



How to Have a
Peaceful Heart

Seven Simple Secrets

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*Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture
references are taken from the New King
James Version of the Bible.*



There are three things I know for sure about peace. First, everybody wants it. Second, God has provided it. Third, few people ever find it.

The word “peace” occurs approximately 400 times in the Bible. In the Old Testament, the word for peace is the Hebrew word “**shalom.**” The basic meaning of that word is “wholeness.” In Israel today, Jewish people greet one another with that word. It is their way of saying, “May you be completely whole in every area of your life. May you experience wholeness spiritually, physically, financially, emotionally, and relationally.” When one person says, “Shalom!!” to another person, he is speaking a blessing over that person’s life.

In the New Testament, the word for peace is the Greek word “**eirene.**” The basic meaning of that word is “oneness.” In the New Testament, the word “eirene” implies that a person is experiencing a sense of oneness with God, with others, and with himself. Nothing is out of alignment. Nothing is out of balance. The person who has “eirene” is living a life that is lined up right vertically, horizontally, and internally.

Those two words for peace lay the foundation for this booklet. God wants us to experience both “shalom” and “eirene.” He wants us to experience both “wholeness” and “oneness.”

If we were asked to take those two concepts of peace and create our own definition, perhaps it would go something like this: **Peace is an inner calmness of spirit resulting from an inner confidence in God leading to an obvious change in the way we approach life.**

That’s what peace is. It is something on the inside that changes your life. It has nothing to do with circumstances. It is more than a feeling. It is an inner sense of confidence that God is in control...even when you lose your job. It is an inner sense of calmness...even when you are being rolled into surgery. It is an inner sense of assurance that enables you to look into the future and smile. It is heaven’s greatest blessing to a troubled heart. It is peace.

Peace has literally changed my life. Or maybe I should say that God has changed my life by giving me peace. Either way you say it, my life has been changed by this amazing gift called “peace.”

You would have had to have known me for a long time to know how true that is. You talk about a guy who lived much too long without peace, that was me!! When I was a child, I worried about everything from the weather to the latest disease. I have jokingly said that I think I came out of the womb worrying!! And those worries grew larger and larger as the years passed by until finally I was so worried about dying that I could no longer fully enjoy living. The thought of death scared me to death. There was little to no peace in my heart.

But all of that changed for me quite a few years ago. It's been an amazing transformation. I don't say that to brag on me because I am not responsible for it. I say it to praise God for giving me such peace. It has absolutely changed my life. I actually don't worry about anything anymore. I really don't. I have peace!! And you can, too!! Trust me. If God can change me from a fellow who worried about everything into a person who has what the old song describes as "peace like a river," He can do the same for you.

In this booklet, I want to identify **seven simple secrets** that you need to know if you are ever going to experience true, lasting peace. I call them "secrets" because so few people seem

to know them. Actually, though, they are revealed in the Word of God. But they remain tucked away there until we discover them for ourselves.

My prayer is that your soul will begin to be filled with peace as you discover these seven secrets. May they be “secrets” to you no more!! May they instead become the “substance” on which you build the foundation of your life. And may you begin to experience that life-changing sense of confidence, calmness, and assurance that Jesus has made possible for us all.

Secret # 1 – The peace that you are searching for is available to you.

The first thing you have to understand is that peace is available. God has made it possible for you to live your life with an inner calmness regardless of what is happening around you. If you don't believe that, you're in trouble. Here's why: If you don't believe that peace is available then you won't pursue peace. You won't be a “seeker.” Instead, you will be a “sitter”...just sitting around with little to no peace...assuming that this is just how life is supposed to be.

But if I can persuade you to believe that peace is available and that your life could be changed by it, then a hunger will develop in your heart, and you will begin to seek those things that lead to peace. And remember this: **God honors seekers.** He Himself has said, “You will seek Me and find *Me*, when you search for Me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:13).

Looking back on my “pre-peace” life, those years of such struggle, I can honestly say that, even then, I was a seeker. I was a seeker of peace. I prayed for peace. I talked with others about peace. I searched for peace through much reading and study. I sought to obtain peace with all of my heart. Even though much of my search was misguided, God still honored it. He knew that I was searching for peace, and He led me to it after many years. He helped me to understand that peace doesn’t come through people, popularity, prosperity, performance, or even through the praying of prayers. He showed me that **true peace** only comes through trusting Jesus Christ. And He led me to trust Jesus with every fiber of my being.

Your heart may be as tumultuous as the Atlantic Ocean during hurricane season, but that can change. You just have to **believe** that

it can change. Even though your heart is restless, it can be at peace. Jesus said so Himself. Listen to His words: “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” (John 14:27).

Notice that Jesus contrasted **His peace** with **the world’s peace**. There is a big difference. The world promises that we will have peace if we get the better job, the bigger salary, the newer home, the best investment, and the ideal family situation. The world says that peace is found by meeting Mr. or Miss Right. Jesus says that when it comes to peace, He’s Mr. Right!! He is the One, and the only One, Who can give us peace. No other person can give us that life-changing sense of confidence, calmness, and assurance. Only Jesus can. And He said that He’s willing to give us **His peace**. Think about that. He has made it possible for us to experience the same peace that He experienced while He was on the earth. That’s amazing to me.

In another verse, Jesus explained that this peace not only comes **from** Him but that it is also found **in** Him. He said, “These things I have spoken to you, that **in Me** you may have

peace” (John 16:33, emphasis mine). True peace can only be discovered in the Person of Jesus Christ. Not only is He the One Who **gives** us peace, the Bible says that He actually **is** our peace. The apostle Paul, speaking of Jesus, said, “He Himself is our peace” (Ephesians 2:14). **The only way you will ever experience true peace is by trusting Jesus Christ.** Let me say that again! **The only way you will ever experience true peace is by trusting Jesus Christ.** Now let’s put that in the first person. Read the next sentence slowly and thoughtfully: **The only way I will ever experience true peace is by trusting Jesus Christ.** I am tempted to stop writing here and ask you to go away for about a week and just think about that sentence. But I doubt you would do that. So just keep reading!!

The other night I was watching *The Tonight Show*, and Jay Leno was interviewing an outdoorsman-type guy. They were talking about panda bears. The guest told Jay that many people, including himself, believe that if you hold a panda bear in your arms and just embrace the moment that you will experience peace. There is something about a panda bear, he said, that somehow soothes the soul. I don’t know about you, but cuddling a live bear is not my way of experiencing peace. I said earlier

that I don't worry anymore, and I don't. But I haven't lost my mind!! Cuddling a live bear would bring me panic, not peace!!

As I watched the interview, though, I discovered that the guest wasn't being silly. He was being serious. He really thought that peace in life was found in pandas. My attitude began to change. I went from thinking, "*This is funny*" to "*This is crazy*" to "*This is sad.*" It is sad because in fairness to that guest, he has probably never heard what I've already told you. And that is that peace is found in a Person, not in a panda. And that Person's Name is Jesus!!

What that man was doing is no different than what many people are doing today. Many are searching for peace in all the wrong places. They are trying to find peace in relationships, money, vacations, hobbies, success, fame, or even in panda bears. Peace, though, is not found in any of those places. True peace can only be found in a relationship with Jesus Christ. True peace comes **from Jesus** and is found **in Jesus**. And, thankfully, that peace is available to us all.

Secret # 2 – Peace changes every area of your life.

Not only is peace available in Jesus Christ, but peace is also absolutely life changing. In other words, peace will positively affect every area of your life. God has made it possible for you to experience peace in every single aspect of your life. Peace permeates our hearts, our minds, our relationships, our work, our finances, and every other area of our lives as well.

One of the benefits of peace is that it helps us to sleep better at night. The psalmist David said, “I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; for You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety” (Psalm 4:8). Thousands of people have sleep disorders. Many of them are physiological and require medical help. Others are psychological or emotional or even spiritual in nature. A lot of people can’t sleep at night because they are worried about something. Peace changes that. Peace helps us to get a good night’s sleep. When we are calm on the inside, it is much easier to fall asleep and to stay asleep.

Not only does peace help us in the night, but it also helps us in the day. When we have

peace, we are in a much better position to face the challenges and difficulties that often come our way. Jesus said, “In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). Jesus was warning us that life can throw us some curve balls. He was telling us that we would have some trouble on earth. But in this same verse, He gave us the secret to experiencing victory while facing problems in life. He said, “In Me you may have peace” (John 16:33). Even in the storms of life, Jesus gives us peace. Maybe I should say, **“Especially in the storms of life, Jesus gives us peace.”**

God’s peace is not just available when the bottom falls out, though. It is available during what we would call the “daily grind” of life as well. God has made it possible for us to live every moment of every day in peace. The Bible says, “Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace **always** in every way” (II Thessalonians 3:16, emphasis mine). You can experience peace at home, at work, at ballgames, while running errands, on vacation, and everywhere else. And God wants that for you. He wants you to experience His peace on a rainy Monday morning just as much as on a sunny Saturday afternoon. The Bible teaches that the righteous “shall delight themselves in

the abundance of peace” (Psalm 37:11). Think about that. God wants you to have so much peace that you actually enjoy your life more because of it.

If that’s not good enough, God has even made it possible for you to die in peace. God said to Abraham, “Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace” (Genesis 15:15). You say, “Well, that was good for Abraham, but what about me?” Friend, if you are saved, you are a spiritual descendant of Abraham. And the blessings that Abraham experienced are available to you as well. The Bible says “that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:14). Think about how the other descendants of Abraham died. They all died in peace. Isaac died in peace. Jacob died in peace. Joseph died in peace. Moses died in peace. Joshua died in peace. David died in peace. In the New Testament, Stephen, the first martyr of the church, died in peace. Peter died in peace. Paul died in peace. And that’s the way God wants you to die, too...in peace.

For me, this was a big deal. Once I became fully assured of my salvation and of my eternal home in heaven, everything else just fell into place. But until we’re ready to die, we’re not

ready to live. The Bible says that Jesus came to “release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Hebrews 2:15). The fear of death is a heavy burden to carry. It is the highest form of bondage. I am thankful beyond words that Jesus has released me from that. How wonderful to have **peace** instead of **fear** when I now think about death. You can have that same peace, too.

All the saints of God have died in peace. Many have died in pain, but all have died in peace. When the great Christian, Dwight L. Moody, was dying, he reportedly said these triumphant words on his deathbed: “There is no valley here. Life is receding. Heaven is opening. This is my coronation day.” That’s a happy way to go to heaven!!

Adrian Rogers, one of my favorite preachers, said these words to his family just before he died: “I have perfect peace.” Those four words were the last words that great voice for God ever uttered. And then he closed his eyes and peacefully went to heaven.

Friend, God wants you to die in peace, too. But until that day arrives, He wants you to live in peace, and sleep in peace, and face problems with peace. And as you’re doing all of that, He

wants you to truly enjoy the peace, the shalom, the wholeness, the eirene, the oneness, and the thrill of a peaceful heart. He wants His peace to change every area of your life.

Secret # 3 – Your heart has an emptiness that only God can fill.

The psalmist said, “As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God” (Psalm 42:1-2). When God made you, He made you with a thirst in your spirit that only He Himself can quench. There is a hunger in your heart that only He can satisfy. There is an emptiness in your soul that only He can fill. St. Augustine prayed this now-famous prayer: *“You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until we find our rest in You.”* Truer words have never been spoken. Friend, **the first step toward experiencing real, lasting peace is to make peace with God.** Unless things are right in that department, it will be difficult to experience peace anywhere else. Unless there is peace vertically, there will be little to no peace internally or horizontally.

How could there be? If you don't have peace with God, you will be uptight, anxious,

nervous, touchy, and pretty well miserable. A person like that is not even at peace with himself...much less with others.

The first step toward life-changing peace, therefore, is to make peace with God. Until we do that, peace will elude us. Our sins have driven a wedge between us and God, and in order for there to be peace, that wedge must be removed.

That's why God sent His Son, Jesus Christ. He sent Jesus to pay for our sins and to remove them from our hearts. The Bible says, "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Jesus died on the cross to pay for our sins. He died to make forgiveness possible. But if you reject Him, there is no hope of forgiveness. There is no hope of salvation. And that means there is no hope of experiencing any real peace. If you reject Jesus, there will be nothing to cleanse your heart of sin, and there will be nothing to quiet your conscience from the accusing voice of condemnation. But if you receive Jesus, your heart will be cleansed, and your conscience will be quieted. The blood of Jesus can do that for you.

A Sunday School teacher had been teaching her third graders that there's nothing God can't do. At the end of the lesson, a little girl raised her hand and said, "There's one thing God can't do." The teacher, a little concerned, said, "What do you mean?" The little girl said, "God can't see my sins when they have been washed away by the blood of Jesus." Friend, that girl was right. I have committed a lot of sins in my life, but God can't see them. He can't see them because they are gone. They have been removed from my record. They are forgiven and forgotten. Praise God that "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (I John 1:7).

But if you've never received Jesus personally, you haven't experienced that forgiveness. And God can see your sins...all of them. That's why you have to make peace with God before you do anything else.

The Bible says, "Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). That word "**justified**" means "just as if it never happened." That's what forgiveness does. It makes it just as if we had never sinned in the eyes of God.

But notice how we get justified, how we get forgiven, how we get saved. The Bible says all of that happens by faith. In the Bible, the word **“faith”** means “trust.” It means “commitment.” It doesn’t mean that you simply believe in Jesus like you believe in George Washington or Abraham Lincoln. I believe Washington and Lincoln were presidents, but I don’t trust them. But I do trust Jesus. I have committed my soul into His care. That’s how I became a Christian. That’s how anybody becomes a Christian. The apostle Paul had done the same thing. Listen to how he described his own salvation experience. He said, “I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day” (II Timothy 1:12). Paul had committed his soul into the care of Jesus Christ. As a result, his heart was filled with peace.

So the way to have peace with God is by trusting Jesus to be your Savior. The moment you trust Jesus to save you, your sins are forgiven, and His Holy Spirit comes to live in your heart. Have you ever trusted Jesus to save you? Have you ever committed your soul into His care? If not, or if you’re just not sure, now would be a great time to do so.

If you want real peace, you have to start at the starting place. And **making peace with God is the starting place.**

I am including a prayer which you can pray right now if you would like to. Pray this prayer and then trust Jesus to save you. He will save you, and He will give you a peace that you have never known before.

“Dear Jesus,

I want peace in my life, and I know that peace can only be found in You. Thank You for dying on that cross for me. Thank You for coming out of that grave. I ask You now to come into my heart, forgive me of my sins, and make me a Christian. I ask You to save me, and I trust You to do it. Welcome to my heart, Jesus. Begin now to make me the person You want me to be.

*In Your Name I Pray,
Amen.”*

Friend, if you prayed that prayer and if you are now trusting Jesus to save you, you have **peace with God!!** You have taken the most important step in life. An inner peace should now be yours. The Bible says, “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we

are children of God” (Romans 8:16). And He bears witness by giving us an inner peace.

Secret # 4 – We can live each day with the same peace that God Himself has.

After we have made peace **with** God, we can now begin to experience the very peace **of** God. This is the peace that God experiences, and it is available to us!!

The Bible says, “Be anxious for nothing, 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 minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7, emphasis mine). Since the Bible says that the peace of God is beyond our ability to comprehend, I obviously can’t fully explain it!! But just because we may not be able to fully **explain** it doesn’t mean that we can’t fully **experience** it!! Because we can!!

Philippians 4:6 teaches that we experience God’s peace through two things: **prayer** and **faith**. The apostle Paul said that we should make our requests to God **with thanksgiving**. That is **prayer** and **faith** together. Just like we

became Christians by asking Jesus to save us and then trusting Him to do it, we go through life asking God to meet our needs and then trusting Him to do it. That's what the word "**thanksgiving**" is referring to. We are thankful not only for what God **has done** in the past, but we are also thankful for what He **will do** in the future. And since we can't yet see what God **will do** in the future, that type of thankfulness requires faith. When we begin to thank God **in advance**, we are living by faith!!

And when we live that way, the Bible says that the peace of God will guard our hearts and our minds. The word "**guard**" is a military word. It is the picture of a troop of soldiers surrounding a house to protect it. God's peace does that. It surrounds our hearts and our minds. The word "**heart**" refers to our emotions, and the word "**mind**" refers to our thoughts. As we continue to trust the Lord to meet our needs and guide our steps, He protects our emotions, and He protects our thoughts. He keeps us from breaking down emotionally when our little world seems to be falling apart. And He keeps our thoughts on Him instead of on our ever-changing circumstances.

So God's peace, like a troop of soldiers, actually protects us from the devil. Satan is the

one who is trying to hijack our thoughts. And he is the one who is trying to upset our emotions. That is why it is imperative for you to stay in an attitude of faith and expectancy at all times. Our faith in God produces the peace of God. And the peace of God protects our thoughts and our emotions from the attacks of the enemy. In other words, if I'm trusting God, my thoughts and emotions are protected. If I'm not trusting God, I'm vulnerable to Satan's attacks of doubt, discouragement, and a plethora of his alluring temptations to sin.

You say, "But how can I stay in an attitude of trust all the time? Things happen, and my faith gets jolted." Of course things happen. Of course our faith gets jolted. That's part of the human experience. We may have an occasional sinking spell. But we can return to a **place of peace** if we will begin to shift our focus back onto God. Listen to this verse from the Old Testament. It is one of my favorite verses in the Bible. The prophet Isaiah declared to God, "You will keep *him* in perfect peace, *whose mind is stayed on You*, because he trusts in You" (Isaiah 26:3). As we begin to refocus our attention onto God and as we renew our trust in Him, He will keep our hearts filled with that wonderful gift called "peace."

Faith and peace are like railroad tracks. They always run together. As long as you have faith, you will have peace. If you have a lot of faith, you will have a lot of peace. If you only have a little bit of faith, you will only have a little bit of peace. And if the faith ever stops, the peace will stop with it. So if you want to **keep the peace**, you have to **keep the faith!!**

The Bible says, “As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him” (Colossians 2:6). We received Christ by faith. And it is **by faith** that we are to live each day. If you will simply make up your mind to trust God regardless of what happens, you will experience His peace. His peace will fill your heart full to overflowing. And it will cover you like a refreshing cloud on a hot, summer day.

A widow in our church said to me not long after losing her husband of over sixty years, “Jon, I will never stop missing my husband. But I feel like God has wrapped me in a blanket of peace.” What a beautiful description of the security, comfort, and protection that God’s peace provides. A blanket of peace...I like that phrase!!

The old song said it well: “Take your burdens to the Lord, and leave them there.” If

you will give your burdens to the Lord, He will give His peace to you. And if you will leave your burdens with the Lord, He will leave His peace with you. That's a pretty good trade.

Faith is our way of saying, "Thank You, God, that You have heard my prayer. And thank You, God, that You will answer my prayer in Your own time and in Your own way." Peace is God's way of saying back to us, "Thank you for trusting Me."

Several years ago, I hired a man to do a fairly difficult job at my house. I showed him what needed to be done and then asked him to do the best he could. When he finished the job, I was amazed at the precision with which he had completed the task. I thanked him for his good work and then paid him what I owed. When I did, he responded by saying something I had never heard before from someone I had hired to do a job for me. He said something I will never forget. With a smile on his face, he simply said, "Thanks for trusting me." I was touched by that. He was actually happier that I had trusted him than he was that I had paid him!! In a similar way, God wants us to **trust Him** more than He wants anything else from us. And when we do, He gives us peace. It is His way of saying, "Thanks for trusting Me!!"

Secret # 5 – It is possible to be at peace with others...even if they are not at peace with you.

Once we begin to live in a state of perfect peace with God, we desire to live in a state of perfect peace with others. When things are right vertically, we want things to be right horizontally as well. And now that we are experiencing God's peace, we are in a much better position to be "peacemakers" in our relationships with others (Matthew 5:9).

Is there anyone with whom you are not at peace right now? If so, I want to mention some things you can do to help remedy that problem.

First, begin to pray that peace will be restored to that relationship. When you pray for peace, you are praying in the will of God. God wants us to be at peace with each other. The Bible says, "Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is* for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Psalm 133:1)! Ask God to show you what specific steps you need to take in order to bring about peace. And ask God to soften the other person's heart.

After you have prayed for peace, begin the process of pursuing peace. The Bible says that

we are to “pursue peace with all *people*” (Hebrews 12:14). The word “**pursue**” means there is something we have to do. We have to take a step. We have to make a move. As you begin the process of pursuing peace, do it humbly, carefully, tenderly, and under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. As you pursue peace, take responsibility for anything you have done wrong, and don’t bring up whatever other people may have done wrong. Just as God convicted you of your sin, let God be the One Who convicts them of theirs. Your job is to accept responsibility for your shortcomings and to humbly seek both forgiveness and peace.

When I was a freshman at Baylor University, I had an unsaved friend who lived across the hall from me on the first floor of our dorm. All semester long, I had prayed for an opportunity to share Christ with him. Finally, late one Sunday night, that opportunity came. We were in my room watching television and talking when somehow the conversation turned toward God. Before I knew it, I was in the process of telling my friend how to be saved. I was getting to the end of the gospel presentation when a guy from the fourth floor walked into my room. He said, “What are you guys talking about?” I didn’t want to embarrass my friend, so I said, “Oh, we’re just

talking about God.” When I said that, the fellow from the fourth floor, who was already a Christian, began to play “the devil’s advocate.” He began to say things like, “You know, you don’t have to go to church to worship God. God is everywhere.” He went on and on with stuff like that. And while it’s true that God is everywhere, his comments were leading the conversation away from salvation, and they were confusing my unsaved friend. Because of that, his comments were getting on my nerves. As a result, I stopped him from talking. I told him that I didn’t appreciate his interrupting our conversation. And I kicked him out of my room. I’m ashamed to say it, but I was probably about as rude to that fellow as I’ve ever been to anyone. I mowed him down verbally and sent him back to the fourth floor.

After that tirade, I went back into my room and said to my friend, “Now, let me finish talking to you about the love of God.” Ha!! I didn’t say that. How could I? I had certainly not exhibited the love of God to the other guy.

The next day, I felt horribly about how I had talked to that fellow. All day long the Holy Spirit was speaking to me. He was saying things like this: “You were wrong, Jon. You were rude. That’s not the way a Christian is

supposed to act. Go to his room, and ask him to forgive you.” I knew all of that was true. And I knew I had to make it right.

So on that Monday night, I walked up four flights of stairs in Penland Hall (I didn’t trust that old dorm elevator). I found his room, knocked on the door, and told him I was sorry. And do you know what happened? He told me he was sorry, too. He was sorry for interrupting. And I was sorry for being a jerk. In the years that followed, he and I actually became pretty good friends. But it all started when God told me to make the long walk up those stairs and pursue peace.

I wish I could say that every story always has such a happy ending, but that’s just not the case. Sometimes people refuse to forgive. Sometimes people don’t want there to be any peace. The psalmist said, “My soul has dwelt too long with one who hates peace. I *am for* peace; but when I speak, they *are for war*” (Psalm 120:6-7).

I hate to say this, but there may always be certain people who are not at peace with you. They may never apologize for their sins, and they may never forgive you for yours. They

may hate you until the day they die. That's sad. But that happens sometimes.

The only thing I can say about that is this: Don't let the fact that they are not at peace with you prevent you from being at peace with them. Don't let the fact that they hate you cause you to hate them. Don't let the fact that they don't care about you cause you to stop caring about them. You make sure that your heart is right. You make sure that you have done all you know to do before God to make things right with that person. And after that, there's nothing else you can do. That's why the Bible says, "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18). Sometimes it's not possible. Sometimes it doesn't depend on you. Relationships take both parties loving, forgiving, and pursuing peace. Do all that you know to do in order for there to be peace, but if the other person's heart remains hardened, you just make sure that your heart remains tender toward that person. God will help you with that.

Another thing I would say is this: Keep being kind to that person, and keep being kind in what you say to others about that person. Never stop praying for that person. And never

stop praying for a miracle of reconciliation. Let me remind you that ours is a God of miracles. Some people talk about the “day of miracles” as though miracles ceased in the first century. Friend, I don’t believe in the “day of miracles.” I believe in the **“God of miracles.”** And He never changes. He can still bring peace to that relationship. My advice is this: Stay in an attitude of love and forgiveness so that if the other person’s heart ever changes, your heart is already primed for peace to be restored.

Miracles still happen. One evidence of that is that my friend who lived across the hall from me in that old college dorm eventually got saved...even after I messed up so badly in my gospel presentation!!

Secret # 6 – You can be at peace with yourself...even if everything in your life is not quite perfect.

Sadly, most people aren’t at peace with themselves. This is certainly not the way God meant for it to be. Jesus said, “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself*” (Matthew 22:39, emphasis mine). But you can’t love your neighbor unless you first love yourself. And

you can't love yourself unless you are at peace with yourself. So allow me to mention some things you can do that will help you to be at peace with the one person you are always with...yourself!!

First, accept those things about your physical appearance that you cannot change. A lot of people struggle with low self-esteem because there is something about their physical appearance that they don't like. This is not only sad, but it can also be debilitating. In extreme cases, some people isolate themselves from all social interaction because of insecurities stemming from their physical appearance. If there is something negative about your physical appearance that you can change, then by all means try your best to change it. But if you can't change it, then don't worry about it. Accept it, and move on in life.

You have to realize that God made you just the way you are. And He made you the way He wanted you to be. So when you criticize yourself, you are actually criticizing the God Who made you. The psalmist said, "I will praise You, for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made" (Psalms 139:14). So instead of complaining about your appearance, start praising God for it. If there's something you

can do to improve it, then do it. But if not, accept the fact that you are God's unique creation, made "in His *own* image" (Genesis 1:27).

When I was in the sixth grade, every time I would walk by a certain group of girls they would laugh at me. They made fun of the way I walked. They used to imitate my walk. According to their interpretation, I was more of a "prancer" than a "walker." I can still remember how self-conscious that made me feel. I tried to change the way I walked so they would stop laughing at me. And then one day I decided, "Who cares!!" And I've been "prancing" ever since.

So when it comes to your physical appearance, your accent, your gestures, your mannerisms, and even the way you walk, be yourself. Those characteristics about yourself that you may not like are actually the "birthmarks" God gave you to make you distinctly unique.

Another thing you can do that will help you to be at peace with yourself is to accept those things about your financial condition that you cannot change. As a general rule, I think women worry more about their physical

appearance while men worry more about their financial condition. Men are providers. We want to take care of ourselves and of our families. That's good. God made us that way. The problem arises when we begin to compare our financial condition with the financial condition of others. Our financial condition is like our physical appearance in one respect. We should do the best we can with it and then move on in life.

Let's say that you have a good paying job of \$50,000 a year. You are able to pay your bills and save a little bit along the way. You feel pretty good about things until you find out that your cousin, who's less intelligent than you are, makes \$100,000 a year. Well, don't be jealous of your cousin. He's jealous of his neighbor who makes \$250,000 a year. His neighbor is jealous of his boss who makes \$500,000 a year. His boss is jealous of his CEO who makes \$2,000,000 a year. And the CEO is hoping he never gets audited! Do you see my point? The amount of money you have is relative. If you associate with poor people, you will feel wealthy. But if you run with the truly rich, you will feel poor. But the fact is, you have the same amount of money either way.

The Bible teaches that we are to work hard, do the best we can, tithe on our income, spend our money wisely, and then live grateful and contented lives. The apostle Paul said, “And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content” (I Timothy 6:8). So be grateful for what you have, and stop comparing yourself to someone else.

As you begin to accept those things about your physical appearance and your financial condition that you cannot change, you also need to accept those things about your circumstances that you cannot change. You can't change your past. You can't change another person. You can't always change your health. You can't change all of your family issues. You can't change your boss. You can't change what other people think about you. You can't change a lot of things. So stop trying. Accept those things that you cannot change.

When I was a senior in high school, I took geometry. I couldn't tell you a single thing I learned that whole year about geometry. But I do remember a picture the teacher had placed on the wall. It wasn't a picture of the ocean or the mountains. And thankfully, it wasn't a picture of a geometry problem!! It was a

picture that contained the words of *The Serenity Prayer*. It's the only thing that I still remember from that class. Perhaps you're familiar with it:

The Serenity Prayer

“God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change...

Courage to change the things I can...

And wisdom to know the difference...”

I love that prayer. We need to learn to accept those things in life that we just can't change. Peace comes through acceptance. First, through the acceptance of Jesus as our Savior and Lord. And then, through the acceptance of those things in life that we cannot change.

It was *The Serenity Prayer* that helped me get through geometry!! Maybe it will help you get through those difficult “geometry seasons” of your life as well.

Perhaps the most important thing you can do in order to be at peace with yourself is to accept

God's forgiveness for the sins you have committed in the past. Many people are not at peace with themselves because they are carrying around a heavy load of guilt over things they did wrong years ago.

Any guilt you may be experiencing from sins that you have already repented of is not from God. It is from Satan, the enemy of our souls, and "the accuser of our brethren" (Revelation 12:10). Once you have confessed your sins and repented of them, they are forever gone, expunged from heaven's record.

If you want to live a life of peace, you need to leave your forgiven sins where they belong...under the blood of Jesus...and in "the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19). I think we sometimes feel like we are showing God how sorry we are for our sins if we continue to live in guilt because of them. After all, at least we are demonstrating to Him that we are serious about them.

While we should certainly be serious about our sins, we should also be serious about God's grace and forgiveness. The best way to honor God is not to wallow around in guilt and shame. The best way to honor God is to praise

Him for His forgiveness and then to seek to live a godly life from this point forward.

After his awful sins of adultery and murder, King David sought and experienced the wonderful forgiveness of God. After he was forgiven, he didn't continue to beat himself up over those sins. Instead, he declared, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered" (Psalm 32:1). The word "blessed" means "happy." David was happy because his sins had been forgiven. He honored God by accepting divine grace and mercy. David was serious about his sins, but he was also serious about God's forgiveness. As a result, he was at peace with himself. His conscience had been cleansed, and he was able to move on in life. Friend, you and I must learn to do the same. The forgiveness of God liberates us to experience peace with God. And it liberates us to experience peace with ourselves as well.

Secret # 7 – You can “keep the peace” even when things around you might not be all that peaceful.

My prayer for you is that God would fill your heart with the gift of His wonderful peace. I pray for you what the apostle Paul prayed for

the Christians in Rome: “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing” (Romans 15:13). And here’s what I know: If you will begin to trust Jesus and then **just keep on trusting Him**, you will experience the peace which I have described in this booklet. But remember, sometimes you have to trust Him when nothing makes sense, when nothing seems clear, and when there seems to be no way.

Years ago, I heard a story about a pastor who boarded a plane to fly home from a speaking engagement. As he sat down and started to put his seatbelt on, he noticed a little girl who was already all buckled up sitting in the seat next to him. She was about seven years old, and her feet didn’t even reach the ground. She had her coloring book out and was as happy as she could be. The pastor smiled at her, took his Bible out of his briefcase, and began to read. The plane took off and reached its cruising altitude. The girl kept coloring, and the pastor kept reading.

About an hour into the flight, the plane encountered some turbulence. At one point, it got so intense that the pastor could no longer concentrate on his Bible reading. In fact, he closed his Bible and began to pray. He was

more than a little bit afraid as the plane bounced around in the air. The other passengers were fearful, too. Everybody was anxious, except for the little girl. She just kept swinging her legs and coloring in her coloring book.

After what seemed like forever in the rough air, the plane began its descent and finally arrived safely at its destination. When it landed, everyone on board took a collective sigh of relief. Everyone, that is, except for the little girl. Even after the plane landed, she just kept swinging her legs and coloring in her coloring book.

As the pastor was waiting for his turn to get off of the plane, he spoke to the little girl for the first time of the entire flight. He said, "Excuse me. Before I get off of the plane, I would like to ask you a question." She stopped coloring, looked up at him with an innocent smile, and said, "Ask away, Mister." He continued, "When we were up there in the bad weather, weren't you even a little bit afraid? How did you stay so calm?" The little girl giggled and said, "Oh, that's easy, Mister. The reason I wasn't afraid is because my father is the pilot, and I knew that he was just taking me home."

I love that story. The little girl was able to stay calm because she knew where she was going and she knew who was flying the plane.

Christian friend, that's how it is with us, too. In the plane ride of life, sometimes things get bumpy. Sometimes things get frightening. Sometimes we are bounced around in the air. But in the cockpit, just out of sight, is our loving, heavenly Father. And all in the world He's doing is taking us home. And He's an experienced Pilot. He's encountered plenty of turbulence before. And remember, He's flying us **through** the turbulence. It won't last forever. We just have to endure some bumps along the way. So we might as well just relax and enjoy the flight.

If we will just focus on Him, even though we cannot yet see Him, He will get us home safely. And He will keep us in complete peace during any rough air we may encounter. After all, that's His promise to us. He has promised to keep His children "in perfect peace" as long as we will trust in Him (Isaiah 26:3). And God always keeps His promises.

So enjoy the remainder of the flight. As I gaze out my window, it looks like clearer skies are ahead. I think I can see the sun trying to

break through the clouds. And even better than that is the realization that we are closer to home than we've ever been!!

So put your tray table up, and return your seat to its upright and locked position!! Before you know it, the flight will be over, and we will be safely home. The Pilot will then emerge from the cockpit, and we will finally get to see His face. With a radiant smile, and with love in His eyes, He will joyfully say, "Welcome Home!!" And we will bow at His feet with tears of gratitude. All we will be able to say is, "Thank You, Jesus. I love You." And He will say to us, "I love you, too. Thanks for trusting Me when things got bumpy. Thanks for trusting Me when things appeared hopeless. I know part of the flight was rough, but We made it home safely. And you became more like Me along the way. Welcome to heaven...where all is well...where peace abounds...and where you will never question My presence again. This is where I was taking you all along."

What a day that will be!! For now, though, we can only imagine. So until that day arrives, let's continue to trust our Pilot through the turbulence. And let's continue to enjoy the peace that He has abundantly provided. And if

we don't get to talk to each other during the remainder of the flight, I'll meet you at the gate!!

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A graduate of Baylor University (B.A.), Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (M. Div.), and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (D. Min.), Jon's desire is to lead people to trust Jesus as their personal Savior and Lord and to help them grow in their relationship with Him.