





# Be Strengthened

A 5-Day Devotional Journey With Jesus

BY JOY HOOKER



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“Peace I leave with you;  
my peace I give you.  
I do not give to you as the  
world gives. Do not let  
your hearts be  
troubled and do not  
be afraid.”

John 14:27 (NIV)

## Day 1

“Peace | leave with you...”



It is always exciting when people make special announcements, such as an engagement or that they have a new baby on the way. But when God announces something big, He goes all out. Yet He also does it in very unexpected ways, often using methods that don't seem to make much sense from an earthly perspective.

For instance, the Christmas story is amazing. God sent messenger angels from Heaven to personally visit at least three people. He placed a unique star in the sky which guided foreigners to worship Jesus. He even sent an unconventional prophet (John the Baptist) to prepare the way, calling the people to repent. However, God's most glorious announcement was carried out in the countryside and witnessed only by shepherds. There, a great army of angels gathered to sing and proclaim praises to God and declare “PEACE on earth” (Luke 2:14).

Possibly hundreds of thousands of angels were involved in the announcement of peace, and it must have been a truly amazing sight. Their decree went far beyond the shepherds who witnessed it. This was a heavenly declaration that was pronounced over the whole earth. It would have resonated in the spiritual realm with immense power and forceful authority.

PEACE was a decree by Almighty God, and it heralded a new era on earth. This decree ushered in a profound initiative by God the Father that would change everything.

We usually think of “peace” in terms of an absence of conflict. Peace is often equated with tranquillity, calmness and quietness. However, this is not the biblical definition of peace.

The Hebrew word for peace is *Shalom*. *Shalom* is an incredibly complex and all-encompassing concept. It has to do with wholeness, completeness, harmony and fulfilment in every sphere. *Shalom* has been likened to a key that opens the door to God’s purpose for His creation. This also includes taking what is damaged to bring it back to health and wellbeing. It incorporates working with what is broken and restoring it to wholeness.

Most importantly, *Shalom* is anchored in the Kingdom of Heaven, rather than on earth. It therefore transcends anything available in this world. This is the kind of peace that was announced by God’s angelic army at the birth of Jesus, and it forms the foundation for the New Testament use of the word “peace.”

As Jesus prepared His disciples for His death, resurrection and ascension, He declared, “Peace I leave with you...”. In fact, wholeness, restoration, and wellbeing through Jesus Christ, continues for all His disciples, including you and I, and will never end (Isaiah 9:7). The fullness of all that was announced at Jesus birth is right here, right now, and is fully present and available for each of us. This is the good news of the Kingdom!

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### Questions for reflection

- Where have I been endeavouring to make sense of God’s ways, using an earthly perspective? How can I change this?
- How biblical is my understanding of “peace”? Have I settled for something less than *Shalom*?

## Day 2

“...my peace I give you.”



Imagine receiving a very precious gift. Every time you think of this gift, you are filled with warmth and delight. It touches your heart in a way that nothing else can. God's gifts are the same. They are heart-gifts. They come from the heart of our loving God.

Peace is a gift from Jesus, to you and me. It was announced by a joy-filled army of angels at Jesus' birth, and its fulfilment was declared with His words from the cross, "It is finished."

The peace Jesus accomplished at the cross was so great that every impediment to reconciliation with God, and every barrier to every human relationship, was flung completely out of the way forever (Colossians 1:20; Ephesians 2:14-17). This was followed by Jesus' grand ascension to sit enthroned above every ruler and all authority in heaven and on earth (Ephesians 1:20-22).

The absolute completeness of God's *Shalom* is so mind-blowing, we can hardly comprehend it - yet Jesus gifts His peace to us. (You might need to stop and think about this for a few minutes!)

Just like any other gift, peace can be given and received (or rejected). We see this when Jesus sends 70 of His disciples into the towns and villages in Samaria (Luke 10:1-12). Jesus tells the disciples not to carry a purse, bag or sandals (representing earthly provision). Instead, like the angels at Jesus' birth, the disciples are to announce peace (*Shalom* – wholeness, wellbeing, completeness) (verses 4-5).

The interesting thing is, like a rejected gift, if the announcement is refused, peace returns to the disciples (Luke 10:6). God's peace will not stay where it is not welcomed. However, the disciples found that, just like the proclamation by the army of angels at Jesus' birth, the announcement of God's *Shalom* had great authority in the spiritual realm (see Luke 10:17).

It is no different today. Jesus' gift of *Shalom* involves so much more than our own salvation and wellbeing. It is a powerful gift that will not only transform every area of our lives, but it also has the potential to impact the lives of everyone around us. Doors will open, demons will flee, chains will be broken, and provision and healing will flow.

Jesus has gifted *Shalom* to all who accept the invitation to follow Him, including you and me. Yet sometimes we don't fully recognise the greatness of this gift that we have already received.

Now is the time to grasp that *Shalom* is fully ours. We ought to not only be experiencing God's peace in our own lives, but announce peace to every aspect of our daily routine. This is Jesus' amazing gift to us.

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### Questions for reflection

- Where have I seen or experienced the transforming power of *Shalom* in my life?
- Are there any areas where I have only partially accepted Jesus' gift of *Shalom*, or put conditions on my acceptance?
- What is stopping me fully embracing Jesus' precious gift of *Shalom* right now?

## Day 3

“I do not give to you as the world gives.”



There are many things on earth that offer the promise of peace, and we can easily default to looking for earthly strategies to find calmness and relief. But looking for peace by avoiding conflict, or trying things like mindfulness or yoga, will never bring *Shalom*, no matter how hard we try. That’s because the peace Jesus gives to us is not from this world – it is sourced in the Kingdom of Heaven. It is entirely different from anything that is found on earth.

Heaven-sourced *Shalom* is based on Jesus’ victory and enthronement. This is a very important point to grasp. *Shalom* is not something that is passive. It is very powerful and has tremendous authority over chaos and disruption - because it comes from the throne of God.

In fact, God’s *Shalom* is so powerful that it confronts and overcomes everything that is evil. As the Apostle Paul says, it’s the God of peace who will “soon crush Satan under your feet” (Romans 16:20).

We see this in the story of Gideon. At the time, the Israelites had included worship of Baal and Asherah alongside their worship of God (Yahweh). Worship of these gods included ritual prostitution and setting up false idols and altars in the land. This brought them into a place of spiritual bondage and opened the door for Israel’s enemies to invade and ravage the land.

It is no accident that when God reveals Himself to Gideon He says, “Peace [*Shalom*]! Do not be afraid” (Judges 6:23). The revelation of *Shalom* breaks so abruptly into Gideon’s awareness



that he immediately and significantly builds an altar to the Lord and calls it “Yahweh is Shalom.” Gideon has become aware that God who *is Shalom*, has stepped into Israel’s impoverished circumstances with Heaven’s wholeness, completeness and peace, and everything has changed.

That same day, God tells Gideon to begin dealing with what has caused their current poverty – the worship of Baal and Asherah. God’s revelation of *Shalom* is what strengthens and empowers Gideon to cut down the idols in his own family (Judges 6:25-27).

The good news is that Almighty God has never ceased to be *Jehovah Shalom*. This same *Shalom* has been gifted to each of us by Jesus.

Just as Gideon was strengthened by *Shalom* to act against idolatry, it’s up to us to do something with the *Shalom* given to us by Jesus. Let’s be strengthened by His *Shalom* to stand as overcomers, not shaken by the evil and chaos in the world around us. Let’s allow His *Shalom* to challenge every area of compromise where we have sought to find peace or fulfilment apart from in Him.

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### Questions for reflection

- What areas of compromise does God’s *Shalom* want to challenge in my life today?
- Where is God calling me to stand in His *Shalom* as an overcomer?

## Day 4

“Do not let your hearts be troubled...”



Many things can cause our hearts to be troubled. Like an unwanted house guest, inner turmoil or anxiety can take hold of our insides and refuse to leave, no matter how much we try and convince ourselves that everything is okay.

Even Jesus was troubled at times. For instance, He was deeply troubled with great pain and sorrow when he saw Mary and those with her, weeping at Lazarus' death (John 11:33). Jesus' soul was troubled and in agony when He spoke about His coming death on the cross (John 12:27). He was also troubled regarding Judas' betrayal (John 13:21).

Although Jesus experienced inner turmoil as we do, He never let it have the upper hand. His reply to the anguish and distress of the cross reveals that He saw far beyond what His own feelings were telling Him (John 12:27). He anchored Himself in the Father and His purposes. That's what we need to do too.

At times like this, we are often faced with a decision as to what voice we are going to listen to and prioritise – our own voice, or God's Word.

- My inner voice might say, “I am not at peace.” God's Word says that Jesus has already given me peace (John 14:27).
- My feelings might say, “I am anxious and uncertain.” God's Word says “Do not let your hearts be troubled” (John 14:27).
- My thoughts might say, “I'm worried and don't know which way to turn.” God's Word says that if I continue to focus on Him, He will keep me in perfect peace (Isaiah 26:3).

The battle between prioritising what we are experiencing and what God's Word says, is real. It's the battle between prioritising the natural and the spiritual, between focusing on the things of this earth or focusing on the Kingdom of Heaven.

The only way we can gain victory in the battle and find true peace, is to go to the source – to realise that Jesus not only gives us peace, He *is* peace. Jesus not only tells us not to let our hearts be troubled, He *is* all we need. He not only strengthens us, He *is* our strength. As Paul says, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, 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” (Philippians 4:6-7).

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### Questions for reflection

- Where have I experienced the battle between prioritising my experience, or prioritising what God's Word says? What was the thing I battled with the most during this time?
- What areas of control am I going to have to let go of in order to receive Jesus' gift of *Shalom*? What can I expect when I do?

## Day 5

“...and do not be afraid.”



Imagine a fully armed soldier – fit, fearless and ready to go into battle at a moment’s notice. That soldier is you and me! The battle clothes we are wearing are truth, righteousness and salvation. In our hands are faith and the Word of God. And on our feet is the readiness to announce *Shalom* into every situation we find ourselves in. That’s how the Apostle Paul describes the us in Ephesians 6:14-17.

When Jesus says “do not be afraid,” He is addressing the stance all of us need to take as members of His Kingdom. The word “afraid” has to do with timidity, cowardice and fearfulness. Jesus has gifted us with His wholeness, completeness and peace, so we can move forward in strength, not in nervousness or fear.

Throughout history, God has always strengthened His people with the gift of *Shalom*. For instance, it’s no accident that God told Aaron to bless the Israelites with *peace* as they prepared to go in and conquer the Promised Land (Numbers 6:23-26).

God strengthened Gideon with a revelation that He is *Shalom*. Gideon was called to address Israel’s idolatry and drive out the invaders. He should therefore act and not to be afraid (Judges 6:23).

In the New Testament Paul tells Timothy that fearfulness does not come from God (2 Timothy 1:7). Timothy can therefore boldly move forward to fulfil all God has called him to do.

Because of God’s gift of *Shalom*, cowardice and timidity should not be given a place in our lives. Fear will undermine peace and

take away our strength. We should never agree with, or form any kind of partnership with the suggestions that fear tries to plant in our minds. Rather, we ought to stand firm in the finished work of the cross, announcing and declaring the powerful good news of *Shalom* into whatever we face.

We can even expect to establish an atmosphere of peace wherever we go. *Shalom* can be announced into hostile environments and bring amazing transformation, just as it did when Jesus sent out the 70 disciples (Luke 10:17). We know we have authority to do this, because Jesus gave it to us, and we are in Him. Our feet are standing on the firm foundation of the good news of peace (Ephesians 6:15).

Peace is an incredible weapon in our spiritual arsenal. We need to remind ourselves that we already possess the power of God's peace. It has been given to us by Jesus - we just need to learn how to walk in it and use it.

Today, do not be afraid. Move forward as one who carries wholeness, completeness and fulfilment. Be strengthened by Jesus and His glorious *Shalom*.

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### Questions for reflection

- What does it mean for me to have peace as a weapon of spiritual warfare?
- Have I been agreeing with suggestions of fear when I should be agreeing with *Shalom*? What do I need to declare to myself in order to change this?

## Notes



## Notes

