

War Zone

"Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, I give to you. Don't let your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful."—John 14:27, WEB

Have you ever felt like you were in a war zone? It might have been because of family conflict, work circumstances, or a chaotic lifestyle. Or perhaps it's when you think, "If only [insert thing or person] were different, I could relax and feel at peace." I think we've all been there—at least I know I have!

The bigger question must be "Why does [X] bother me?" Or "Why am I bothered by what people say and do (or don't say or don't do)?"

I can hear you answering, "I'm bothered because they are annoying!" But are they? "They know that it annoys me when they say (or do) that!"

My response is, "Why are we annoyed over it, when they clearly aren't?"

Such questions and thoughts scream the need for peace in our lives, but where does our peace come from? Circumstances? People? We can wait our whole lives for that to happen.

Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, I give to you. Don't let your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful" (John 14:27, WEB).

Jesus' heart and mind weren't a war zone until Gethsemane, and He endured that so we don't have to. According to this verse, Jesus left His peace as a gift for us. And what an amazing gift! His peace didn't rely on circumstances or what people said and did. He didn't get His peace from those things, and we don't need to either.

I've recently concluded that the greatest war zone is in our own hearts and heads. Our thoughts and feelings cause us more trouble and fear than the things others do or say, yet Jesus invites us to not let our hearts be troubled or fearful but choose the peace He is holding out to us instead.

Now if you're like me, sometimes you feel you deserve to have those negative feelings. After all, what happened wasn't right! True, it wasn't. But should that annoying person be able to steal my peace? Will I allow that to happen? I'm actually handing it over to them myself when I choose to hold on to the bitterness, anger, and annoyance. I'm giving away the gift Jesus gave me.

Jesus gives us that peace so we don't have to experience the war zone. And now the question is this: How do I live in that peace and not let the fear, anger, and worry take over?

I've only found one way: by choosing to give my feelings to Jesus and asking Him to replace them with His peace. Sometimes it doesn't happen immediately, but as we discuss things and work through them, with peace as the goal, it doesn't take long. All I have to do is be willing to not hang on to the war zone. Sometimes the damage has been big, but He is the healer of our hearts and minds as long as we are willing for Him to do it. His love does it!

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18). Knowing, *truly knowing*, we are loved by God changes our responses to the annoyances of others. Experiencing His understanding and love for me makes all the difference in the world—it changes *me* and *keeps* me in peace. ■

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