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Is the Character of Peace working in you? Here is how you can find out. Take a careful look at this character and fruit of Peace from God's most precious Word by examining the passages below. Now ask yourself:

1. How do I exhibit Peace in my daily life?
2. What can I do to develop a more Peaceful attitude?
3. What blocks the practice of peace in my life?
4. How can I make Peace function better, stronger and faster, even in times of uncertainty and stress?

Peace is surrendering and yielding ourselves to the Lord to be in His control, for He is our ultimate peace! In so doing, tranquility will be our tone, control, and our composure. This will be fueled from our harmonious relationship with God-handing over control of our hearts, will, and minds to Him. We are willing to make peace with others because we have found peace with God. Thus, we can live at peace with our neighbors, proclaiming serenity and rekindling it when it goes down or is lost. Peace is unity, which is more important than just resolving trivial disagreements. Our focus must be on edifying and encouraging-such things, unfortunately, rare in the church today! We will either lift people up or bring them down, something we need to know so as to pursue peace and harmony and not let the childish and petty things of life divide us. Our focus must be on keeping our own accounts straight and not worrying or interfering with others. This helps make us peacemakers. Once we make real peace with God, we will be able to make and maintain peace with others. When we are at peace with God, we need to be at peace with ourselves emotionally, and others relationally.

(Isaiah. 26:3; Matthew 5:9; Luke 19:42; John 14:27; 16:33; Romans 5:1; 12:18; Galatians 5:22-23; Colossians 3:15; Philippians 4:7).

Chaos and turmoil are the opposites. This can range from seeking destruction and chaos to being a distrustful and impatient person, which will bring you despair. You will be unable to build positive relationships or handle difficult situations. You will have an "I must have control" orientated personality and be unable or unwilling to give yourself to God and others.

In Hebrews and many other places in Scripture, God is called a *God of peace*. Sometimes this means a benediction and a title for God. Which means it is His character and how He treats us and thus how He calls us to treat others (Rom. 15: 33; 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 4:9; 1 Thess. 5:23; 2 Thess. 3:16; Heb. 13:20)! This prime relationship role we have with God creates the path for the work of the Spirit and God's love and serenity being exhibited in us. So we are living out what He pours in us, so it pours out through us. This helps with our confidence and hope so we persevere in our commitment and production of fruit and faith. The question we need to be asking, *is this happening and if not why not?* Because, in Christ, we are at peace, we now have a special favor from God and an ability to live a triumphant life that would please Him. This means we can be peace and live a life of comfort and composure (John 4:2; 14:27; 20:19; Luke 1:28; Gal. 1:3; Eph 1:2).

Yet, many Christians fail to realize that our intrinsic value is from Christ, not what others say or do. We need to learn to look to Him and all else will fall into place. However, we forget and we fight! So it is when churches fight and people leave, never to venture into another church again! Thus, we are to look at Christ as our Lord and example, and not what other Christians seem to do to us. Our faith is in Christ, not in how we are treated in life or at a church; however, we must always strive to do our best

at treating others, even at churches with excellence in the way of the Fruit of the Spirit! If we can't do it at our "Home" how can we do it in our personal homes and community?

Our relationships, including with Christ, is not without its fears and distresses, as with any relationship. We are in a world that is filled with distress and pain and there is no way to walk through it without stumbling onto suffering and distress. Even in the face of these struggles and hardships, we are to refer to and focus on God as comfort! If we just live our lives with the attitude of how things affect "me" and not "others," then we are living with the devil, and not with God. We are living in turmoil as we are at war with ourselves, God and others and not one of clam and comfort.

In Romans 12: 14-21, we are to be "*peace makers*," and not hide in protest, or fight in ignorance. This is about how we react. There are times when Christians must take a stand to defend morality, such as the anti-abortion movement. This must always be done in the parameters of love and listening, and in kindness, while never compromising biblical integrity or values. There are also times when we must go to war, either for defense or to defend others. This is not a rejection of the sixth commandment of, "*you shall not murder*." Rather, it is the protection and responsibility to the government, which is moral and just if followed biblically. In this passage is also the phrase, *live at peace*, this is what we are to be because who we are in Christ. We will fail at it, as conviction sits up negative responses in others as does pride, fear and attitudes. But we are still to strive for peace even though we may not get it!

Peace can be maintained for a time out of ignorance or denial, but when the realities of life come upon us, peace can be impossible unless we let His peace reign in us! When we do not let go we will blame God and lose our unity and serenity in Him. Peace is learning to let go of our will, desires and plans. Peace is not the peace of the hippie movement or even between nations, although those things can be applied from it. Peace is serenity from the realization that God is in charge and we can relax because He is in control. Peace is the recognition that our biggest problem has been solved! It is the stillness we have when our trust is upon Christ as Lord (Psalm 46:10). Peace will also enable us to yield our will over to Him. Peace enables us to be moved from the stronghold of fear and trepidations into a life of harmony (Isa. 26:3; 2 Tim. 1:7). When we are on the verge of giving up, or losing our hope, peace can be the anchor to keep us on His path, to see His hope, to let it give you the confidence to keep moving on His path.

Reflection

The Peace that Jesus gives is not the absence of trouble, but is rather the confidence that He is always there with us. This helps us in our efforts in the pursuing of peace. This demands an active participation to get involved, not just sitting on a couch and hoping for it. How can I *live in harmony*, we can do this by emptying ourselves of pride to allow the work of sanctification that brings humility and love, by respecting and sharing the same love and thoughts- togetherness (Phil. 2:1-8; 1 Pet. 3:7-12). It is about positioning ourselves in Christ, not in the ways of the world, being harmonious not filled with self-conceit!

Remember the fruit of the Spirit are codependent entities, neither one can stand or work by itself as they are designed to work all together synergistically to build us up for His service.

- Here are positive examples from Scripture (Psalm 27:1-6; Luke 1:26-38; 2:25-32; John 14:25-31; Acts 27:21-25)
- Here is are negative examples from Scripture (II Sam. 15:1-13; Matt. 2:13-18; 26:69-75; 27:1-7; Luke 8:22-25)

Further Questions

1. How would you define Peace?
2. What are the things that cause despair for you?
3. How does despair counteract Peace?
4. Do you cooperate with Christ as your Lord, to allow His peace to rein in you, if not what is in the way?
5. When have you been filled with Peace the most?
6. In what situation did you fail to have Peace in which you should have?
7. What issue is in your life that would improve with more Peace?
8. Think through the steps you need to take to put Peace into action in a specific instance. Such as a counteracting the attitude of despair or hopelessness, or not letting your circumstances get in the way of your peace?