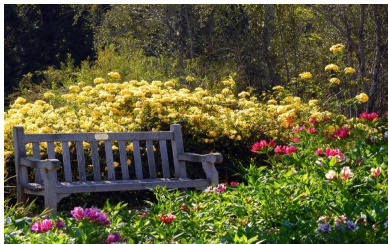


FINDING PEACE by Linda Ensley



The rain is pouring down; the wind is blowing the rain hard against the house. I'm thankful that I am in for the night and do not need to venture outside. As I sit at my dining room table, watching and listening to the storm that surrounds me, I find peace. I'm protected from the storm; I'm dry and comfortable. Inspirational music is drifting from the radio in the kitchen; my Bible is open in front of me and there is a hot cup of coffee in my hand. Ah! This is good! This is peace in my little world.

In the midst of this thought, I'm reminded of the difficult day I just had at work. There were far too many phone calls on this day that I was rushing to meet deadlines. There were computer and printer problems that slowed things down, and so much more than usual that needed my attention. Yet, in the midst of this personal storm, I could find peace. How wonderful it is to be able to close my eyes and inwardly connect with my Lord and Savior. Even if it is only for a moment, I can refocus; I can feel safe and comfortable in His presence. He validates all that I am and all that I'm doing and gives me strength to continue. He confirms His love for me and I am once more at peace.

The Hebrew word used most often for peace is *shalom*. The basic meaning of *shalom* is harmony, tranquility, wholeness and a general well-being in all areas of life. This is the peace that existed before sin entered the human race. I wonder if this is why we can find peace and rest in nature, like the tranquility of a beautiful sea shore, the peacefulness of a garden filled with flowers, or the joyfulness of birds singing at sunrise. **Psalm 34:14** commands us to **“Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.”** God longs for us to live in that same peace that He created in the beginning.

What a wonderful gift peace is. But just like love and joy, it is another fruit of the Spirit that needs to be cultivated. **James 3:17-18** highlights the need for peace as one pursues wisdom. **“But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sew in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.”**

Peace is one of those quiet, inner gifts that produces the power to change one's view of their worldly circumstances. The apostle Paul wrote these words to the Philippian church, from his prison cell in Rome. **“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to**

God. And the peace of God which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

The true sign that the Holy Spirit has produced this peace within you is when it overflows to others. **Romans 12:16-18** states **“Live in harmony with one another. So do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position...Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”**

The words of **Colossians 3:15** are often used as a blessing: **“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.”**

Foundations for Living offers volunteer opportunities for you to cultivate the fruits of the Spirit in your life as you invest in the lives of others, and in so doing introduce them to the Prince of Peace.

