

Rules of Engagement
THE SHOES OF PEACE
Small Group Questions

Opening: Describe the best shoes you've ever worn in your life. What made them your favorite shoe?

- 1. Satan's strategy is to divide and conquer. How have you seen this work in your own life; personal relationships, work, church, etc?**
- 2. The Shoes of Peace represent Peace 'with' God and the Peace 'of' God. What's the difference between the two?**
- 3. Many unbelievers are offended when told they are objects of God's wrath. How would explain the plight of an unbeliever when it comes to their relationship with God?**
- 4. Review John 14:27 and John 16:33. How would you explain the peace of God in the life of a believer?**
- 5. An affective presentation of the gospel can be found in Romans, called the Roman Road. Review the passages: 3:32, 6:23, 5:8, 10:9-10; 6:1-4
How confident are you it taking with someone about the plan of salvation? What would help you become more prepared?**
- 6. Peace with God leads to peace with others. What are the major challenges in maintaining the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace? Can you share any personal experiences with relational breakdown. How did you reconcile? What's keeping you from doing so?**
- 7. The peace of God surpasses understand. Why?**
- 8. What scripture passages could you use to encourage a believer to allow the peace of Christ to rule in their hearts?**
- 9. What is the most important and practical principle you learned from this teaching on the Shoes of Peace?**

Ephesians 6:10-15, (P. 979)

We've been talking about the issue of spiritual warfare. There was a time in the life of Martin Luther when his experience of spiritual warfare was so real and intense that it almost took on a physical manifestation. At one point Luther took an ink well and threw it at the devil. It broke and splattered all over the door. The stain remained for many years reminding Luther and all that entered into that room how vivid the conflict can be. Spiritual warfare is the cosmic conflict waged in the invisible, spiritual realm, and gets fleshed out in our everyday existence.

Ephesians 6:10-14, (P. 979)

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.

So, we're on the third piece of armor. We'll put them on the screen for you:

The Belt of Truth**The Breastplate of Righteousness****The Shoes of Peace**

The Belt of Truth protects you from deception. The Breastplate of Righteousness protects your from accusation. The Shoes of Peace.

It was Forrest Gump who said: "My Momma always said you can tell a lot about a person by their shoes. Where they're going and where they've been." Take a look at your shoes. How many of you could use a new pair of shoes? There is no end to the type of shoes available. You have shoes for every sport. And for every sport you practice shoes and game shoes. You have winter shoes and summer shoes. Leather shoes, plastic shoes and wooden shoes. Dress shoes, work shoes and casual shoes. Slip on, lace up, open toed, high healed, wing tipped, ballet, tap and jazz. Men have shoes to match their belt, and women have shoes that match absolutely everything in the universe. When I trained for my first marathon Tim Adam's first piece of advice to me was: buy the right shoes. How many of you know the pain of wearing shoes that don't fit? It's not only painful, it can do lasting physical damage. The closest store that Runner's World Magazine recommended was in South Bend. So I drove to store where the manager put my feet on a machine that measured my shape, size and arch. I spent over two hours with him determining the right shoe for me and it make all the difference in the world. Shoes are important.

Paul tells us to stand firm, verse 15, **as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.**

Satan hates the gospel. He fears the message of Christ because it is the power to save, to rescue sinners from the kingdom of darkness. So this piece of armor is important. Why?

Satan's Arsenal: DIVISION

God created us for relationship: Satan seeks to destroy relationship. You've heard the military strategy: Divide and conquer. Satan seeks to separate you from God. Satan wants to attack your marriage; disrupt your working environment, come between you and your friends, sow seeds of conflict in the church. Satan triangulates by playing both ends against the middle. He gets two people fighting against each other so he can move in and win. That's what children do: mom said it was ok if you said it was ok. Divide and conquer.

The Believer's Armor:

Paul says, you've got to put on the shoes of peace. The Roman soldier of Paul's day wore an open toed sandal, with leather strapping wrap upward around the shin. The soles were implanted with spikes protruding downward, much like cleats on a golf shoe, only longer. So, when they needed to move they could do it quickly and when they needed to stand they could stand firm.

Verse 15: **as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.**

In other words: the message of Christ stabilizes you like a good pair of shoes. So, let's look at the two sides of peace.

1. PEACE WITH GOD

Ephesians tells us that because of sin we have become objects of wrath. Romans 5 tells us that we were enemies of God; war with God. But because of what Jesus did on the cross, and by virtue of our believing and surrendering to Jesus we have been reconciled.

Romans 5:1 (NASV)

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Reconciliation is the process of making peace. Like two countries who sit down and formulate a peace treaty. Some of you will remember the hand shake between Anwar Sadat and Menachem Begin marking the end of conflict between Israel and Egypt. It happened on the south lawn of the White House with Jimmy Carter somewhat orchestrating the whole thing. Reconciliation is as if God were on one side, we were on the other, and Jesus filling in the gap, taking the hand of God and the hand of man and placing them together into the same grip.

Colossians 1:20 (ESV)

and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

This is the heart of the gospel message - the cross bridges the gap between two opposing parties.

Isaiah 53:5 (NIV)

**But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,
and by his wounds we are healed.**

We are no longer enemies of God. We have peace with God. Which, then offers us the peace of God.

2. THE PEACE OF GOD

You cannot have the peace of God without having peace 'with' God. Being reconciled to God brings us a state of internal, subjective peace. However, question: can you have peace 'with' God and not experience the peace 'of' God? Absolutely. That's what your spiritual conflict is all about. If Satan cannot destroy your peace 'with' God, he will attack the peace 'of' God in your life.

John 14:27 (NIV)

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.

The Greek word, eirene, from which we get the name, Irene, is much like its Hebrew counterpart, Shalom which embodies completeness and wholeness. Paul would often use the word 'peace' in his salutations as a blessing. Like you would wish someone 'a good day.' You want life to go well for them. May the peace of God go with you.

But here's the reality:

John 16:33 (NIV)

I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

No one is exempt from the trials and tribulations of life. But Jesus came to give us peace. Do you remember the Old Testament story of three men in the furnace? God didn't keep those boys from the fire. God joined them in the fire as the fourth man. When Satan tries to rock your world, the Bible tells you, greater is He who is in you, than he who is in the world. Peace comes in a person. And when you have the person of Jesus you have an inner resting of the soul that doesn't fluctuate based on outside circumstances. When you have Jesus you experience a calm in the midst of the storm, security in the midst of turmoil. A person at peace is stable in the midst of the chaos Satan strives to create in your life.

The Rules of Engagement:

Most of you have seen a billboard or bumper sticker with this statement:

NO GOD, NO PEACE

KNOW GOD, KNOW PEACE

Satan seeks to separate you from everything that is good. He attacks the harmony in your home, your marriage, your friendships, your church, within your inner being. Let me give you three rules of engagement that stabilize you in the conflict.

1. MAKE PEACE WITH GOD

You need to, either establish or remind yourself of the peace that has been secured through the blood of Christ. History tells us that several battles took place in our country months after the Civil War ended with the surrender at Appomattox. Because it took a considerable amount of time to spread the news that the conflict was over. The conflict is over. You just need to sign the peace treaty. How do you do that? Four things:

Number one: acknowledge that you are a sinner.

Romans 3:23

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

95% good is 5% short. You are an enemy of God, an object of wrath.

Romans 6:23 (NIV)

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

When you break the rules you get the punishment. Physical death on earth, eternal death in hell.

Romans 5:8 (NIV)

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Jesus is our peace treaty bridging the gap between you and God.

John 1:12 (NIV)

To all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—

It takes two to make peace. Jesus secured it, but you have to receive it. You can do that right where you are, with whatever words convey the faith and surrender of your heart. If you come to him in faith, surrender to him in repentance, you can walk out of here possessing peace with God. From that point on: Nothing can separate you from the love of God. But there's more: peace 'with' God leads us to peace with each other.

2. PURSUE PEACE WITH OTHERS

Psalm 34:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:13; 2 Timothy 2:22; Romans 12:18; 2 Corinthians 13:11

It doesn't fit the believer, one who has established peace 'with' God, not to seek peace with their brother. The Bible sees it as a logical progression. Peace with God, peace with man. The Bible is full of such exhortations. Psalm 34 tells us to seek peace and pursue it. 1 Thessalonians: be at peace among yourselves. 2 Timothy: pursue peace 2 Corinthians 13:11: live in peace. Jesus taught us: if you've offended someone go and make it right. If you've been offended by someone go and make it right. Paul told us in Ephesians to maintain the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. Paul gave us this wisdom in Romans

Romans 12:18 (NIV)

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

It takes two to reconcile. So, just as there are those who refuse to accept the peace treaty established by Jesus, there are going to be those in your relational world who will not meet you at the peace table. That does not exempt you from the pursuit of peace. This is so vital to the issues of spiritual conflict. There is no pain like relational pain - it robs you of abundant life. And if you refuse to seek and pursue peace, friends, you are giving the devil a foothold in your life. You're thinking about that person right now. And the anger, resentment, bitterness, gossip, slander, revenge, sadness depression, guilt whatever that relational breakdown is producing in your life, you are allowing a stronghold to be constructed in your mind and heart that Satan is using to destroy you. That's the bottom line: You will be the casualty in this. So, where in your life are you ignoring or refusing to address the lack of peace in a personal relationship?

3. ALLOW PEACE TO RULE IN YOUR HEART

There is something attractive about a person at peace. It's hard to fluster a person at peace. Satan wants us to take off our shoes and lose our peace.

Colossians 3:15 (NLT)

Let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts.

The word for rule is the word for referee or umpire. The game is centered around what the umpire declares. There are balls and there are strikes and our heavenly umpire calls them as they are. The peace of God calls the shots, makes the decisions.

Isaiah 26:3 (ESV)

**You keep him in perfect peace
whose mind is stayed on you,
because he trusts in you**

How do you keep Satan from disturbing the peace? You stop listening to him. You know God loves you but you feel insecure. You know God forgives you but you feel guilty. You know God is for you but you feel inadequate. You know God is present but you feel alone. You see what he's doing: Satan wants to separate your emotional world from your intellectual world. You know it up here (the head) but you don't feel it down here (in the heart). When Paul tells us to renew our mind in Romans 12, that's another way of letting the peace of God rule in your life. Because your heart is open to what your mind is focused on. The Word of God produces the life of God in you. And when you have the life of God in you, Paul says,

Philippians 4:7 (ESV)

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

You have a peace that the world does not understand.

What Must I Do to Stand Firm?

There's an interesting verse in Romans 16 that is a fitting conclusion to the shoes of peace.

Romans 16:17-20 P. 950

I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.

Division and deceit. Satan is the father of lies and the instigator of conflict and divisiveness. Paul tells us to be aware of his schemes.

¹⁸ For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites,^[1] and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.

And then he commends the Romans for their faithfulness

¹⁹ For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil.

He's ending the book the way he began it, back in chapter one, verse 8, he thanked God for them because their faith was being reported throughout the entire world. Rome was the center of the world. If it happened in Rome, everyone eventually heard about it, even the gospel. But it wasn't easy. Trials, tribulations, persecutions, the threat of deceit and division. And then he closes with this prophetic encouragement:

²⁰ The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.

The peace of God will soon crush Satan. Some translations use the word bruise. It is the word used for the crushing of grapes, crushing grapes into wine. And he uses the word 'soon' to give them hope. Hold on. One day it will all be over. In this world you will have tribulation but take heart, I have overcome the world. Are you ready for that? Everything that Satan is trying to do, for a period of time he's sowing his seeds of deception and division. But the God of peace. You have a God of peace. A God who is peace. A God who gives peace. One day, the God of peace is going to crush Satan, he's going to squish him like a cowboy boot on a grape. And where is God going to put him? The Bible says that all things are subjected to Christ. 1 Peter says all authorities and powers are in submission to Christ.

God told us in Genesis that His Son, through His redemptive work on the cross would bruise the head of Satan. How did he bruise his head? He put his foot on him. He's going to crush him. But notice what Paul says here. He doesn't say He's going to crush him under 'his' feet. He's going to crush him under 'your' feet. You are raised with Christ and seated with Christ in the heavenlies. So, in the sense that we are 'in Christ,' Satan under His feet is Satan under yours. When Jesus puts an end to the conflict we get to put our feet, wrapped in the shoes of the gospel of peace on the head of the one who has disturbed the peace. It's time to put Satan where he belongs, not in your head, but under your feet.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.