife Anna and their four children were on a ship to Europe from America. The ship tragically collided with another boat, and all four children perished. Anna survived and telegraphed Horatio who boarded a ship to go and join her. When he was in the area where the accident occurred, the captain notified him where his children died. It was during this boat journey that Horatio wrote the words:

*When peace like a river attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll,*

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Peace of Christ

*Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
It is well; it is well with my soul.*

Surely, in tragic times, it is challenging to feel at peace. Yet we need to draw on the grace and love of the Holy Spirit. We can focus on the truth of scripture, that teaches us about our Heavenly Father who lavishes love upon us, and yes, in the midst of hard times, we can allow His Holy Spirit to comfort us.

As I watch my South Sudanese brothers and sisters, I learn about living in peace despite hardships. When there is war around them, they pray. When there is hunger, they pray. When they lose loved ones, they grieve and pray. Let us remember to cling to our Lord and PRAY when we are lacking peace.

So, the next time you are finding yourself anxious, worried, or concerned, call on Jesus, the Prince of Peace, and the Holy Spirit, our advocate. Remember that Jesus does not give to us like the world does- He gives to us freely and for eternity. He gave up His life for us, so that peace between God and us was restored. His blood paid the price for our sin, His resurrection assures us that we will have eternal life with our Father in Heaven. God's love is unconditional. The only requirement to receive His love, grace, and peace? Receive the free gift of Christ.

- When we talk about peace, what is the first thought that comes into your mind? Do you feel at peace in your life right now? If not, what is the cause for your lack of peace?
- What is something in your life that gives you anxiety? Whatever it is, pray now and give this anxiety over to the Lord. Ask Him to teach you to find peace in the midst of your anxiety.
- If you know someone in your life who needs to know the peace of Christ, pray for him or her right now. Let them know that you prayed for them, and ask if there is anything you can do to help.



Dr. Gina Wintermantel serves our CVM Affiliate (international) veterinarians who have a desire to share the love of Christ through veterinary medicine. She graduated from the University of Illinois, and has been a small animal practitioner in Wisconsin and Minnesota. The Wintermantel family (husband Steve, and children Hazel, Abraham, Josiah and Cyrus) is currently raising support through CVM to serve long-term in South Sudan.

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Peace

Anxious for Nothing

What is one of the most significant gifts you've received?

When I was eight years-old my parents gave me a Bible for Christmas. I'd had a number of illustrated children's versions, but this was my first full length grown-up Bible. It was to be my primary Bible for a couple decades until they gifted me with a bilingual version for my move to Bolivia. That first Bible went through a number of covers, highlighters, and phases of life with me. But one of my clearest memories with it was of a time my mom used it to encourage me.

I can't remember the specifics of when or what struggle I was going through, but one day in middle school, I found that she had placed an index card with Philippians 4:6-7 written on it:

"Be anxious for nothing, but in all things through prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

That continues to be one of the scriptures deep in my heart to this day. I refer to it more often than probably any other passage of the Bible. *"Be anxious for nothing..."* I can whisper as a breath prayer and His peace returns to me.

As I write this, much of my current stress comes from our youngest son Paul's GI tract. At less than three-months old, he's already on a myriad of drugs you'll soon be prescribing to your own patients. And as we navigate tests, treatments, and referrals in the human medical field I often wish I could have him taken care of by veterinarians, because there surely wouldn't be a 5-week wait time to see a specialist!

If you've watched a family member or pet suffer, you understand how difficult it is. I so wish I could take the pain for him. But I can't. However, Jesus offers to carry our burdens for us, *"Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you."* – Peter 5:7

By the time you read this, we'll likely have figured out a combination of lifestyle changes and therapies to relieve Paul's discomfort, or he'll have outgrown his tummy troubles on his own. Isn't that how most of our stressors are? Although temporary, in the moment, peace is so hard to find. Our worries and concerns can become all-consuming, if we try to bear them ourselves. That's why God asks us to give them to Him.

What anxieties are you holding onto that you could make known to God and trade in for His beautiful peace that will guard your heart and your mind in Christ Jesus?

- Is it a test that's coming up that feels like it could make or break your grade? *Be anxious for nothing...*
- Maybe not just any test, but *the* test; is NAVLE making you more than a little nervous? *...in all things through prayer and supplication...*

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Anxious for Nothing

- Do you have a loved one suffering physically or emotionally? ...***with thanksgiving...***
- Are you fretting over your future plans for an internship, a job, or a specialty? ...***let your requests be made known to God...***
- Is there a relationship that's dragging you down, but you don't know how to restore it? ...***and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding...***
- Is the weight of it all consuming you so much that you can't find peace? ...***will guard your heart and your mind in Christ Jesus.***

Release it to Him. Give Christ your concerns and feel the weight lifted off your shoulder to not bear your burdens alone. And feel His peace wrap you up like a warm hug.

Remember, if you're this stressed about these issues, even with Christ in your life, think about how your classmates, who share many of these trials, must feel if they don't have confidence in Him. "*How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him who proclaims peace.*" Seek Christ for His peace in every situation, and share His peace with those around you. There are so many things that cause dissensions in our world today, let us be peacemakers, let us proclaim peace, a peace that surpasses all understanding.

- Share a burden with the group, let them help carry it for you.
- Who might God have for you to proclaim His peace to?
- Has anyone ever given you a verse just at the right time? If not, you can borrow mine. Scripture can be such a powerful salve for the soul.

If you have time left before or after your discussion, read all of Philippians 4 together and carry its wisdom with you as you return to class or the clinic.



Dr. Lauren Charles is a graduate of Auburn, CVM, class of 2005. She grew up in Louisville, KY and returned there to practice in a small animal clinic for 3 years. Then for a year, she practiced in Baltimore working for Banfield, while planting a church. After a number of short-term mission trips to Latin American countries she lived and served in Bolivia from 2009-2012, working primarily with veterinary students. Lauren adopted her daughter Angie, and her dog Ruby in Bolivia, and then married her husband Jon. They now also have two sons, Isaiah and Paul. She serves as CVM's Southeast U.S. Region Rep. Email: lcharles@cvmusa.org

Peace

Shalom

שלום

When I was an undergrad at Purdue, I elected to take some courses alongside my Jewish roommate. I took several biblical studies courses that helped me read and interpret scriptures in Hebrew. I also took Hebrew language classes. Along the way, I became enamored with the word “shalom”. I find it charming that in Modern Hebrew, the same word for “hello” and “goodbye” also means “peace”. What a beautiful sentiment to wish the people you meet.

Our theme verse Isaiah 52:7 reads: *“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, “Your God reigns!”*

This passage comes to us in the context of the deliverance of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon and back to their rightful home in Jerusalem. When we think of “peace” in English, from the Latin *pax* or Anglo-French *pes*, it means freedom from civil disorder, reconciliation, tranquility, or a treaty to uphold those things.

Though English translations insert the word “peace” into this passage, the meaning holds considerably more depth when you consider the original Hebrew, *shalom*. It comes from a root word meaning “wholeness, completion, wellness, or perfection.” **Knowing that definition, read Isaiah 52:7 again. How does it change the way you see this verse?**

When Isaiah is referring to the beautiful feet of those who proclaim *wholeness*, bring good tidings, and proclaim salvation... this is where the rubber meets the road in the beautiful literary arc of the Bible.

- Who can bring us, the broken humans here on earth, a sense of wholeness? God alone.
- How will that sense of wholeness come to us? **Read Isaiah 9:6-7**

In God’s kingdom, shalom is part of the package. As described in Isaiah 32:17, *“The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever.”* Thanks to God’s grace and his desire to have a relationship with us, everyone has the privilege of this sense of wholeness, forever. All we need to do is accept the Prince of Peace, Jesus, as the only way to obtain that restored relationship with God. You can read about him in **Isaiah 53**, now or in your own time.

As Christ-followers, how do we bring peace? It’s easy to be peaceful when you are experiencing success. But I’ve learned the most critical peacemaking moments are cultivated in the midst of difficulty.

My daughter Hannah is a laid-back kid, but I can attest to the fact that toddlers are brimming with emotions. They are reactive about circumstances that seem meaningless to us. Meltdowns occur with innocuous food events. She points at the “offensive” food, cries, and sometimes screams. Often, I am caught by surprise. How do I respond to a person that may as well be

Peace *Shalom*

looking at a pit of lava, when all I see is a piece of chicken? My favorite parenting strategy reminds me to “stay unruffled”. Faced with a screaming toddler, I seek to understand that her emotions are very real *for her* and I should remain calm in the midst of a tantrum. When I actively understand her feelings and remain peaceful in my response, the tantrums end sooner. My husband Maurice uses similar tactics for his job in the political realm.

The sense of internal peace in the midst of chaos harkens back to the biblical uses of shalom. Believing in Christ *does not* mean that we won't face difficulties. It *does* mean that we have the peace of God dwelling within us, and we can face difficulty with that perspective. We can be a force for shalom in this chaotic world, and point others toward the hope we have in Christ.

Paul says in Romans 10:14-15, “*How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”*”

I often wonder how nonbelievers make it through times of trial. Without the foundation of God, I'm not sure what hope I would have. To combat that emptiness, the Holy Spirit can share peace through us: “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*” (Gal. 5:22-23).

- **What are some practical ways you have seen the peace of the Holy Spirit work through various relationships in your life?**
- **What can you do this week to be intentional in expressing shalom when you aren't feeling it? How can you be a light in the darkness, instead of adding to it?**

As a precept study reads, “For NT believers, this shalom is found only in Christ, Who makes our lives whole, our relationships harmonized, and allows us to experience the spiritual wholeness that God intended for human beings in creation. Believers have been “re-created” as it were. God's supernatural peace (the fruit of His Spirit indwelling us) can now provide freedom from disquieting or oppressive thoughts or emotions. Jesus did not end all human wars, but He does make it possible to end the war between God and man. His death is our peace, our means of reconciliation with God, Who we can now call “Abba, Father”.

Thanks be to the Lord who makes us whole. To all of you reading this, shalom.



Dr. Melissa Cheeks seeks to do God's work through her CVM ministry, “Threads of Love” (Col 3:12, 14), joyfully serving students and vet professionals in nine states. She grew up in Illinois, was at Purdue for eight years, and graduated with a DVM in 2011. She now lives in Madison, Wisconsin with husband Maurice and daughter Hannah. Follow her ministry: www.facebook.com/cvmthreadsoflove or best of all, grab a cup of coffee with her if you are passing through Wisconsin. Email: mcheeks@cvmusa.org

Peace

Peace 24/7

The other day, I was in Denver to do a conference for CVM and I touched base with a vet friend to see about going to church with her and her husband. When I called, she said they were recovering from the flu and in the conversation, she mentioned that this time of illness had made her think about her prayer life. She said that she wondered if sickness sometimes is a wake-up call to remind us to give thanks for good health. 1 Thessalonians 5 says to pray continually and give thanks in ALL circumstances -even more I would think in good times.

When prayer life is mentioned, most of us think about laying at the feet of Jesus when we are going thru trials. You have probably spent a lot of knee time about tests in school. We do that with sickness, relationship problems, family dynamics, finances and the list goes on. The time we spend with a bowed head for help would peg the meter pretty high.

During the periods of calm/peace, do we reach a state of complacency in our lives? It made me realize that I had become the person asking for my pot to be filled with good so the bad would float out. Instead of making it about what God could do for me, I needed to fill God's ears with praises for His many blessings. I was becoming the palm up guy waiting for God to fill me, instead of me being humbled how God would think that I was worthy of all the good things he does for me each day. *"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father."* s-James 1:17

The more we are vertical in our prayers for the good things in life, the more our minds gather those and puts them in a file to readily retrieve them when we are experiencing trials and need to know how much God has loved us and walked thru every previous trial. It is our responsibility to build that repository of God-deliverance moments in our lives. They need to be secured in our minds so we can recall them later during the trials.

As I think back over my last 35 years since I graduated, I have been blessed with lots of mountain top and valley experiences, all of which have allowed me to grow closer to Christ. Shamefully, I have to admit that the drawing near to Him was done more in the valleys as I cried out to him for peace. Replays of my life are not something that I really want to look at as I was more for me in my prayers, than a child of the most high praising God through all the good times. I looked at the good times as something I had earned or deserved. Sure, I thanked him for my food, my family, getting into vet school and many other things, but did I carry it into every day? In the replay of life, I know there are big gaps where I wasn't praising God daily for work, staff, clients, finances, health, our home, family, luxuries, etc.

Peace is a state of mind. I think we all know the drama-folks and those that can stay calm in the midst of a hurricane. We can all think of people in the Bible that stayed calm in storms, Daniel in the lions' den, Joseph in jail, Paul etc. In prison, Paul was singing hymns. He knew who was walking with him. Deuteronomy 31:6, says *"the Lord goes with you and will never leave or forsake you."* Paul says in Hebrews 13:5 that *"God will never leave us or forsake us."* If we believe that God has our eternity in Heaven secure through His promises, then why do we think He wouldn't be here for us on earth when He has made that promise? That gives me peace.

Peace

Peace 24/7

A while back, as I was dealing with some stresses in my life God directed me back to a verse. The verse was Luke 22:31-32, "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." This time my heart was right to see that God knows all and Christ is there with us interceding with the Father on our behalf. Jesus is praying for me when the evil one attacks me. He wants us to use the tough times to help us and others.

Build peace in your life when you are feeling the pressures:

1. Recall from the repository of good things God has done for you in past trials.
2. God knows and has a purpose. -Luke 22:31-32
3. He will never leave you. -Deuteronomy 31:6, Hebrews 13:5
4. Jesus has prayed and is interceding for you. -John 17:6-26
5. You have the power to defeat Satan. -James 4:7-8
6. You have been given the equipment for battle. -Ephesians 6:10-17
7. Ask people to pray with you. -Ephesians 6:18-20

I don't know how people that don't have Christ in their lives can find peace, but I do know that my peace comes from within. Since He gives me power when the Holy Spirit came upon me, I can take any situation and use it to glorify him by knowing that He is in my corner praying and cheering me on.

- What percent of your prayer life is giving thanks versus asking for something? Why is that?
- Can you think of one time that you can separate what God did for you and what you accomplished on your own?
- How does praising God play into having peace in your life?
- What verses speak peace into your life? What promise speaks peace into your life?
- When you are walking with someone else needing peace, how are you going to use God's word with them?

Thank you Lord, for Your promises! His promises give me peace 24/7.



Dr. Glenn Gaines is the South Central Region Representative for Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Louisiana. He is a 1982 Texas A&M graduate that practiced mixed practice in Brenham, TX for 25 years. He and his wife Kathy have done many short-term trips and worked with CVM in Mongolia from 2007-2010. Email: ggaines@cvmusa.org

Peace

“Peace: What’s That and How Can I Get It?”

I am not a veterinarian. However, I’ve worked alongside them at CVM for the past 5 years and have seen the pressures, stresses, and struggles that both vet students and vets share. And I like to think that each one of us, in the veterinary profession or not, can live our lives controlled by those pressures, stresses, and struggles if we don’t know how to manage them.

I’m a born-again Christian. I’m a Pastor’s wife. I’m a mother of 4. I’m the US Ministry Director at CVM. Among other things, I’m an unofficial mentor, counselor, prayer partner, teacher, worship leader, ministry leader, and cheerleader. My normal week consists of usually only 1 night that doesn’t have church service or event, a sports practice or game, or an opportunity to mentor or counsel others. And though I feel like I’m always running to the next event, I wouldn’t change a thing. I’m exactly where I want to be. Why? Because I’m passionate about the people I’m running with and running to. And I am a pursuer of peace.

I’ve learned something over the years about managing my time, efforts, and pressures. I can either allow those stresses to run me – which leaves me drained, depressed, and feeling inadequate. Or I can give them over to the Lord, who can be my peace even in the midst of the storms that come my way.

What is PEACE? One of the answers I found was: To be complete or whole... In this world that is vying for our attention all the time, where daily living can rob us of joy and contentment and where our minds can be overwhelmed by the struggles of life, it’s hard to comprehend that we can be complete or whole. I’m here to tell you that YOU CAN!

Philippians 4:6-7 says, *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, Which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*

“True peace does not come as a result of eliminating sorrows and disappointments. It comes as a result of one thing, and that is an intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. He is where anxiety ends and peace begins,” -Charles F. Stanley.

That’s why we need to prepare ourselves *BEFORE* we get to the storm. How do we do that? Scripture gives us the key. Throughout the Bible, it’s made clear that Jesus came to a sinful humankind, desiring to enter into a relationship with us. He established a covenant of peace with us, which was sealed with His presence.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.” –John 3:16-17

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“I have told you these things so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble but take care! I have overcome the world.” – John 16:33

Peace on the outside comes from knowing God on the inside! God created a way to have relationship with him through his Son, Jesus. When we are in a right relationship with Him, we are promised His peace. *“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” -Romans 5:1*

Our Theme verse for this year is Isaiah 52:7, *“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim PEACE, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, “Your God reigns!”*

It’s hard to proclaim what we don’t have, right? So, my encouragement to you today is to pursue the Lord... pursue a relationship with Him and through that, He will transform your life and bring you PEACE, making you complete or whole. Be passionate in all you do and who you are doing it for.

- If you don’t have a personal relationship with Jesus, that’s where you start. Ask others in your group what that means exactly to them.
- Read Isaiah 26:3. It says that God will keep us in “perfect peace” if our minds are “stayed” on Him. What does that mean? Our minds focusing on our problems or our minds centered on Him?
- Peace is experienced as a result of prayer. What does a good prayer life look like?
- Do you live in peace with others? If not, what ways can you change your perspective to do so?



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Peace

The Fullness of Peace

As someone who struggles with performance anxiety, I have a lot of restlessness and self-criticisms that dictate my life. There have been fleeting moments where I have felt at ease and experienced God's peace beyond all understanding, but it has never been constant. Instead, I often find myself acting out of the impulse of my heart to **do** things to secure my life rather than rest in what Christ has done for me.

I default to allowing my anxiety to motivate me. I'm afraid being at peace would cause me to be lackadaisical and complacent. I don't want to be defined as "lazy" and miss impending deadlines. I want to successfully complete the work that is put in front of me. The fear of not finishing is a motivator. However, this fear is consuming. It makes me anxious and in turn insecure and self-righteous and far, far away from peace.

Does this happen to you? Do you also find yourself spiraling in a vicious cycle of trying to have more peace and confidence but yet being consumed with "what ifs" and anxiety to finish your work before a deadline approaches? Or an exam. Yet, the reality is that studying needs to get done and there are always more tests. You have committed to completing your education in order to become a veterinarian and deadlines come along with this commitment, but you also know that you can't operate in fear all of the time. Nonetheless, Jesus came to bring peace to this world, even in a world full of deadlines, consequences, and restlessness. Jesus said:

*"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives.
Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." –John 14:27*

I find that part of my struggle of receiving peace is how I still constantly experience anxiety. I put an expectation on God. I challenge Him saying, "If Jesus gives peace, then I should constantly feel His peace and all of my troubles will instantly go away." Yet this battle is ongoing, and instead Jesus has had to change my perspective on how to receive His peace.

Notice how the passage says, "*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives.*"

Through this ongoing battle with anxiety, Jesus has **given** me peace out of His act of service to die on the cross for me. He **left** peace here in this world for me to access and use. The result is not that Jesus will instantly take all of my troubles away, but that His act for my salvation and access to the Holy Spirit here on earth is for me to be sustained and to receive His strength to handle those troubles.

Jesus also asks to "*not let your hearts be troubled and [to not] be afraid.*"

This is a prompt to work with Jesus instead of operating solely on your own in response to fear. It isn't a commandment to handle this world in the absence of fear but in the presence with Jesus in the midst of deadlines, potential consequences, and restlessness. We need to continue to be reminded through our struggles to rest in the fullness of peace that Jesus has given and left with us here on earth. Let us pray and receive the presence Jesus (Immanuel – God with us) in our fear and rest in His peace.

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Prayer: *Lord, I cannot be a part this world without you. Teach me your way Jesus that I may rely on your Spirit in this world even when it doesn't produce peace instantaneously and constantly. I look to You for strength instead of my own efforts. I remember what you have done on the cross for me. Your act of love sustains me. Thank you. In Jesus Name, Amen.*

- What happens when you choose to operate your life succumbed to busyness and deadlines without Jesus?
- How often do you expect Jesus to instantly give you peace or take your troubles away?
- What are ways you can choose to remember Immanuel (God with us)?

Take the time to reflect, pray, and remember what Jesus has done for you and to ask the Spirit to lead you in the daily grind.



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Peace

Quietness and Confidence Forever

It was a number of years ago that I was discussing with a friend; whether or not I should quit my first veterinary job. This was a big choice. It could mean moving countries (again), and restructuring my whole life. She asked me one question. "Do you feel at peace with that decision?"

I remember that question very distinctly. I processed it in my mind over and over - really struggling with what she meant by "peace". I translated the word "peace" to mean; do I feel okay about the decision or does it cause me worry, anxiety or uncertainty. To be honest - the whole process made me ponder if I had ever felt peace about any decision I had made, as decisions do not always come to me easy.

That thought of peace, in decision-making, has remained with me over the years. If I am honest though; I cannot say I made a choice based on a feeling of "peace". What I have realized is that my friend was actually asking me a different question. Do I believe that God has led me to that decision and if so, then do I feel His peace?

When we look to the infallible Word of God there are many references to peace. There are two references in particular that help me understand the idea of "peace".

The first is Isaiah 32:17-18:

"The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever. My people will live in peaceful places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest. "

God tells us that the fruit of righteousness is peace. That is, being right with God or living a life pleasing to God will provide us peace. Wow! He then says "quietness and confidence forever". That "quietness" to me, is when there is no internal war (inside my head) happening over a decision. "Confidence forever" is knowing that our decisions are right because we are right with God - and know that He is in wise and perfect control.

The second verses are Isaiah 11:6-9:

"The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

Though this verse does not mention peace, it illustrates it very well. It draws a picture of the ultimate peace that we as believers will experience someday forever. Yet this promise is still relevant to the now.

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Quietness and Confidence Forever

There are often two sides to a decision or life situation. It can feel like internal war as those two sides oppose each other in our minds. Yet, through God's leading in our lives, that turmoil can become as calm as a leopard lying beside a goat. Calm.

☐ Quiet. Peaceful. That moment is when you know you know that the decision is right. Not because you've found peace - but because you've found God's leading, which creates peace.

The battle is finished, His peace is present when you are living for Him, directed by Him.

- What stands out to you when you read the verses in Isaiah?
- How have you experienced God's leading when making a decision?
- How do you reflect God's peace to others in regards to decision making?



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Peace

Pieces of Peace

Christ's Peace is unique

"Peace I leave with you; ... Not as the world gives" John 14:27

A special Tibetan friend of mine once asked me – "Do you have Peace?" He was reflecting on the events of his life and how his worldview dealt with crises. His life had never been very easy – part of the consequences of where he called home. We had shared many experiences together in the remotes of China and I had the privilege to walk with him through some major traumas and he with me. It was apparent that he wanted to know if there was something deeper in me than what I could create on my own. I contemplated his question for some seconds asking God to examine my heart for an honest & transparent answer. I then stated to my friend "You know me well. We have spent years working together. You have seen me in many different situations even those where I might not have been labeled a man of peace. But I can truly say that I have an overriding peace that resides within." My friend looked at me and said that he believed what I said to be true and acknowledged he had seen the same in other Christians he knew. He then confided that he had not seen such a peace in any other group of people. He also stated that it is this peace that makes him believe Christ is real and open to pursuing a relationship with Jesus!

Christ's Peace creates chaos (Externally)

"I have not come to bring peace, but a sword." - Matthew 10:34

His name is Devilal – it means red god and was a name given in hope of placating the local spirits. Devilal lives in the remotes of western Nepal and comes from a heritage of witch doctors, shamans, and folk Hinduism. His life, like that of his ancestors and neighbors, was consumed with appeasing the local deities. But one day the unimaginable happened, Devilal met Jesus and was wonderfully saved. His life was so radically changed that his wife, Chandra Cali wanted to know this God too. His neighbors were not so inclined as they were too afraid of the consequences from upsetting the spiritual realms of their village. It was not long before they started threatening Devilal with his life. In their view he had one of two choices –return to worshiping the local gods or leave the village. Devilal did neither. Though he had no desire to be martyred, he stayed. Trusting in God's sovereignty & love, he was able to bless those who persecuted him. His life was far from easy, persecution poured down on him & his family, but an inner peace confirmed his hope in Christ. His neighbors realized he had no fear; completely opposite of what consumed them. God blessed this story with the miraculous; after some years, many in his village & the surrounding villages discovered what Devilal & his family had found!

Christ's Peace creates Chaos (Internally)

"This child ... will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed." -Luke 2:34, 35

Simeon was an old man filled with great expectancy. He believed God wanted him to wait at the Jewish Temple so he could see God's Salvation before he died. When he saw the infant Jesus he knew – God's promise was fulfilled! The Holy Spirit then moved him to make some amazing proclamations. He foretold how Jesus would expose the thoughts & attitudes of many hearts – even ours! For some, this unveiling would lead to life, for others to death; and for everyone it would lead to a time of internal chaos while making the decision between Christ (life) or Self (death). Not exactly a time of peace. About 30 years ago, Jesus finally got my undivided attention. I am sure for all the years before He had been knocking at my heart's door but I was too noisy inside to hear Him. On that special day, He was so in my face (heart) that I could not

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Pieces of Peace

ignore His presence any longer. He exposed the depths of my heart and it wasn't exactly something to celebrate. Where there is unforgiven sin chaos reigns. I remember coming to a point of decision – who was I going to follow? Jesus was offering me peace. Though by the standards of the world I had a bright future, Jesus showed me how empty my future really was. By God's grace & faith, I was able to give Him my chaos and start a journey that I have never looked back on. And yes, becoming a Christian brought a whole new set of chaos to my life (like Devial) but Christ's peace allowed me to not just survive but be a blessing – something called LOVE!

- If my Tibetan friend were to ask you, “Do you have peace?” What would be your answer?
- Do you remember a time without Christ's Peace? What are the differences in your life?
- What were the circumstances like when Christ's Peace entered into your life?

External Chaos

- Has your decision to follow Christ ever brought about turmoil from the outside?
- Have you experienced a falling away from those who are/were closest to you?
- If so, what does that turmoil or those relationships look like today?
- Have you been able to hold onto His peace through the chaos?

Internal chaos (may not be easy to answer in a group though I hope & pray you can)

- How is your internal peace today?
- Is there anything in the way of having all of Christ's peace for you? What is it? What can you do about it?

Please be in prayer for one another. As possible, encourage one another by allowing Christ's peace in you to pour love on others.

Here is a promise worth knowing:

“I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” -John 16:33



Drs. Monty & Shelley Mathis are WSU veterinary graduates ('86 & '88 respectively). They both came to Christ one year after graduating. WSU's CVF group played an important role in their coming to Jesus. After having their own practice for 10 years Monty & Shelley plus their daughter & son moved to the Himalayas with CVM. 15 years later they returned to the US where Monty is CVM's Mission's Coordinator and Shelley has returned to clinical medicine. Interested in long term missions ☺ – drop Monty an email: mmathis@cvmusa.org