

PRECEPT MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

PEACE WITH GOD

The Need of Every Heart

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PEACE WITH GOD—THE NEED OF EVERY HEART

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Foreword

By Kay Arthur

How can we, as human beings who have messed up so badly ever expect to be at total peace with a holy God?

It seems impossible, doesn't it? Unattainable! Something you could never achieve no matter how much you tried!

Peace...no matter the storm, no matter the turmoil within or the trials without? It seems like a wish, a dream that could never come true.

Yet the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who lived as a man, tempted and tried and tested in every way that we are, told us there was peace in Him (John 16:33).

That is what *Peace with God—the Need of Every Heart* is all about. As a group of us (all associated with Precept Ministries International) sat around our breakfast table a number of years ago, talking and praying about the spiritual needs of people around the world, this was one of the topics God brought to our minds. And thus this study which has been written, re-written, polished and prayed over for over ten years is finally in print.

Beginning at *the beginning* of everything but God who has no beginning, Molly Farlow and Al Whittinghill are going to take you on a journey through the whole counsel of God that will help you understand with great clarity just how you and any other person can be at peace with a holy God.

Molly and Al are dear friends, seasoned teachers whom I love and admire deeply because of their unwavering faithfulness and passion to establish people in the Word of God, the Bible. Both have served on staff at Precept Ministries International and have taught God's Word in many nations of this world.

Once you do this study you will have a perfect tool for carrying out Jesus' commission to make disciples of all the nations (Matthew 28:18-20). What peace and joy will be yours if you share it with others, for you will truly be about your Father's business—explaining how to have unending peace with God through the One who is called the Prince of Peace.

How to Use This Study

If you're interested in finding peace with God, and you'd like to learn what the Bible says about it by yourself or with a small group, and you have limited time for whatever reason, this study is for you! It's ideal for self-study when you have time or for early-morning, lunch, or evening groups, Sunday-school classes, and family devotions.

If you've decided to study in a group, there's no homework; participants complete each simple weekly lesson at the same time in class. You'll observe biblical texts, mark key words, answer key questions, and then discuss your findings to produce life-changing insights.

In a group study, you or someone else can take on the role of leading the discussion. You don't have to worry about lecturing or teaching—we've provided the biblical texts, inductive study questions (who, what, when, where, why, how), and insight boxes—everything you need to get going.

Here are some helpful points for leading:

- Open the study with prayer, thanking the Lord for His Word and for the opportunity to learn from it.
- Have someone read the text aloud while others follow along. Rotate readers from text to text or read them all yourself.
- As you read the Scripture texts aloud, read slowly, allowing time to (1) call the key words aloud together as you come to them and then (2) mark them with the symbol and/or color noted. The idea is for everyone to keep pace. If you would rather not call the key words aloud, that's OK too.
- Read the REFLECT questions but make sure students answer the inductive study questions together only from the text. It's not your job to lecture or answer the questions for them.
- Discuss together how new truths you discover can and will impact your life. Make sure everyone participates in this.
- If people have cross-references or insights from their lives, give them time to share them with the group at the end of the week's study only after you've completed the study of that week's texts.
- Ask the group how they can apply the study to their prayers and lives for the week. "What is relevant to pray and do in light of the truths we learned?"

Close your study praying these prayers and also for special needs in the group.

Introduction

How can I have peace with God?

One day we will see clearly that it is peace with God that is the great need of every heart.

The deep and driving need of men and women worldwide is to have a sense of peace and well-being. Everyone is looking for what will bring them meaning and fulfillment in their lives. People search for this in an endless number of places and try a million different things to find what they are longing for. Everyone in the world is attempting to find satisfaction in his own unique way. Do you see this happening?

Some seek ultimate meaning in family relationships, some in their reputation, and others in a successful career. Others give themselves to pleasure in a lifestyle full of “what feels good” in the moment. Many are frustrated trying to find what they think they need. They settle for a life of distractions that consume all their energies. Others attempt to dull the pain of disappointment with chemicals, drugs, and other things.

We expend so much energy on trying to “fix” what is broken around us. There are broken nations, broken families, broken marriages, broken relationships, and broken lives. It seems that everything is broken in this world plagued by self-centeredness, pride, unbelief, fear, hatred, violence, corruption, and guilt. Sadly, all of man’s solutions for the problems in the world are short lived and end up being just temporary substitutes for the real need—peace with God.

There is real peace—not just an absence of war between nations which people think is peace on earth, not just a lack of conflict with others or a lack of turmoil within ourselves, but true peace. It is a peace that passes all understanding, satisfying the longing of the heart when it is known. Only a truly genuine relationship with God offers lasting peace. This is the need of every heart.

You may say, “Where can I find this peace?” Well, that is what this study is all about!

Week One—Creator and Sovereign LORD

How can we have peace with God? Is it possible?

To understand how we can have peace with God, we must start at the beginning of human history. We need to understand who God is and what our relationship to Him is. To do this, we need to go to God's Word, the Bible, to learn what He has to say. So we'll start in Genesis, the book of beginnings. In its first pages the Bible gives us an accurate account of how the universe and man came into being. This is God's record of the creation of all things.

Let's begin by observing everything we can about God and His account of creation.

OBSERVE

Read Genesis 1:1-5:

- Mark every reference to **God** (including pronouns) with a triangle. △

Genesis 1:1-5

- 1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
- 2 The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.
- 3 Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.
- 4 God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.
- 5 God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

INSIGHT

The English word *God* in this text translates the Hebrew word *Elohim*. *El* means *strong and mighty*, and *im* is a masculine plural ending. Here it speaks of the one supreme and true deity and is used in conjunction with God as Creator.

REFLECT

As you examine the text think about what you're observing. What do you learn from marking references to *God*? Just look at what the text says, and then record below what you learn. For example, in verse one you saw that "God created the heavens and the earth." Now list the rest.

According to the text, when did creation take place? How far back does this account take us?

Where did the heavens and earth come from?

How did God bring these things into being? What does this tell you about God?

OBSERVE

As we continue looking at the creation account, what more can we learn about God?

Read Genesis 1:6-8:

- Mark every reference to *God* with a triangle. △
- Circle *and it was so*.

Genesis 1:6-8

- 6 Then God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.”
- 7 God made the expanse, and separated the waters which were below the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse; and it was so.
- 8 God called the expanse heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

REFLECT

Once again, let’s study the text. Asking questions of the text and letting it answer helps us focus on what it says.

What did you learn about God?

What did God create on the second day?

OBSERVE

Are you wondering why we are going through the creation account? The answer is simple. We are establishing from God’s Word who He is and what our relationship to Him is. Everything He created was by design, with a purpose and a plan. Understanding this is essential for comprehending how we can have peace with God.

Now read Genesis 1:9-13:

- Mark **God** (including pronouns) with a triangle. △
- Circle the repeated phrase *and it was so*
- Underline the phrase *saw that it was good*.

Genesis 1:9-13

- 9 Then God said, “Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear”; and it was so.
- 10 God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters He called seas; and God saw that it was good.
- 11 Then God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, *and* fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them”; and it was so.
- 12 The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was good.
- 13 There was evening and there was morning, a third day.

REFLECT

What did you learn about God from this passage?

What did God create on the third day?

What does the fact that God created and named imply about Him?

INSIGHT

Now here's something to think about: Who has the right to name people, places, and things? Who names a son or daughter? Who names a company? The one who creates, designs, owns, and/or rules over someone or something has the right to name.

OBSERVE

Read Genesis 1:14-19:

- Mark **God** (including pronouns) with a triangle. △
- Circle *(and it was so)*
- Underline the phrase *saw that it was good.*

Genesis 1:14-19

- 14 Then God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years;
- 15 and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth”; and it was so.
- 16 God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; *He made* the stars also.
- 17 God placed them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth,
- 18 and to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good.
- 19 There was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.

REFLECT

What did you learn from this passage about God?

What did God create on the fourth day?

What two great lights did God create?

God spoke all things into existence. Have you considered how powerful His word is?

OBSERVE

Read Genesis 1:20-23:

- Mark **God** with a triangle. △
- Underline the phrase *saw that it was good.*

Genesis 1:20-23

- 20** Then God said, “Let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of the heavens.”
- 21** God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind; and God saw that it was good.
- 22** God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.”
- 23** There was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.

REFLECT

What did you learn about God from this passage?

What did God create on the fifth day?

What did you learn from underlining the phrase *saw that it was good*?

How often do you pause to see the goodness of God’s creation?

OBSERVE

Read Genesis 1:24-31:

- Mark **God** (including any pronouns) with a triangle. △
- Circle the phrase *and it was so*
- Underline the phrases *saw that it was good* and *it was very good*.

Genesis 1:24-31

24 Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth after their kind”; and it was so.

25 God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps on the ground after its kind; and God saw that it was good.

26 Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

28 God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

29 Then God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the

earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you;

30 and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, *I have given* every green plant for food”; and it was so.

31 God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

REFLECT

What did you learn about God verse by verse?

What did God create on the sixth day?

According to verses 26 and 27, what is different about man? In whose image was he made?

INSIGHT

The Hebrew word translated *image* means *resemblance, likeness*. This does not refer to a physical body but to spiritual, moral, and intellectual qualities. God created man (male and female) with a spirit (Genesis 2:7), making them different from the animal kingdom that operates by instinct. The spirit God placed within man gave him a unique capacity to know, love, obey, communicate, and fellowship with the loving Creator who is Spirit.

Who did God put in authority over His creation, and what was he to do?

Look at all the verses in Genesis 1 where you marked *and it was so*. What does this phrase tell you about God?

What did you learn from marking *it was very good*? Why do you think God repeated the phrase *it was good* on the previous days of creation?

What did you learn about God's goodness, His abundant desire for our highest good?

Does knowing that we are made in God’s image impact how you feel about yourself and how you deal with other people?

OBSERVE

Read Genesis 2:1-4 and mark:

- **God** and **LORD God** (including pronouns) with a triangle. △
- **seventh day** (including pronouns or synonyms) with a 7.

Genesis 2:1-4

- 1 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts.
- 2 By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.
- 3 Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.
- 4 This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made earth and heaven.

INSIGHT

In the New American Standard Bible and other translations, **LORD** (written in small capital letters) translates the Hebrew consonants יהוה. The transliteration of these consonants, YHWH, has been pronounced **Yahweh** and later **Jehovah**. This name conveys the meaning *Self-existent One*.

LORD God translates the Hebrew **YAHWEH (Jehovah) Elohim**. Together they mean *Self-existent God*.

REFLECT

What did you learn from this passage about God?

Review what you learned from marking *seventh day*. How does it differ from the other six days?

According to what you have learned so far, how did the heavens and earth come into being?

Have you ever stopped to meditate upon the wonder of God's creation and the knowledge, creative wisdom, and unlimited power it took to bring everything into being from nothing? Has it ever caused you to stand in awe of Him?

From what you have observed from God's creation account in Genesis, was there harmony and peace?

Was man at peace with God, His Creator, at the very beginning?

OBSERVE

It is very important to understand and acknowledge that God, who created and sustains the heavens and the earth, is the owner and sovereign ruler over all of His creation.

There are many verses in the Bible that express God’s ownership and sovereignty. Let’s look at just a few of them.

Read the following Scriptures and mark:

- *God, LORD, and Most High* (including pronouns) with a triangle. △

Psalm 90:2

- 2 Before the mountains were born
 Or You gave birth to the earth and the world,
 Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.

Psalm 24:1

- 1 The earth is the LORD’s, and all it contains,
 The world, and those who dwell in it.

1 Chronicles 29:11-12

- 11 “Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Yours is the dominion, O LORD, and You exalt Yourself as head over all.
- 12 “Both riches and honor *come* from You, and You rule over all, and in Your hand is power and might; and it lies in Your hand to make great and to strengthen everyone.

Daniel 4:34-35

- 34 “But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever;
For His dominion is an everlasting dominion,
And His kingdom *endures* from generation to generation.
- 35 “All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing,
But He does according to His will in the host of heaven
And *among* the inhabitants of earth;
And no one can ward off His hand
Or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’”

INSIGHT

Nebuchadnezzar was a powerful king of Babylon, ruling from 605-562 B.C.

God Most High or ***Most High God*** translates the Hebrew name ***El Elyon***. This name designates God as *the Sovereign Ruler over all*.

REFLECT

What did you learn about God from these passages?

INSIGHT

Sovereignty means *absolute supremacy in rule and power*. The sovereign is the ruling power: determining, administering, and having complete dominion. Although God, the Most High, grants man dominion, He alone is sovereign. Thus man was to rule under God’s authority.

From these verses, what is God sovereign over?

Does your desire for control prevent you from trusting that God is sovereign? Or does it comfort you to trust that He has all things under His control?

OBSERVE

There is one more foundational truth that we need to see before we end this week’s study. What was God’s purpose in creating man?

Read Revelation 4:11, Acts 17:24-28, and Isaiah 43:7:

- Mark **You**, **Lord**, and **God** (including pronouns) with a triangle. △

Revelation 4:11

11 “Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.”

Acts 17:24-28

24 “The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands;

- 25 nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all *people* life and breath and all things;
- 26 and He made from one *man* every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation,
- 27 that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;
- 28 for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we also are His children.’”

Isaiah 43:7

- 7 “Everyone who is called by My [God’s] name,
And whom I have created for My glory,
Whom I have formed, even whom I have made.”

REFLECT

Why did God create man?

List below any additional insights you gleaned about God.

What does God’s Word, the Bible, say about God’s original purpose in creating man?

INSIGHT

Did you see the word **glory**? Our LORD God is worthy to receive glory from His creation. The Hebrew verb associated with the noun **glory** means *to be heavy, to give weight or importance to, to be a visible manifestation of*.

The Greek verb for **glorify** means *to estimate highly, to value, to exalt the reputation of*. When we glorify God we magnify who He is in our thoughts, words, and actions; we esteem and praise Him. As His representatives and ambassadors on earth, we fellowship with Him and express to others truths about Him that are praiseworthy: His will, His ways, and His life.

God is good and holy (Revelation 4:8), and life and peace come only from being in a loving relationship with Him. This relationship develops increasing trust, continuing submission, and loving obedience to His revealed will.

In light of what you’ve learned about God, are men today fulfilling His purpose in creation and living accordingly? Why or why not?

The Heart of The Matter

As we draw our study to a close this week, it's helpful to review key principles we learned and apply them to our own lives.

This week we observed what the Bible says about the creation of the heavens and the earth. The truths we have seen are foundational for understanding how we can have peace with God:

- God is eternal, existing before time began.
- At the beginning of time God created the heavens and the earth and all that is within them.
- God owns everything He created.
- God is all-powerful. He spoke all things into existence from nothing.
- God is the Sovereign Ruler over all His creation. "...He does according to His will in the host of heaven and *among* the inhabitants of earth" (Daniel 4:35b).
- All God does is good.
- In His goodness, before God created man, He provided everything man needed for his existence and well-being.
- God created man in His own image.
- God created man to be in relationship with Himself.
- God created man to rule His creation under His authority.
- God is personal: He speaks, creates, sees, and blesses.
- In the beginning man was at peace with God.

This week we also learned that God created man to:

- glorify Him by reflecting His character and ways.
- live in a loving relationship with Him.
- bring Him pleasure.

What is the most significant insight you have learned from this week’s study?

Are you living according to God’s original plan and purpose?

Creation teaches us about God’s power and authority, but to know Him, we also need to understand His attributes, who He is.

During the week, go back and review what you have written about God. To help you know and understand God more fully, you can reflect on His attributes that are shown in the accompanying chart.

Attributes of God	
NATURAL (Inwardly in Himself)	MORAL (Outwardly to His Creation)
Omniscient: Knows all	Holy: Morally excellent, righteous
Omnipresent: Present everywhere	Wise & Good
Omnipotent: All-Powerful	Truthful: Cannot lie
Eternal, Everlasting: Has always existed	Loving: Unconditional while we were still sinners
Immutable: Never changes	Long-Suffering: Slow to anger
Self-Sufficient: Effects His will without help	Just: Decides with fairness and without partiality
Self-Existent: not dependent on anyone or anything for existence	Wrathful: Hates all unrighteousness
Incomprehensible: Beyond man’s understanding	Merciful: Compassionate toward those who offend Him
Infinite: Not bounded in any way	Jealous: Unwilling to share what is rightfully His
Transcendent: Above, apart from His creation	Faithful: Keeps His promises