

**TEXT: Philippians 4:4-9**

**TITLE: The Pathway to Peace**

**THESIS: If you're looking for peace, look to Jesus.**

**4 Areas where looking to Jesus can give us peace**

**1. Look to Jesus in Our Relationships (4:2-3)**

a. "...because you belong to the Lord, settle your disagreement."

Paul's appeal for reconciliation wasn't just to "make people happier" or "let bygones be bygones". His appeal was based on the reality that Euodia and Syntyche were daughters of the King, and they needed to look to Him for reconciliation.

b. Because we belong to Jesus, are we allowing our identity to bring peace and reconciliation to our relationships with others?

**2. Look to Jesus in Our Lifestyle (4:4-5)**

a. Paul's joy is not "Pollyanna" joy where we blissfully ignore problems and put on a façade of pseudo-spiritual bravado. This is joy that transcends circumstances, not downplays them.

b. "...the Lord is coming soon." Are our lives a *turnoff* or a *testimony* to the people around us?

### 3. Look to Jesus in Our Circumstances (4:6-7)

a. 4 Directives: Be ***still*** [*“don’t worry”*], be ***honest*** [*“pray about everything”*], be ***vulnerable*** [*“tell God what you need”*], and be ***thankful*** [*“thank Him for all He has done”*].

b. “*Don’t worry*”...the Greek word for worry is the same word that Jesus uses in **Matt. 6:27**.

c. “*Then you will experience God’s peace...*” Peace takes work; focus takes work; are we willing to put in the ***hard work and heart work*** to experience God’s peace?

### 4. Look to Jesus in Our Influences (4:8-9)

a. Inner Influences (Thinking) (v.8) – ***What*** are we allowing to influence us? The things we think about internally eventually show up externally.

b. Outer Influences (Doing) (v.9) – ***Who*** are we allowing to influence us? Who has access to speak into our lives?

## **ONLINE INTRO ONLY**

Good morning everybody! My name is Jon; great to be with you this morning.

Today's message was originally going to be preached at our normal in-person service on Sunday morning; but due to some weather concerns, and dangerous road conditions, we had to cancel our in-person service for the weekend of this recording, and so here we are! 😊

We're finishing up our **First Things First** series with a message from **Philippians 4** about the **Pathway to Peace**.

### **Philippians 4:2-9 (NLT)**

**2** Now I appeal to Euodia and Syntyche. Please, because you belong to the Lord, settle your disagreement. **3** And I ask you, my true partner, to help these two women, for they worked hard with me in telling others the Good News. They worked along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are written in the Book of Life.

**4** Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice! **5** Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon.

**6** Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank Him for all He has done. **7** Then you

will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

**8** And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. **9** Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.

### **STORY INTRO: The Shattered Ornament**

The final week of December, I was helping to take down Christmas decorations around the church. I was taking some ornaments off the tree in front of the nursery—some fragile ceramic ornaments that had words like “hope”, “joy”, “peace”, and “Noel” written across them. I had placed these ornaments on the desk next to the tree by the nursery.

And wouldn't you know, I had one clumsy moment where I was trying to extract another ornament from the twist tie that was holding it onto a tree branch...and somehow, somehow...that second ornament brushed against one of the ceramic ornaments and knocked it off of the desk.

Before I could make sense of what was happening...

- ...there was a white blur of motion...
- ...followed by the distinctive ***crunch!*** of broken material...

And I looked down to see this ceramic ornament shattered in pieces on the floor. Most of it was absolutely smashed; but part of it was semi-intact...and on that one part of the ornament, you could just make out the word “peace” surrounded by jagged edges.

As I brushed the broken ornament into a dustpan, I couldn't help but be struck by what I was seeing. ***This picture describes so much in our world today, doesn't it?***

## **MAIN INTRO**

So many people are living “trapped” in a reality of shattered peace.

We see pictures and read stories about shattered peace on our phones and screens every day.

And it's not just in the public news or mass media...but for some of you...this is a picture of what 2025 was like for you personally.

- It was a year of heartache...
- ...anxiety...attack...
- ...loss...grief...
- ...tension...conflict...

Now that we're in January, you're wondering, “How am I supposed to survive this year if last year was so bad? How can I find peace in 2026?”

## TRANSITION to BIG IDEA

Thank God that you and I are not the only ones who have ever wrestled with the search for true peace.

- God created us...He sees us...
- He knows the world we live in...
- He knows the worries and the “peace-killers” that we struggle with...

And because God created us...because He loves us...God has laid out in His Word the pathway to peace. The pathway to peace is simply this:

## BIG IDEA

**If you're looking for peace, look to Jesus.**

- Before you look to **your own wisdom**...look to Jesus.
- Before you look to **secular wisdom**...look to Jesus.
- Before you look to **an addiction** (drugs, food, pornography or otherwise)...look to Jesus.
- Before you look to **any other human solution**...look to Jesus.

The Bible says that if we're looking for peace, the only solution is to look to Jesus first.

The Apostle Paul, who wrote the book of Philippians, is going to lay this out for us.

## CONTEXT

Paul is writing this letter from prison to a local church in the Greek city of Philippi. Paul had planted this church on one of his missionary trips (you can read about that in **Acts 16**); and even though Paul is in prison for preaching Jesus, his heart is still fully invested in this church ...and so he's writing this letter to a point person in Philippi who can communicate Paul's heart to the believers there (that point person is the anonymous "true partner" in **v.3**).

Paul's whole letter to the Philippians can really be summed up by those three words that we highlighted a minute ago: "Look to Jesus". We see that theme in every chapter of the book.

And now this last chapter, Chapter 4, Paul gives us **4 Areas** where looking to Jesus can give us peace. The first one he shares is if we're looking for peace...we should: **Look to Jesus in Our Relationships**.

### POINT 1 – Look to Jesus in Our RELATIONSHIPS (vv. 2-3)

2 Now I appeal to Euodia and Syntyche. Please, because you belong to the Lord, settle your disagreement. 3 And I ask you, my true partner, to help these two women, for they worked hard with me in telling others the Good News. They worked along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are written in the Book of Life.

Euodia and Syntyche were two women—two members of the church at Philippi—who were at odds with one another.

- We don't know what they were fighting about...
- Whether it was a bitter word, a reckless action, something done, something undone...

But whatever their spat was, it was serious enough that word reached Paul all the way over in prison. The lack of peace in this relationship was having a negative impact on the health and culture of the church.

So Paul exhorts Euodia and Syntyche to settle their disagreement...and notice *why* he wants them to do this:

“Please, because you belong to the Lord, settle your disagreement.”

- It wasn't, “to make people happier”...
- Or, “to lighten the mood”...
- It wasn't even, “to lift up the cause of unity”...
- No, it's “because you belong to the Lord...”

Paul's appeal for reconciliation was based on the reality that Euodia and Syntyche were daughters of King Jesus, and they needed to look to Him in their relationship with each other.

This is why Paul leans into the relational angle in **v.3**.

- “You’re daughters of the King; you’re spiritual siblings with the other family members of this church.”
- “You belong to the same Lord...you’re saved by the same Gospel...you’re working hard for the same end-goal as Clement and the others.”
- “In this relationship, ladies, you need to stop looking at each others’ faults and start looking to Jesus instead, so that you can have peace.”

### **SUBPOINT 1A – MODERN APPLICATION**

Because we belong to Jesus, and because of our identity as His children, are we allowing that identity to bring peace and reconciliation to our relationships with others?

I want to be so careful with that question, because there are relationships where abuse happens, where unrepentant sin happens, and where reconciliation is not always possible.

But at the same time... How many relationships have died that should never have had to die?

- How many stories of reconciliation have gone unwritten by a failure to look to Jesus?

- How many relationships have been derailed by looking to temptation, looking to insecurity, and looking to self as king, rather than looking to Jesus Christ as King?

On this side of eternity, every human relationship, at some point, will be affected by the occasional lack of peace...the occasional flare-up of sin and selfishness. And when those flare-ups happen, who will you look to?

- When that argument at home happens...who will you look to?
- When that conflict at work happens...who will you look to?
- When your child rebels...who will you look to?

Before you allow that fight, that conflict, and that rebellion to rob you of peace...look to Jesus.

## **TRANSITION to POINT 2**

Not only does Paul tell us to look to Jesus in our relationships...but if we're looking for peace...we also need to look to Jesus in our actions...the example of living that we set before others.

## **POINT 2 – Look to Jesus in Our ACTIONS (vv. 4-5)**

4 Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice! 5 Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon.

I think it's so significant how Paul connects being "full of joy in the Lord" with being "considerate" in all we do. Then you look at **why** he connects those two things... "*The Lord is coming soon.*"

- It's not, "Be joyful, so that you won't depress people..."
- It's not, "Be considerate, because love makes the world go round."

It's all because "The Lord is coming soon."

I love what pastor and commentator **David Guzik** says about this verse:

"When we live with the awareness of Jesus' soon return, it makes it all the more easy to *rejoice in the Lord* and to show **gentleness** **[consideration]** to all [people]. We know that Jesus will settle every wrong at His return, and we can trust Him to make things right in our falling-apart world."<sup>1</sup>

Don't miss that link between "joy" and the Lord's return...because oftentimes, "rejoicing in the Lord" is one of the most misunderstood ideas in all of Scripture.

### **SUBPOINT 2A – The real meaning of "the joy of the Lord"**

There are way too many Christians who confuse "**joy**" with "**denial**".

- "If I can just put on a **brave face**..."
- "**Disconnect** my feelings from my circumstances..."

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<sup>1</sup> <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/philippians-4/>

- “And **suppress** my emotions under a whole bunch of **spiritual psychobabble** and **out-of-touch optimism**...
- “That’ll be the joy of the Lord...and the more I **deny/ignore** my circumstances, the **easier** I’ll find peace.”

That’s not the way this works!

The joy of the Lord is **not a naïve, disconnected “Pollyanna” type of joy** where we **downplay** our problems, put on a **façade**, and hope against hope that we have enough pseudo-spiritual bravado to generate peace.

The joy of the Lord is a joy that **transcends** circumstances, not ignores them—and it can transcend those circumstances because the Lord is coming soon.

## **SUBPOINT 2B – TURNOFF vs. TESTIMONY**

Paul says here that the reality of the Lord’s return should produce real joy and real fruit in our behavior. This should cause us to ask: “*In light of the Lord’s return...is my behavior a **turnoff** or a **testimony** to the people around me?*”

You ever met a spiritual “turnoff”? Someone who’s trying to “fake” the joy of the Lord? And you can’t help but notice the stark disconnect between their language and their fruit?

You ask them how they’re doing, and the turnoff says...

- "Hallelujah, I'm living in victory!" ...but then you see how they treat the server in the restaurant after church.
- "I am blessed and highly favored!" ...but their reckless spending habits are about to drown them in debt...
- "I am more than a conqueror!" ...but they behave like a loser towards their spouse and kids...
- "I've got peace that passes understanding!" ...but the people around them are walking on eggshells...completely absent of peace.

We've all met people who are turnoffs...but then you contrast the "turnoff" with the "testimony"... Someone who **is** gentle, who **is** considerate.

You ask the testimony how they're doing. They say...

- "Hallelujah, I'm living in victory!" ... and just their smile alone seems to **radiate** with an **otherworldly confidence**, **security** and **peace** that can only come from looking to Jesus.
- "I am blessed and highly favored!" ...and they're constantly pouring that blessing **back** into others. They fill people, not drain them.
- "I am more than a conqueror!" ...and you can't help but be in **awe** as they stay faithful to God through pain, trauma, sorrow, and loss that

would **completely wipe out** anybody else.

- "I've got peace that passes understanding!" ...and they've got so much peace that it passes your understanding too!

You can't experience that kind of peace by looking to **optimism**, **denial**, or **human wisdom**. You can't get that by trying to be **good enough** in your **own strength**. You only get that by looking to Jesus.

If you look to Jesus in your actions...

- if your **joy** and your **behavior** are connected to Him...
- if you're **anchored** in the hope of His return...
- if you live in such a way that your life is a **testimony** of who Jesus is...

You'll find His peace within you. If you're looking for peace, look to Jesus.

### **TRANSITION to POINT 3**

We look to Jesus in our relationships...in our actions...and then Paul says if we're looking for peace, then we need to look to Jesus in our circumstances.

### **POINT 3 – Look to Jesus in Our CIRCUMSTANCES (vv. 6-7)**

**6** Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank Him for all He has done. **7** Then you

will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

Let's zoom in on these two verses and look at **4 Directives** that Paul gives for looking to Jesus in our circumstances.

**SUBPOINT 3A – Be STILL** (“don't worry about anything...”)

Many of you will be familiar with **Psalms 46:10**: “Be still and know that I am God.” But have you ever looked at that verse in context? The context of that verse in that Psalm is speaking about war...and the Hebrew word for “Be still” is a word that can mean “stop” or “cease”.<sup>2</sup> That's why the CSB renders that verse a little differently...not “be still and know”, but “Stop fighting, and know that I am God.”

Being still and “not worrying” before the Lord isn't just a matter of taking a ***quick pause*** or ***momentary escape*** before launching into worry all over again; ***this is a heavenly mandate to “stop fighting”, “let go”, and not get suckered back in by the turmoil of worry.***

By the way, the Greek word that Paul uses for “Don't worry” is actually the same Greek word that shows up in **Matthew 6:27**, when Jesus tells us, “Do not worry about tomorrow.”

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<sup>2</sup> <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/7503.htm>

Paul says to the Philippians, “In your circumstances...”

- “**Don’t** worry...”
- “...be **still**...”

And as you look to Jesus in your circumstances, don’t just **be still**, but **be honest**.

**SUBPOINT 3B – Be HONEST** (“pray about everything...”)

You ever had it happen where there’s something on your mind, and you think to yourself, “Nah, God doesn’t want to hear from me about that. That’s not worth praying about; God doesn’t care.” Paul shuts that thinking right down.

“Pray about everything...” **No holds barred**. No subject **too small**, **too big**, **too boring**, or **too taboo**. Pray about **everything**.

Besides, it’s not like any of us can **keep God in the dark** by not speaking our mind. **Psalm 139:2** says that God can see our thoughts a mile away; He knows what we’re dealing with even better than we do. And as long as it’s **impossible** to hide our thoughts from God...**why not be honest?**

Yes, be reverent, be honorable...don’t cuss God out or malign His character...but even as you honor God, don’t show **superficial** honor...be **honest!** And beyond being honest, Paul then says to be vulnerable.

### SUBPOINT 3C – Be **VULNERABLE** (“tell God what you need...”)

You ever realize how **humbling** and **awkward** that is?

- I think of the times when I’ve been in a **prayer meeting**; we start by exchanging prayer requests... And sometimes, there’s a request on my mind, and I think, “I don’t want to ask prayer for that; that’ll make me look weak.”
- Or maybe there’s an **altar call** at a service or event... “I don’t want people to feel sorry for little old me; it’s too embarrassing to go to the altar. Everyone there has ***REALLY BIG NEEDS*** and my little issue isn’t worth the **long walk**, the **awkward self-disclosure**...and what will people **think?** What will people **say?**” “Ooooooh, Jon’s at the altar! Must be something baaaaad going on there!”

“Don’t get **psyched out** by that,” Paul says. “Tell God what you need!”

- Acknowledge your **lack**...
- Acknowledge your **crisis**...
- Own your **weakness**...
- ...and appeal to His **goodness**.

Yes, that’s **humbling**. Yes, it can feel **exposing**. But again, our weakness is not a surprise to God! So rather than try to **hide** our needs from God (as if He can’t see)...why not be vulnerable, humble ourselves, and create a **heart-space of humility** so that God has access to move in our lives?

Be ***still***, be ***honest***, be ***vulnerable***, and then Paul says...be ***thankful***.

**SUBPOINT 3D – Be THANKFUL** (“thank Him for all He has done...”)

When we look at what Jesus has already done, we can take hope in what He’s about to do.

- No, that doesn’t mean that life will ***play out*** the way we want it.
- Or that God is ***guaranteed*** to give us a miracle.

But when we remember ***what God has done in our past***, then we know that ***the heartbreak of our present*** is ***no match*** for ***His future***.

**Those 4 directives—be still, be honest, be vulnerable, be thankful...it**  
all leads to this:

***“Then you will experience God’s peace...”***

**SUBPOINT 3E – *THEN* you will experience God’s peace**

Pay attention to the ***“then”***... Paul is basically saying that ***our choice***...to be still, honest, vulnerable, thankful...that decision will ***directly impact our capacity*** to receive God’s peace.

That’s significant...because none of these directives are easy.

And even looking to Jesus is not always easy.

- On this side of heaven, you and I will always be **locked in battle** with **trials** and **circumstances** that threaten to take our eyes off Jesus.
- Looking to Jesus is hard work. But it's necessary work!
- By using the "**then**", Paul is challenging us in **v.7**... are we willing to put in the **hard work and heart work** to experience God's peace?

Will we do the **hard work and heart work** of always looking to Jesus in every circumstance?

"If you're looking for peace, look to Jesus."

#### **TRANSITION to POINT 4**

Paul tells us to look to Jesus in our relationships, our lifestyle, our circumstances...and finally, Paul says, "Look to Jesus in your influences."

#### **POINT 4 – Look to Jesus in OUR INFLUENCES**

"***What's influencing you?***" Paul asks. "What **voices** are you allowing to speak into your life? What are you allowing to **take up real estate** in your head and your heart?"

He touches on **two types of influences** that we need to be watchful over.

## SUBPOINT 4A – INNER Influences (v.8)

First, Paul talks about our inner influences in v.8...

Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.

How many of you know that's easier said than done?

“Come on, Jon, I’m trying to think about true things, honorable things, pure and right things, etc...but it’s SO HARD!!!!!”

Yeah, it is hard...those characteristics that Paul tells us to think about, they can seem so unreachable...so unattainable when we look to ourselves...

But when we look to Jesus...we discover that these are the same characteristics that Jesus already has.

- Jesus is true...Jesus is honorable...Jesus is right...pure...lovely...admirable...excellent...worthy of praise.

If you’re looking for peace, look to Jesus!

**\*pause\*** The things we think about internally eventually show up externally.

I've noticed in my own life that whenever I'm **experiencing a lack of peace**, that lack of peace is often because of **my failure** to look to Jesus in **my thought life**.

- I find it way too easy to **ruminate**...to **overthink**...
- To **overprocess past hurts, present crises, future bad scenarios**...

When I start looking to those thoughts more than I look to Jesus—that's a recipe for **sleepless nights, stress eating**, and more time on my phone than in prayer.

But when I direct my thought life to look at Jesus...and all that He is...

- the more I get my eyes **off** of me and **onto** Him...
- the more **real estate** I give Him...

...the more His characteristics will rub off on me and **influence** me and **transform** me into a man who is walking in the **supernatural peace** of God.

#### **SUBPOINT 4B – OUTER Influences (v.9)**

But it's not enough to look to Jesus in just our **inner** influences...Paul reminds us that we are to look to Jesus in our outer influences as well.

Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.

Listen to how ***personal*** Paul makes this. “Hey Philippians, you’ve ***seen*** me...you ***know*** me...you’ve ***seen my own walk*** with Jesus in action...allow that walk to be an influence on you.”

Church, what ***influences*** are you surrounding yourself with? Who has ***access*** to speak into your life? Who’s ***influencing*** you from the ***outside***?

- Is it FOX? Social media? Hollywood?
- Are you allowing any old ***commentator*** or any old ***celebrity*** to speak influence into your life?
- Or are you surrounding yourselves with voices and influences that will ***inspire*** you to look to Jesus?

[\*pick up phone\*] I don’t know if we realize the significant outer influence that we allow into our lives ***just from this little device.***

- We listen to secular, sensualized “love songs” on Spotify...and then we wonder why we’re battling with ***lust, loneliness, and depression.***
- We watch a ***true crime documentary*** or an ***exposé*** that’s dark, morbid, and negative...and then we wonder why ***we*** feel dark, morbid, and negative.

- We scroll for hours through endless **doom and gloom** on social media...and then we wonder why life feels so **jaded**, **cynical**, and **hopeless**.

That's why with all of these influences in our life—inner and outer, personal and digital—Paul exhorts us to look to Jesus.

- Look to the One whose **example** we can imitate.
- Look to the One who is **pure**, **lovely**, **admirable**, **excellent!**
- Behold the One who is **true**, **honorable**, **right**, and **worthy of praise!**

## CONCLUSION

If you're looking for peace, look to Jesus.

- If you're looking for peace to **heal that troubled relationship**...look to Jesus...
- If you're looking for peace to **transform your actions**...look to Jesus...
- If you're looking for peace to **survive your circumstances**...look to Jesus...
- If you're looking for peace to **navigate the different voices of influence** in your life...look to Jesus...

## APPEAL

Some of you have never looked to Jesus before.

- You've **heard** about Him...
- You've **studied** Him...
- But you've never **looked** to Him...
- You've never **placed your life in His hands** and **acknowledged your need** of Him.

**Today** is the day to look to Jesus.

Some of you maybe **used** to look to Jesus, but you started looking to other things...

- You looked to **money** for **security**...
- ...looked to **relationships** for **validation**...
- ...looked to your **goals** and your **dreams** for **fulfillment**...
- ...and **somehow**, it still left you **empty**.

**Today** is the day to look to Jesus...look to the one who can give you **transcendent peace in this life** and the **guarantee of heaven in the next**.

Before you exit this online service...I want you to take these next few moments and look to Jesus.

- ***Talk*** to Him. ***Open up*** to Him.
- Be ***still***...be ***honest***...be ***vulnerable***...be ***thankful***...

And I believe that even in this unconventional online setting...God is still ready to move. The power of Jesus is here to save, to deliver, and heal. Let's look to Him today.

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