

Special Messages of 2016

Experiencing More Peace of God

Unedited Transcript

Patrick Morley

Good morning, men, and welcome to Man in the Mirror men's Bible study. We have some visitors today. We have some men who are in town for our Boot Camp training, which is the final step of field staff training before men are out doing the work with churches. By the way, every church that these men engage, we know from our calculations, that every church will see 15 new disciples for Jesus in the first year, so it's a powerful ministry they're going to be involved in. I'd just like to introduce them, and maybe ask them to stand. Hold your applause, if you would. Rudy Costa from Tracy, California. Nathan Curry from Woodstock, Georgia, and Jimmy Huff from, do you say it as Martinez or Martinez? Martinez, yeah. In Georgia, I didn't think they'd say Martinez, but Jimmy Huff, and then Tyson Michaels from Cutbank, Montana and Tyler Sutton from Peoria, Illinois in the Phoenix area. Great. I wonder if you would join me in welcoming these men to Orlando for Boot Camp training! Awesome. Good to have you men with us. We're also, this morning, going to present the 2016 Jim Seibert Distinguished Service Award. The previous recipients were Jim Seibert in 2007, and then John Barber. John, just raise your hand. You don't have to stand up, John. Jim Angelakos, who's not here this morning. Almost half of our crew is on vacation today. Jim Angelakos, and then Don Walburn, raise your hand. Tom Watson, up here. Keith Thomas, back there. Steve Jones, back there. Jeff Taylor's not with us today, and then Steve Hall is also not with us today.

The significance of this award is that each year, we try to recognize some unique contribution in serving others. We have a man among us who's been serving in an extraordinary way. What he's actually been doing is he's been picking off a number of you and doing one-on-one discipleship. A number of you have experienced this with this gentleman. In all my years of doing discipleship, I would say this is a singular example of somebody who is intentionally and purposefully just trolling through the Bible study and looking for guys that he could pick up and disciple. The 2016 Distinguished Service Award goes to, and if you'll please join me up here, John Anderson. John, this says the Jim Seibert Distinguished Service Award, your name on it, John Anderson, and it says Man in the Mirror Bible study 2016 and then Ephesians 3:14-21. On behalf of the leadership team and all the men here, just thank you so much for caring so much. We recognize you so much. God bless you.

You're so welcome. We ought to also do a shout out today. We have some men, eight of them, who have been with us for about a year. They're meeting on Tuesday at the church coffee shop. They call themselves Cross Culture. They're the Mountain View Church in Tumwater, Washington, and Rob Brower is their leader. I thought this was interesting enough, I'd just read it, self-description. "We are from different churches, different denominations, different cities, different generations, different ethnic and economic backgrounds. However, we believe that God has called us to be part of something whose whole is greater than the sum of the parts." I just thought that was a very unique approach. They call themselves Cross Culture. Would you join me in giving a rouse and a warm welcome to Cross Culture? One, two, three! Hoo-rah! Welcome, men. We are really glad to have you here with us today.

The title of today's message, Experiencing More Peace of God. Let me just tell you what has precipitated this message. The man who took me under his wing, Jim, and disciplined me, the main venue, the starting point for that was, we were at a couples' Bible study. My wife and I, when we first were married, Jim took me under his wing and invited me to be part of a couples' Bible study. His wife, Carolyn, one day was talking about how she had had some grueling problem. I can't remember what the problem was, but she said that she had read Philippians 4:6-7, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything with prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God, and the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." Then she said, with a most radiant smile, one of the ten most radiant smiles I've ever seen, she said, "So last night, I was suffering with anxiety over this situation, and because of Philippians 4:6-7, I prayed with thanksgiving, and I experienced a peace of God that you can't put into words."

I just remember being so struck by that, that I want that in my life. Now, since that time, you as well as I, we all go through undulations. We're constantly, and it's not just like we're joyful and peaceful and hopeful for three years, and then we have a one-week period of time. There is that going on, those big things, but there's also this daily undulation that we experience between suffering and hard times and things that cause fear, anxiety, dread, worry, and then also joys and things that make us happy. I just have really been going through a challenging time. I don't need you to teach me. You don't need me to teach you. What I want to do this morning is just want to share what I've been going through, a little bit of it, and then talk about some of the things that the Scriptures say.

This would be new, perhaps, to a few of you in terms of what the Scriptures might say, but it's not new to any of you in terms of what we experience. I've called the talk Experiencing More Peace of God. It's not about knowing more about the peace of God. What I'm hoping today will be is you having an actual experience. Maybe it's vicarious with me, or maybe you will have your own shadow case, something you're going through and you'll be able to walk right alongside me as I talk about these things. The ministry has cash flow problems. Can you think of anything besides child pain maybe and back pain that hurts more than cash flow problems? I've been walking with God for more than four decades. These cash flow problems, I have more faith for those problems today than I've ever had before.

"Faith," Hebrews 11:1 says, "is the assurance of things hoped for," so there's an assurance, "and the conviction of things not seen." I have, in my heart, an assurance of the things that I hope for, and I have in my heart a conviction of the things that I don't see, but guess what? I still woke up in the middle of the night last night, thinking about it. The first piece of this is, why are we still struggling to find peace? Why are we still struggling to find peace? By the way, if you don't struggle to find peace, you're welcome to go ahead and leave right now. Honestly. Just, I'm not going to go off on that tangent. I woke up in the middle of the night last night, and I thought it was interesting, since I was planning to talk to you today about how to have more, experience more peace. Philippians 4:6-7. I just recalled the verse. By the way, that's not a bad verse to memorize. I recalled the verse to my mind, and then I prayed. I asked God to give me His peace.

I went back to bed, and I slept like a baby and woke up to the alarm. I didn't wake up early or anything like that. It was awesome. I have other problems. I've been trying to hire someone. I don't know if they're the right person or not, but that's not the problem. The problem is, they don't know if they want the job or not. You've got this anxiety. You're so hoping that this person is the right person, but you're not sure yourself, and on top of that, they're not even sure, so you go through this process of basically, how do you find peace about these things? It may be more just daily for you. I know a man who, if he

doesn't come up with \$3,000 by Monday morning, his apartment complex is going to be filing an eviction notice.

There's a man who can't be here this morning because he has to now go to work at 7:30. He's trying to win custody of his daughter back. His daughter is actually living with one of his wife's relatives right now, and he's trying to win custody back, so he's trying to be able to show six months of pay stubs, because he has a prison record and some things like that. He's not with us this morning. There's the anxiousness, the fear, the dread, that comes with that. Maybe it is back problem. Maybe it is some sort of a physical problem. Maybe it's not you. Maybe it's your spouse, and the anxiety, the fear, the worry. How is this going to turn out? Proverbs chapter three, verses 25 and 26 say, "Have no fear of sudden disaster or the ruin that overtakes the wicked, for the Lord will be your confidence, and He will keep your foot from being snared."

I remember I had a project, a real estate project. It wasn't leasing up. It wasn't leasing up. I bought an old building. I rehabbed it. It wasn't leasing up. I was under so much pressure, and I remember the first time I read Proverbs chapter 3:25 and 26. "Have no fear." I was in the grip. I was in a death grip of anxiety, in fear, in worry, in dread. I had no peace. I couldn't find peace. It was affecting everything. I was snapping at my wife. I was irritable with my kids. My insides were roiling all the time, and I read Proverbs chapter three, verses 25 and 26, "Have no fear of sudden disaster or the ruin that overtakes the wicked, for the Lord will be your confidence, and He will keep your foot from being snared." That made me think about that radiant smile on Carolyn's face and the peace of God that had come into her. That verse, that changed my life.

I've had a little string of experiences with Scriptures that God sent to me that I ran across at exactly the right time in order to help me take another step in experiencing more and more of the peace of God. Let's just say that you have been now maybe beginning to implement more and more of these six habits of spiritually happy men that we just talked about, about reading the Word of God on a regular basis, being in a small group, serving someone, tithing, being part of a church and another one that I'm missing. You do this, and you have this joy. You have this peace. Your faith surges. You're really feeling good. That's the situation. Then, boom. The next situation comes along. You have a deal that you've been working on. If that deal doesn't close, you're going to be in deep weeds. You were up with me last night, because you don't know how it's going to turn out.

How is it that we wrestle with these things? How is it? A lot of the time, the solution is to work harder, but here's what I find to be true for me. A couple, three weeks ago, I went through this little exercise, and I realized, I was looking back at all of the things that have not worked out for me. To the best of my knowledge, I can't think of a single thing that hasn't worked out, whether it's a task or a relationship, but for the reason that I was trying to control the outcome. Proverbs chapter 21:31 says, "The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the Lord." You have to make the horse ready for the day of battle. You have to do your part. You have to do your work, but victory rests with the Lord! It's the Lord God who is producing the outcomes. We're not producing the outcomes. God's calling us to be faithful, not to produce particular outcomes. The outcomes are the work of God.

God is sovereignly orchestrating all human events, yes? Why? To bring us into right relationship with Him and right relationship with each other. God is doing these. God, in Ephesians 1:11, God is working out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will. He has a will! He has a plan! He has a purpose for your life! It's good! Romans 8:28. Most of us know Romans 8:28, "ALL things," not most things, "ALL things work together for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose." Then we

try to control the outcome. Proverbs 21:30 says, "There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the Lord." When I try to take control of the outcome, when I try to control the outcome, and I've done this many times and in many ways, and I do it less and less all the time, but I still do it, even after all these years. Maybe it's a tenth of what I used to do, but I still try to do it. It's just because I'm so human! You are so stinkin' human!

My calling is to take God's message of love to a broken generation. I've shared before how that calling came to me. I won't do that today, but I heard, in my mind, a distinct voice that I recognized as the voice of the Holy Spirit saying to me, "I want you to take My message of love to a broken generation." I have made a career out of trying to understand what that means! I know what a broken gen-, right away I knew what the broken generation was. It's the rat race. It's the man in the mirror. It's all those things! I get that, but what is God's message of love? God actually put blinders on me for, literally, for a decade. I kept asking. I kept praying, pleading, yearning to know. Sometimes, the longer you plead, the longer you yearn, the longer you want to know, the more you appreciate something when you actually get it!

Maybe it's a material thing that would make you understand that better, maybe it's a car. Maybe it's a woman that you chase for a long time, but it's also true with spiritual insight. The harder something is to apprehend, the more we tend to appreciate it. Finally, one day, it dawned on me, "Jesus Christ is God's message of love!" "For God so loved the world that He sent Jesus." There's so many facets of this. "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called His children, and that is what we are." "But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, has made us alive with Christ." God is love. That's His nature. He lavishes this love on us. He wants to lavish this love on us. We're on Death Row. We're Death Row inmates. Jesus Christ forgives. He came...

Jesus Christ basically stepped in as a surrogate for you and for me to pay the death penalty for all of those terrible things that you've done, but you know and I know that you still do those terrible things in your heart, at least, every day. If there's somebody here who doesn't think that you do terrible things in your heart every day, then we need to talk. Whether it's murderous thoughts, jealousy, envy, lusting after your neighbor's wife, whatever it is, so it's not just for all those terrible things that we did in the past that Jesus has come. It's for all those terrible things that you're going to do tomorrow and the next day and the next day and the next day and the next day after that, also. His love for us is just so overwhelming. It's so amazing. John 14:27, this Jesus, He says this. He says, "I am leaving you with a gift, peace of mind and heart. The peace I give is a gift the world cannot give, so don't be troubled or afraid."

Jesus said, "As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you." That's unfathomable, to think about that God the Father, the way that He loves Jesus, and there's no way to really comprehend that, but He says, "As that Father of yours has loved Me, so have I loved you." Jesus loves us the same way that His Father loves Him, but that's not all. John 17:23, Jesus says, "As the Father has loved Me, so the Father loves you." The way that the Father loves Jesus, the Father loves us that way, and Jesus loves us that way, too. Romans 5:5, "God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit." This love that Jesus loving us like His Father loved Him and the Father loving us the way that the Father loved Jesus, then the Holy Spirit takes all that, and He pours it into our hearts. He pours that into our hearts.

There is a cluster of ideas here, and peace is a byproduct of understanding and believing, fully understanding and truly believing and embracing this love of God by faith. Peace is a byproduct of really grasping how infinitely God loves, how inexhaustibly God loves you! I want you to just, I don't want you to know anything today. I just want you to experience this peace that God has for you, because of His love! This is how God showed His love among us. He sent His one and only Son. "This is love, not that we

loved God, but that He loved us and gave." One verse that would be worth looking at, we'll look at more than one, but one verse that we'll be looking at together is 1 John, if you want to turn in your Bibles to 1 John chapter four. Then, drop down to verse 18. It says this. It says, "There is no fear in love." There is no fear in love, so the fear, the anxiety, the lack of peace. The flip side of peace is non-peace. The source of that non-peace is this fear, this dread.

Jesus says, "Fear not. Fear not. Fear not. Fear not. Fear not. Fear not. Don't be afraid. I'm giving you this peace as a gift." He says here, John does, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear," because fear has to do with punishment. All those terrible things that you're doing, this morning, they're all forgiven, every single one of them. You should bring them to Jesus. You should repent. You should ask for His forgiveness. You should enjoy His forgiveness, but they are forgiven, because that has to do, the fear that we feel has to do with punishment. "The man who fears is not made perfect in love."

Let the love of Jesus be perfect in you. Just go for that. If you just go for that one thing, and there are many different ways to say this, but just go for that one thing, to really and truly understand and believe how much God loves you. God loves you very much. He loves you completely, fully. Don't try to help Him. Don't try to help Him. Experience more peace this way. This is the big idea. This is the Big Idea. **God literally pours His love into our hearts by His Spirit. Do you feel it?** Do you feel it? God literally pours, pours, that's Romans five, chapter five. God literally pours His love into our hearts by His Spirit. Do you feel it? Do you feel it?

We have this problem. We're still struggling to find peace. He's pouring His love into our hearts, so how does God provide to solve this problem? I've already been talking about it quite a bit, but I want to give you some of the promises. I've already mentioned Proverbs chapter 3:25 and 6, "have no fear of sudden disaster." Philippians chapter one, verse six, "He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion." He's got this. He's got this. When you have something that's creating anxiety, a problem, yeah, you need to get the horse ready for the day of battle. That's true, but victory rests with the Lord. What's happening to you is not random. You've been praying about your life, so whatever's coming your way, you don't have to now somehow spring into action and solve this problem, because you've been praying for God's will to be done, and so whatever's happening in your life has already passed through the hands of God before it came to you.

A couple of others, 2 Timothy chapter one, verse seven. "For God has not given a spirit of fear." God doesn't give a spirit of fear, "but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." The first choice we have is to try to control the outcome, but the second choice is 1 Peter 5:7, "Cast all your anxiety on the Lord, because He cares for you." Philippians four, verses six and seven, our verse for the day, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything," pray about everything with supplication, with thanksgiving, with a spirit of gratitude. When we pray, this is how we appropriate this. When we pray, when we pray, "the peace of God which surpasses all comprehension," what in the world does that mean? "The peace of God that surpasses all comprehension?" It means that there is a kind of peace that can not be described with words! That's what that means! There is a kind of peace that can not be described with mere words. It surpasses comprehension, but it "will keep your heart and your mind" at 3:00 am "in Christ Jesus," or put it back there.

It's beautiful. It's beautiful. Then, you can do 1 Thessalonians five, whatever it is, 15 to 17, which says, "Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing, and in everything, give thanks." Can you do that? Absolutely! Even when you get the diagnosis, you have known people, I'm sure, who have said, "The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord!" They have rejoiced in bed.... Scott

Alexander used to lead this table. Got subcutaneous T-cell lymphoma non-Hodgkins. Not a problem, not a problem. Nobody dies from cutaneous T-cell lymphoma non-Hodgkins, but seven years later, Scott died. Every day of his life, he rejoiced! He prayed without ceasing, and he gave thanks because the Scripture says, "This is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." It's because Scott understood how much he was loved. The Big Idea today is this: **God literally pours His love into our hearts by His Spirit. Do you feel it? Do you feel it?**

Then, just a couple of practical things here. I think we have time for, really, I'll just, I'm going to tell you a little story. We have a little dog. The little dog is Missy. Missy is a camp dog. We were camping last week. She's a camp dog. She loves to camp. She loves to travel. She loves to hike, and she's a water dog. This little dog, it's a little poofy, frou-frou lap dog for middle-aged women is what it really is, little Bichon. It has the body of a Bichon but the heart of a Labrador. It loves the water, so we were camping next to a creek, pretty good-sized creek with steep banks about eight feet high. I have a leash here. Maybe you can just hold on to the end of that. Right there, that's what? Maybe three, three and a half, four feet? Something like that, but this is one of those leashes where you can also give the dog a little more leash, a little more rope, so that's about something like what? Maybe 15 feet? I didn't measure it, but it looks like about that. 15 feet, three inches. No, I'm kidding. Something like that.

I hooked this leash up to our little dog, and then we go out for walks and hikes. Dogs and leashes is a good combination, because what that leash allows me to do is to give the little dog quite a bit of freedom, quite a bit of freedom. If I didn't have the leash, I wouldn't even let the dog out of the camper, you see, because I'd be afraid of all kinds of things. From my perspective, the leash is a good thing. From the dog's perspective, the leash is not such a good thing, because I use the leash to guide the dog. There's a place at our campground last week where, along the bank, there's really only one place to go down safely. Every place else are pretty high banks. It would be dangerous for the little dog to try to go down there.

I'm walking the dog, Missy, and Missy decides that she wants to go down in the wrong place! What do I do? I put the brake on the leash, and I pull her back. I restrain her. She looks back at me like, "Come on, Dad! This is going to be cool! This is going to be fun!" I'm looking at her and I'm saying, "No, we're not going to do that, because I'm here to protect you from your freedom! You have all this freedom outside now that you didn't have, but I need to protect you, so I'm going to use this leash to guide you," because I knew that ten feet downstream was a place where the dog could go down safely, so I used the leash to guide the dog toward the open space. The dog takes off running, like it always does, and runs down the bank? No. It runs right by the place that would be safe to go down and goes on the other side to another place that would be equally unsafe to go down!

I pull and jerk back the leash again, and eventually get her to go down into a place that's basically quiet water between some rocks and rapids and some rocks and rapids, where she can go and play in the water. What does she do? Does she go over to the water-soaked rock slab and enjoy the water? No! There's a stump. There's a tree in the middle of the river, so she's going over, and she's trying to get up on top of this log that's laying, this giant, big log that's laying, so I have to jerk her back again. Does she go down and just? No! There's this little muddy area over here, where it looks like quicksand to me, but it's certainly black mud. She goes over to that, and immediately wants to start, so I restrain her again.

What is the dog thinking all this time? "My daddy doesn't really love me that much, because my daddy won't let me have my own way." What am I thinking? I'm thinking, "I love this dog so much that its protection is my highest priority. This dog, I love this dog. Taking care of this dog is so important to me. I

am pouring out my love on this dog right now, and this dog has no idea what I'm doing." That's the way it is, brothers, with us a lot of the time. This is a very existential thing, this walking with the Holy Spirit. There are so many different ways to say it. I wrote down a few. Walking in the Spirit, a moment-by-moment relationship with God, an along-the-way kind of a thing, a daily walk, but it's basically about this. It's about letting Jesus be the highest and best thought that we have in any situation, and understanding that His love for us is exponentially more than we could possibly imagine.

You may be under a lot of anxiety, stress. For practical reasons, you may need to downsize. Maybe you should downsize. Maybe you should cut back something, but this is not a talk for that. This is a talk for normal guys who are experiencing this normal anxiety and fear that comes along, and how to have more peace. The way to have more peace is to understand that God has literally poured out His love into your heart by His Holy Spirit. Do you feel that? Do you feel that? I hope you do. Let's pray.

Our dearest Father, we come to You at the, some of us, curled up in Your arms, some of us yanking at the leash, some of us sensing great peace and joy today, right now, this moment, but we know that later, there will be something that will be at least an invitation to anxiety and fear and worry. Lord, I just pray that we all would just, in a very personal way, grasp how high and wide and deep is the love that You have for us, and that we would feel the peace of God that You have promised just oozing into us, because this love leads us to a trust that You are really looking out for what's best for us, that You really are working all things together for good. We make this prayer in Your name, Jesus. Amen.