

PEACE OF MIND IN AN UNSTABLE WORLD

No matter what the future holds, you can have peace of mind and confidence when you know this.

No matter what happens in the world or in our own individual lives, is there a place to turn for stability? Can we look toward the future with hope, regardless of life's and the world's circumstances? These days many people are seeing the value of God as their constant. The world around us is ever-changing, but God does not change. He is steady, reliable. He says, "Is there any God besides me? No, there is no other Rock; I know not one. For I, the Lord, do not change."¹ God is always there. He can be counted on. He is "the same yesterday and today, and forever."² And God can make himself known, giving us a peace of mind through him, setting our hearts securely at rest.



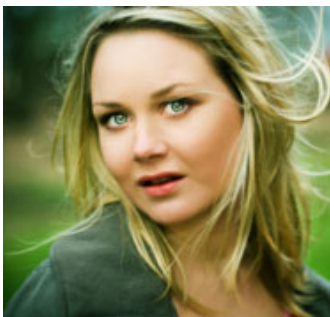
Is Peace of Mind Possible?

Heather, a Stanford grad, put it this way: "To be in a real-life relationship with God is a staggering and beautiful daily reality. There is 'cosmic companionship' that I won't trade the world for. I am deeply known and loved in a way I can only hope to adequately communicate."

Steve Sawyer, a hemophiliac, looked for stability when he found out that he'd received HIV from a bad blood transfusion. At first Steve was in great despair. He blamed God. Then Steve reached out to God. The result: the last few years of his life, Steve travelled to countless college campuses (enduring great pain) just to tell fellow students how they could know God and experience the peace he had experienced in knowing him. God has said, "My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."³

Like Steve, others have learned that no matter what happens in this life, it's not "the end of the world" -- because this world isn't the end.

The God of the Foxholes



Admittedly, many people wait until times get really rough before they turn to God. A military chaplain from World War II explained that "there are no atheists in the foxholes." When life is rosy, people don't feel like they need God. But that often changes when things get messy, when we realize we're in the trenches.

Caryn explains her path to God like this: "I thought I was a Christian because I went to church on Sunday, but I had no idea who God was. My senior year in high school looked much like my other three years. I spent most of my time getting drunk, high, or trying to find some way for someone to love me. I was dying inside and had no control over my life. It was when I realized how much I wanted my life to end that I knew when I went away to college I had to find some hope. It was then that I asked God to come into my life. He has shown me love, security, forgiveness, support, comfort, acceptance, and a purpose for living. He is my strength, and I wouldn't be here today if it weren't for him."

Who knows what the future holds? Many may feel like they're in a foxhole. Life can be a battle. Our peace of mind can be greatly shaken. At those moments when the heat is on, we often reach out to God. That's okay, because God, *the* constant, is there and actually wants to be involved in our lives. He says, "I, even I, am the Lord; and there is no savior besides me. Turn to me and be saved...for I am God, and there is no other."⁴

Yes, God can be thought of as a "crutch," but it's likely that he is the only truly legitimate one.

The Invisible Foxholes

Some people, however, turn to God even when things seem to be going well. John explained that: "By my senior year, I had achieved everything that people were telling me would make me fulfilled -- having leadership roles in campus organizations, partying, making good grades, dating girls I was really attracted to. Everything that I wanted to do and achieve while in college came to pass -- and yet I was still unfulfilled. Something was still missing and I had nowhere else to go. Of course, no one knew I was feeling this way about life -- on the outside I didn't show it."

Even when things seem to go right, life can still present a foxhole -- an internal one that's invisible to the naked eye but felt in the heart. Becky described that phenomenon this way: "How many times have you thought that if you just had that piece of clothing, or that boyfriend, or got to visit some place, that then your life would be happy and complete? And how many times have you purchased that shirt, or dated that guy or visited that place and walked away feeling more empty than when you began?"

We don't need failure or tragedy to feel the foxholes. Most often lack of peace results simply from the absence of God in our lives. Becky says of coming to know God, "Since then I've had many struggles and changes in my life, but everything I do takes on a new perspective knowing that I have a loving, eternal God on my side. I believe that there is nothing that God and I can't handle together -- and as for the completeness that I had searched so hard for, I had finally found it."

With God involved in our lives, we can rest easy. As we get to know God and listen to what he says in the Bible, he brings about that peace of mind in our lives, because we know him. We see life from his vantage point, aware of his faithfulness and ability to take care of us. So no matter what the future holds, we can place our hope in God as our constant. He's waiting to prove himself in our lives if we will turn to him and seek him.

True Peace of Mind - Building Upon the Rock

Are you building upon something in your life? Believe it or not, every person is building upon something. Each of us has a foundation, something we're putting our hope and faith in. Maybe it's ourselves -- "I know I can make my life a success if I try hard enough." Or a lifestyle -- "If I can make enough money, life will be wonderful." Or even a time period -- "The future is going to change things."

God has a different viewpoint. He says it is shaky ground to put our hope and faith in ourselves, in other people, or in anything this world offers. Instead, he wants us to trust in him. He says, "Everyone who hears these words of mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock. And everyone who hears these words of



mine, and does not act upon them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall."⁵

It's wise to have God involved in our lives for those times when the catastrophes come. But God's intent is for us to have a more abundant life no matter what the circumstances are. He wants to have a positive influence on every area of our lives. When we rely upon him and his words, we are building upon the Rock.

The Ultimate Peace of Mind

Some people feel secure being the child of a multi-millionaire, or knowing they can easily pull good grades. There is an even greater security in having a relationship with God.

God is powerful. Unlike us, God knows what will happen tomorrow, next week, next year, the next decade. He says, "I am God, and there is no one like me, declaring the end from the beginning."⁶ He knows what will happen in the future. More importantly, he knows what will occur in your life and will be there for you when it happens, if you've chosen to include him in your life. He tells us that he can be "our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in times of trouble."⁷ But we must make a sincere effort to seek him. He says, "you will seek me and find me, when you search for me with all your heart."⁸

That doesn't mean that those who know God will not go through difficult times. They will. If our nation encounters terrorist attacks, environmental or economic disasters, those who know God will be included in the suffering. But there is a peace and a strength that God's presence gives. One follower of Jesus Christ put it this way: "We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed."⁹ Reality tells us that we will confront problems. However, if we go through them in relationship with God, we can react to them with a different perspective and with a strength that is not our own. No problem has the capacity to be insurmountable to God. He is bigger than all the problems that can hit us, and we are not left alone to deal with them.

God cares. God's great power, which can be shown in our lives, is accompanied by his deep love. The future might be a time of world peace as never seen before, or maybe there will be more ethnic hatred and violence, more divorce, etc. In either case, no one will love us as much as God can love us. No one will care for us as highly as God can care for us. His Word tells us, "The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him."¹⁰ "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."¹¹ And, "The Lord is righteous in all his ways and loving toward all he has made. The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them."¹²

Jesus Christ told his followers these comforting words: "Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Therefore do not fear; you are of more value than many sparrows."¹³ If you turn to God, he will care for you as no one else does, and in a way that no one else can.

Peace of Mind through God

We have no idea what the future holds. If it brings hard times, God can be there for us. If it brings easy times, we will still need God to fill that inner void we have and to give our lives meaning.

When all is said and done, what matters most? What really matters is that we are not separated from God. Do we know God? Does he know us? Have we shut him out of our lives? Or have we let him in? Through knowing him, he produces in us a changing perspective and gives us hope. Through being in a relationship with him, we can have peace in the midst of all circumstances.



Why must God be central to our lives? Because there is no real peace or hope apart from knowing him. He is God and we are not. He does not depend on us, but we must depend upon him. He created us to need his presence in our lives. We can try to make life work without him, but it will be futile.

God wants us to seek him. He wants us to know him and to have him involved in our lives. But there is a problem: we've all shut him out. The Bible describes it this way: "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way."¹⁴ We've all tried to make our lives work without God. That's what the Bible calls "sin."

Heather, quoted earlier, says concerning sin: "When I entered Stanford, I was not a Christian. The world lay at my feet then, waiting to be revolutionized. I attended political meetings, took classes on racism and social justice, and immersed myself at the community service center. I believed in the power within me to make a significant difference in the world. I tutored underprivileged elementary school kids; I ran the day camp at a homeless shelter; I collected leftover food to feed the hungry. Yet, the more I tried to change the world, the more frustrated I became. I confronted bureaucracy, apathy, and...sin. I began to think that maybe human nature needed a basic overhaul."

Peace of Mind = Peace with God

Changing times and improved technology don't really matter all that much in the grand scheme of things. Why? Because our basic problem as human beings is that we've distanced ourselves from God. Our greatest problems are not physical, but spiritual. God knows this, so he provided a solution for our separation from him. He made a way for us to find our way back to him...through Jesus Christ.

The Bible says that, "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."¹⁵ Jesus Christ was crucified (an ancient form of execution) for our sins, in our place. He died, was buried, then rose from the dead. Because of his sacrificial death, we can come into a relationship with God -- "To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."¹⁶

It's really rather simple: God wants to be in perfect relationship with us -- so he made that relationship possible through Jesus. It's then up to us to seek God and ask him into our lives. Most people do this through prayer. Prayer means talking honestly with God. Right now you can reach out to God by telling him something like this in sincerity: "God, I want to know you. I haven't allowed you into my life thus far, but I want to change that. I want to take advantage of your solution for my separation from you. I am relying on Jesus' death on my behalf so that I can be forgiven and be made right with you. I want you to be involved in my life from this day forward."

Have you sincerely asked God into your life? Only you and he know for sure. If you have, you have a lot to look forward to. God promises to make your present life one of greater satisfaction because of your relationship with him.¹⁷ He promises to make his home in you.¹⁸ And he gives you eternal life.¹⁹

Melissa had this to say about God: "My mother divorced my father when I was very young, and I

wasn't really sure what was going on. I only knew that my father no longer came home. One day I went to visit my grandmother and I told her that I didn't understand why my father would hurt me and then disappear. She hugged me and told me that there was someone who would never leave me, and that someone was Jesus. She quoted Hebrews 13:5 and Psalms 68:5 which say 'I will never leave, nor forsake you' and 'He will be a father to the fatherless.' I was really excited to hear that God wanted to be my Father."

No matter what happens in the world around you, there is peace of mind knowing that God can be there for you. Regardless of what the future holds, you can have God as your constant.

(1) Isaiah 44:8 and Malachi 3:6 in the Bible (2) Hebrews 13:8 (3) John 14:27 and 16:33 (4) Isaiah 43:11 and Isaiah 45:22 (5) Matthew 7:24-27 (6) Isaiah 46:9-10 (7) Psalm 46:1 (8) Jeremiah 29:13 (9) 2 Corinthians 4:8-9 (10) Nahum 1:7 (11) 1 Peter 5:7 (12) Psalms 145:17-19 (13) Matthew 10:29-31 (14) Isaiah 53:6a (15) John 3:16 (16) John 1:12 (17) John 10:10 (18) John 14:23 (19) 1 John 5:11-13