

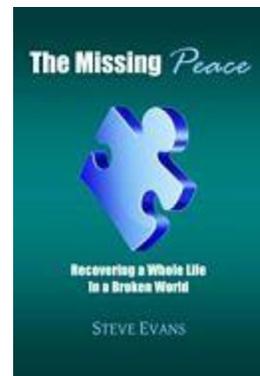
The Missing Peace

Recovering a Whole Life in a Broken World

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PREFACE

If you have had a taste of the marvelous peace of Christ and want to learn how to live consistently in it then this book is for you. A heavenly peace—gentle and uplifting, resplendent with hope and pregnant with possibilities for joy—is your true inheritance in Christ. Whether you are a brand new Christian or a veteran of many campaigns, this peace is meant to be your daily, moment by moment, experience of your union with Him, even and especially, in the midst of all the cares and pressures of this life. Sadly, this peace is the missing piece in many Christians' experience of their faith. We have Bible studies, church services, prayer and fellowship enough to fill our days, but this peace was meant to fill our hearts.



How can it be that the peace of Christ has gone missing? Is this not the peace of which Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you.”? The world is famous for its take backs. Jesus, on the other hand, makes His peace always available to us. Peace is His perpetual gift to us, but we are not living in it: What’s going on?

Consider how the world gives beauty and strength to youth for free; riches, prestige and power to those who care for nothing else. It even gives a measure of peace to anyone on top of their game—whether it is self-protection or self-promotion—so long as you can see how things are going to work out in your favor. These gifts are all too often fleeting treasures. Yet, this peace that Jesus gives is intended to be an everlasting inheritance, our inheritance, our daily inheritance.

To be sure, most Christians can enter into this peace during an anointed worship service and can touch base with this peace during moments of devoted Bible study or prayer. We even have a rock bottom sense of peace that we are headed toward heaven and that God is in control. But do we live in this peace as our daily delight and source of surpassing strength—no matter what comes our way? That seems to be beyond us.

Throughout the Body of Christ there are those who suffer not only from diseases of the body but from the many and varied dis-eases of the soul: stressed by anxious concerns, carrying deep pain from the past, depressed in heart and spirit or just plagued by a whole host of negative emotions which can so easily quench the simple joy of living.

Rather than being released into the glorious liberty of the children of God, many believers have become captive to their inner lives at the very time when the world needs a witness of the life-changing power of the gospel. As in Isaiah's day we are a people in need of restoration.

But this is a people plundered and looted; they are all of them trapped in holes and hidden in prisons; they have become plunder with none to rescue, spoil with none to say, "Restore!" Isaiah 42:22

This book grew out of a conviction that there is a real power of transformation available through faith in Christ, but that His Words of life are somehow not reaching His people in a way that they can appropriate. As a pastor I knew the frustration of preaching and pleading, "Trust the Lord and follow Him," as the great answer to life's problems and a very real means of recovering peace, yet I rarely saw the needed changes come to others. I was gently haunted by a passage in Jeremiah about speaking words that do not heal.

They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace. Jeremiah 6:14

I realized that others needed more, because I myself needed more. From the first moments of my new life in Christ, I had been introduced to the ministry of deliverance and have been gratefully walking in the benefits of that early release from demonic bondage ever since. But there would prove to be much more in the tangled mess of my innermost emotional life than could be addressed by simple deliverance. It was of course absolutely necessary—if I wanted freedom—to resolutely "put to death" anything that the Word or the Spirit identified as sin, lest I become enslaved to the enemy all over again. It was also essential that I learned to try my level best to trust the Lord and seek to follow Him—these two requirements of basic discipleship (along with Bible study, prayer, worship, fellowship and service) certainly bring tremendous comfort, growth and healing to those who walk in them. Basic discipleship helped me live with my pain and damaged inner life, it even helped me prune away the unwanted fruit, but it was not mending my heart or getting to the root issues that were causing me such abiding anguish.

Again and again I happily discovered that God was sending into my life two other graces that produced remarkable "results": strong revelation of truth and inner healing by His Spirit. Revelation and inner healing are therefore two goals of this series of lessons. Only the Holy Spirit can reveal truth in the way we need to receive it for its freedom-making power to liberate us; only the Spirit can do the transforming works of ministry necessary to restore our lost wholeness. However, there is much that we can do to position ourselves for grace to happen. Why else would He entreat us so often to seek Him?

These 24 lessons from Healing Streams Ministry's *Matters of the Heart* teaching series will show you how to bring your heart to God and how you can receive His Heart for

you. That is the essence of the Great Exchange—our dis-grace for His grace—and it is always available for us to access through the faith He has given us. Where our inner state is concerned, there are two great assignments which are actually gracious invitations to experience the surpassing vitality of new life in Christ:

1) Restoration: Preparing our inward state to hold up under the pressures of daily life requires recovery of the natural grace that got lost along the way. For countless reasons—not least of which is getting free of the pain—we need to recover from any emotional brokenness emanating from our past. But there is another level...

2) Mastery: As we learn to manage our emotional life, we not only receive freedom from the past, but we gain the graced ability to reign with wisdom over our own emotions, making it possible to live even the most active or embattled days with deep peace and Spirit-led resourcefulness!

By a process of recovery leading to mastery we can experience our own life, no matter how damaged initially, becoming just what Jesus described to Nicodemus so long ago: weightless and free. Being “born again” is only the entry point. Those who learn this new way of yielding to His Spirit will become like leaves floating on the wind:

Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." John 3:7-8

We truly can learn how to be lifted and carried by the river of peace that God is sending our way each day. Being born again ushers us into the new life; the Holy Spirit within us provides the power to live the new life. He is the River of Peace. Are you only experiencing trickles and puddles of that peace? Take these lessons to heart, learn the way of the heart and the peace will soon become a slender stream. Persevere and it will grow into a mighty river leading you into great adventures in company with your Lord. One Day it will carry you all the way to God's throne in heaven.

I leave it to God and the devil to provide the pop quizzes, times of testing and final exams. The Lord never tempts us at any time, but He does provide opportunities for growth. In our times of trial and struggle God is “testing” to see if we are ready and willing to take a step upwards into greater faith and faithfulness (He already knows our true spiritual condition, but do we?). Meanwhile the enemy becomes active, tempting us to come into agreement with his distorted perspective, take on his demented attitudes and walk in his destructive ways. I pray that you will learn to recognize the difference, shun the enemy and hearken to the Lord. May this become your time of learning these essential lessons of the heart and growing greatly in grace!

CHAPTER 1: THE SPIRITUAL ROOTS OF DISEASE

Though we begin with the body, this series of lessons is not primarily about physical health and the means to achieve it. Rather, it is about seeking emotional and spiritual health of the highest order. Finding the life that is “hidden with Christ in God” or entering into “the glorious liberty of the children of God” would be excellent Biblical ways of expressing the goal. As it happens, however, modern medical science shows us a connection between our emotional life and the root issues of disease that gives us a practical place to begin looking at our deeper, truer need. C. S. Lewis once described pain as “God’s megaphone,” meaning that He gets our attention when our bodies break down. So, it is in seeking to find a remedy to our illnesses that we have been drawn into a far greater understanding of the ways in which we are actually going astray from our God. The diseases of our bodies are but reflections of the dis-ease of our souls!

Three Flawed Theories

Before we look at what is actually making us sick, let’s go over some cherished notions that we may still be carrying around in the back of our minds. There are three flawed theories of why we get sick. They may not be taught, but they are often caught.

1) The germ theory: As an explanation of why we get sick, this is accurate but misleading, since germs account for only part of all diseases. Nor does this theory tell us why we had the weakened immune system that allowed germs to infect us in the first place. Stressing the body by lack of sleep, poor nutrition, or lack of exercise can weaken the immune system, but are you aware that research has shown that just six minutes of a negative emotion can suppress the immune system for more than 21 hours?[v]

2) The “out of the blue” theory: This provides a graceful covering for us, since we are claiming to have no idea of any connection between our lifestyle and the disease. (Surely it is nothing we have done. It just came on us out of the blue!) Yet everything on earth happens by cause and effect. The real problem with this theory is that it seems to be pointing a finger at God who lives in those “blue” heavens. However, God is never the author of evil: Untainted by any shadow He is instead the Giver of “every good gift.”[vi] Death, disorders and disease are consequences of the fall of man.

3) The punishment theory: According to this theory we sinned, so God is punishing us. But that cannot be! God punished Jesus fully and completely at the cross for our sins; it would be a breach of justice for God to punish us when the penalty has already been paid in full by Another. A further problem is that it seems to suggest that God reaches, in anger, into His bag of punishments and puts one on us without regard to the natural order.

The Mind-Body Connection

The truth is that there is a natural connection between the way that we live and the diseases that come upon us. As much as 80% or more of all incurable diseases have a known mind-body connection. According to one study, stress related disorders account for 75-90% of all visits to primary care physicians. Consider these connections between disease and emotional stress: high blood pressure and heart disease correlate with anger and hostility; autoimmune disorders, Multiple Sclerosis, Lupus and arthritis are associated with bitterness, resentments and self-hatred; gastrointestinal disorders such as IBS, panic attacks and heart palpitations are related to anxiety; tension and migraine headaches, along with back pain, TMJ and Fibromyalgia are all associated with repressed anger. Now reflect that our science is just beginning to discover the linkages between specific negative emotions and specific physical disorders, but already these connections can be made. Imagine how fine-tuned this may one day become.

Negative emotions damage the body. When we perceive a situation to be dangerous, adrenaline and cortisol are released by our bodies to facilitate “flight or fight” responses. This is part of the General Adaptation Syndrome (G.A.S.) which gives us the extra “gas” we need to power-up for potentially life-threatening situations. The problem is that most of the “dangers” that cause stress cannot be resolved by fighting or running away! Modern life seems to be characterized by a mounting sea of stressful events and daily pressures coming at people from every conceivable direction. And yet the real culprit isn’t the situations which surround us—it is the emotional reactions going off inside of us. That is why Dr. Don Colbert entitled his book on the mind-body connection *Deadly Emotions*—not “deadly situations.” Stating that emotions are not confined only to the mind or heart, he describes the physiological processes by which all emotions are translated into chemical reactions which occur at both the organ level and the cellular level! Apparently, the “most damaging” emotions are feelings we might consider “garden variety” such as un-forgiveness, anger, worry, fear and frustration. Clearly, no one with an emotional life is immune to the danger!

These negative emotions which place so much stress upon our bodies come in two forms: those that arise out of present situations and those that are “embedded” in our deepest memories. Doctors Alexander Loyd and Ben Johnson in their book, *The Healing Code*, state that embedded negative emotions are the most damaging kind, producing “physiological stress” (at a subconscious level), as opposed to “situational stress” (at the conscious level). These unhealed memories are actually stored as false beliefs and negative images which form “destructive cellular memories” in the cells of our bodies!^[xi] In terms of the mind body connection they list three “one things” which we need to know: There is one thing that can heal anything—our immune system; there is one thing that turns off the immune system—stress; there is one thing that will turn the immune system back on—healing “the issues of the heart.”

From the Bible’s perspective there are a few “good” emotions that we might perceive as negative ones due to the way that they feel: godly fear (awe and respect for God as both holy and all-powerful); “danger fear” (in life-threatening moments); righteous anger

(hating the sin, yet still loving the person); and pure grief (mourning that is uncontaminated by anger, fear, doubt or guilt). These emotions are actually very good to have even if they don't feel like it at the time.

From a medical point of view all other negative emotions are stressors to the body, and it is extremely evident how damaging they are to our physical health. However, from a Christian point of view they represent something that is also very damaging to our spiritual health—they are sins! Now this may seem like adding to the bad news: The negative emotions we don't like feeling in the first place are not only causing disease, they are also sins, separating us from God! Isn't this very bad news indeed? No, not at all: It is wonderful news! It shows us there is a way out, both from disease and from the entrapment of negative emotions.

If the negative emotions, causing us so much loss of peace and joy as well as health, are actually things in our personality that God has given us and wants us to have, then we are stuck with them—and the diseases they induce. However, if they are sins then He has provided a way of freedom, since Jesus died to free us from sin's power as well as from its penalty. That way of freedom will be the subject of all of the following lessons. For now let us consider the negative emotions in relationship to their polar opposite—the peace of Christ.

The Peace of Christ

We always have a choice how we will respond to life: Will we give in to stress, take on the negative emotions so close at hand, or will we choose to find the path of peace that comes from trusting and obeying God? God created us to live in peace with His peace. Even under the terms of the Hebrew covenant, it was possible to live with perfect peace, but there was a condition: Keeping one's mind fixed or stayed on the Lord. How does one do that? In a word—trust. Trusting God is how we “live by faith.”

You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. Isaiah 26:3

Peace comes to us on the basis of our actual heart-trustin God, not the doctrinal rightness of our beliefs. Our minds judge right and wrong, but it is with our hearts that we judge who to trust. Whenever we actually release our hearts to trust God, our minds naturally become rested or stayed upon Him, until something else disturbs our rest. In the New Covenant Jesus also promises us peace and His peace goes far beyond any of the outward things that disturb us.

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. John 14:27



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How does the world give us peace? Anyone can get peace from the world in this way: I see the problem; I go to work on it; I begin to see the thing get better; I get peace back. You don't have to be a believer in anything but yourself to get peace in this way. But there are real problems with getting peace this way: I can't always make things better so I lose even more peace in the attempt; I have to wait until things look like they are getting better before peace begins to return to me; and as soon as one trouble is fixed, I may lose peace over two more things that just flared up. This way is guaranteed to produce many seasons of significant stress over the course of a lifetime. We know it all too well—it is the way of trusting Self to be our savior.

Jesus gives believing, trusting hearts peace at the first sign of trouble—whenever we cast our cares on Him as our only Savior. All of us get a daily report card on how well we are doing at trusting and obeying the Lord. In fact it is personally delivered moment by moment as the Holy Spirit reveals our actual peace levels to us. In any moment the peace of Christ is either going up, holding steady, or going down—all according to our ability to trust and follow Jesus throughout the day.

When our hearts and minds fully trust Him with the whole of our life and that of our loved ones, we are at peace. Our bodies can then experience peace (homeostasis or physiological equilibrium) and all systems work in balance to maintain health. As Dr. Art Mathias of Wellsprings Ministries in Alaska likes to say, our bodies are barometers of our spiritual health. Seen in this light the diseases and disorders we can't ignore are “warning bells” alerting us of our need to return to living in the peace of Christ.

The Pathway of Disease

Pay close attention to this pathway of disease for it is also the way by which mental illness, addictions and all sinful behaviors become entrenched:

- 1) Loss of health comes from loss of peace in the mind or heart: This is the overwhelming evidence of mainstream science.
- 2) Loss of peace comes through the entry of negative emotions: This is simple displacement—after an internal “tug-of-war” either the peace of Christ or stress will always win out.
- 3) Negative emotions draw power from unresolved issues carried from the past: These are the root causes.
- 4) Unresolved issues always reveal that there are broken relationships of trust and love with God, self or others: The two Great Commandments have been breached.[xvii] These issues are crying out to be healed, not buried.
- 5) Loss of peace indicates there is a sin issue to deal with: We have been turning from God, which is why His peace was lifted.



6) Loss of peace warns that the other kingdom is manifesting through us: We have been turning to the enemy, which is why unchristlike thoughts and feelings are beginning to grip us.

Just as peace, love, joy and the other delectable fruit of the Spirit manifest the life of Christ and the working of God's Kingdom through us, so too do negative emotions actually manifest the "emotional life" of the enemy, coming out of our carnal or fallen nature, and advance his dark kingdom through us. We are paying a terrible price for not living in the peace of Christ.

Prayer

Father, in the course of these lessons enable me to be honest, open and transparent before You. Please help me to choose to deal with You and with anything You may want to bring up. Despite the pain I may have to work through, I am determined to break free of my past and truly learn how to live with Your peace established in my heart.

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