

Jehovah Shalom

the
LORD
is Peace

DAY ONE

Why is there so much anxiety, worry and stress today?

There really is no more reason today to worry, to be anxious or fret than in previous generations. We have so much for which to be thankful. One of the factors that leads to anxiety is an "information overload." For all the good we derive from the internet, television and cell phones there is a side of them that adds to our daily stress. Seeing pictures and hearing of events out of our control can be upsetting and frustrating. I have chosen to limit the amount of negative information that comes my way each day. That does not mean I do not keep up with what is going on in the world, but I do not let it bombard my day. Wouldn't it be of greater value to commit more time to praying for those who are suffering and experiencing injustice and looking for ways to help others experience the joy of God's peace?

This week we will be studying Jehovah Shalom, the LORD is peace. Let's begin by considering the peace of God. What does that mean? What will it look like? How can we experience this peace?

In Numbers chapter 6, God had given Moses instructions for the Israelites to follow, in order to live an obedient and consecrated life. He gave them the words of blessing that when spoken conveyed the feeling of love and peace that God wants his people to have for one another.

Numbers 6:22-27

The LORD said to Moses, 23 "Tell Aaron and his sons, 'This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them: 24 " ' "The LORD bless you and keep you; 25 the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; 26 the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace." ' 27 "So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them."

Let's take a few minutes to consider this "blessing" more closely. In the chart below, describe what you believe is meant by the words in this blessing. Please do not rush through this. Think about the questions relating to each verse and about God's choice of inspired words.

The Blessing	The meaning of this blessing.
Num 6:24 <i>The LORD bless you and keep you;</i> Consider: What does it mean for God to <u>bless</u> someone? What does it entail for God to <u>keep</u> someone?	

The Blessing	The meaning of this blessing.
Num 6:25 <i>the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.</i> Of what benefit is it to have God's face shine on you? When God is extending his grace to you what will that look like or feel like?	
Num 6:26 <i>the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.</i> If the LORD, the Self-Existent One, the great I AM, turns his face toward you, what might you expect to happen next? What benefits might come from God giving you peace?	

You are probably familiar with the greeting, shalom, which simply means peace. When you hear the name Jehovah Shalom, what comes to mind? _____

The first time we see the name, Jehovah Shalom used in the Bible is in Judges 6:23-24. The Israelites are living in the promise land. Joshua led them in many military victories to possess the land God had promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their descendants. Joshua died at the age of 110. (Judges 2:8) He had carefully and prayerfully led the Israelites after Moses. Before he died, Joshua reminded the people to reverence and serve the LORD and to remember all the ways the Lord had cared for them, and if they did those things God would continue to fulfill his promises and be their God.

But the people themselves had grown weak in their faith. They are simply following the orders of Joshua and the elders not looking to God in obedience; not teaching their children the wonderful care of their God. Judges 2:10 tells us that a generation grew up that did not know the LORD and all he had done for Israel. They began doing evil and serving the gods of the heathen who had occupied the land before them.

By the time of Judges 6, Israel has broken the covenant made with the LORD. They refused to humble themselves and repent of their stubborn ways. They chose to live by their own standards. God allowed them to be taken into bondage. The people cried out, and the LORD raised up a deliverer. Even though they cried out to God, remorse is not repentance, and they quickly went back to their evil ways, and thus this cycle was played out over and over during the time of the Judges.

In Judges 6, we read about how Midianites severely oppressed the Israelites while in their captivity. Once again, the Israelites cried out, and God sent a prophet to speak to them and remind them of their good and gracious God.

Have you ever experienced a similar situation, where you cried out to God for deliverance but immediately went back to living in the same neglectful, self-centered and rebellious pattern?

DAY TWO

Let's read and examine Judges 6:1-24, and then answer a few questions.

Judges 6:1-24

The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD, and for seven years he gave them into the hands of the Midianites. 2 Because the power of Midian was so oppressive, the Israelites prepared shelters for themselves in mountain clefts, caves and strongholds. 3 Whenever the Israelites planted their crops, the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples invaded the country. 4 They camped on the land and ruined the crops all the way to Gaza and did not spare a living thing for Israel, neither sheep nor cattle nor donkeys. 5 They came up with their livestock and their tents like swarms of locusts. It was impossible to count them or their camels; they invaded the land to ravage it. 6 Midian so impoverished the Israelites that they cried out to the LORD for help. 7 When the Israelites cried out to the LORD because of Midian, 8 he sent them a prophet, who said, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I brought you up out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. 9 I rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians. And I delivered you from the hand of all your oppressors; I drove them out before you and gave you their land. 10 I said to you, 'I am the LORD your God; do not worship the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you live.' But you have not listened to me." The angel of the LORD came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. 12 When the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon, he said, "The LORD is with you, mighty warrior." 13 "Pardon me, my lord," Gideon replied, "but if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our ancestors told us about when they said, 'Did not the LORD bring us up out of Egypt?' But now the LORD has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian." 14 The LORD turned to him and said, "Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?" 15 "Pardon me, my lord," Gideon replied, "but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family." 16 The LORD answered, "I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive." 17 Gideon replied, "If now I have found favor in your eyes, give me a sign that it is really you talking to me. 18 Please do not go away until I come back and bring my offering and set it before you." And the LORD said, "I will wait until you return." 19 Gideon went inside, prepared a young goat, and from an ephah of flour he made bread without yeast. Putting the meat in a basket and its broth in a pot, he brought them out and offered them to him under the oak. 20 The angel of God said to him, "Take the meat and the unleavened bread, place them on this rock, and pour out the broth." And Gideon did so. 21 Then the angel of the LORD touched the meat and the unleavened bread with the tip of the staff that was in his hand. Fire flared from the rock, consuming the meat and the bread. And the angel of the LORD disappeared. 22 When Gideon realized that it was the angel of the LORD, he exclaimed, "Alas, Sovereign LORD! I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face!" 23 But the LORD said to him, "Peace! Do not be afraid. You are not going to die." 24 So Gideon built an altar to the LORD there and called it The LORD Is Peace. To this day it stands in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

Who were the enemies attacking the Israelites during this time period?

What did you learn about these enemies of Israel?

A prophet, sent by God, told the people why the enemies of Israel were having so much success attacking them. What was the reason?

● What did the Israelites do because of their great suffering? _____

● Highlight in Judges 6:1-24 who it was that sat down under the oak to talk to Gideon? _____

To help us gain a better understanding of who this "angel of the LORD" is who is talking with Gideon, let's refresh our memories of a few times people in Scripture spoke with an angel of the Lord. There are other references, but these are two we have talked about in the last few weeks.

● Who did Scripture say spoke to Hagar in Genesis 16:7-13? (page 21 in your Study Guide) _____

● Who spoke to Abraham in Genesis 22:11-14? (page 31 of your Study Guide) _____

● What did we learn about God's character in Genesis 16:7-13 and Genesis 22:11-14?

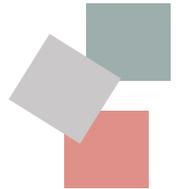
● Now that we have established who it is that is speaking to Gideon, where is this conversation taking place, and what was Gideon doing when the angel of God appeared?

● Why do you suppose this was a less than ideal place to thresh grain? Take a few minutes to look up the process of threshing in ancient times, and maybe even pictures of an ancient winepress to help you better understand what is happening in this story. What made this an unusual place to thresh grain?

● After reading this section of Scripture, why do you believe Gideon may have chosen this place to thresh his grain? _____

● What good news did the angel bring, and what did he call Gideon?

● What questions did Gideon have for the angel in verse 13?
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DAY THREE

● What questions do you have for God when things become difficult and hopeless? Do your questions sound anything like Gideon's? _____

● It is true that not all trials and tribulations are a result of personal sin. Some of the hardships we must endure are simply the result of living in a world broken by sin. But there are times when it would do us

well to ask a few questions and to be totally honest as we answer them. If we are feeling oppressed, alone, and forsaken by God, what questions might we ask ourselves? _____

Do you know anyone who is going through a long and difficult trial? Since you have been studying the names of God, what words of comfort might you share with them?

Why do you believe Gideon called this place "The LORD is peace?" (Jehovah Shalom)

It has been said, "Sometimes God calms the storm; sometimes He lets the storm rage and calms His child." When you are going through a long and difficult trial, what do you focus on that brings you peace? _____

What was the response of the angel to Gideon's questions? Did he answer them?

What did the angel say to Gideon?

This was an amazing call of God on his life. God is calling Gideon to save his people from the hand of their oppressors, the Midianites, the Amalekites and several other enemies. Does Gideon's view of himself and his family match that of the LORD? In what ways did Gideon's opinion of himself differ from the LORD's opinion of him? _____

DAY FOUR

To which tribe does Gideon belong? _____

How did Gideon describe his family and himself? _____

How would you describe yourself and your family? _____

Do you believe God could use you in a significant way to free others who are in bondage?

After accepting the offering Gideon brought, we are told the angel of the LORD disappeared. What realization hit Gideon and caused him to tremble in fear? _____

Did the LORD leave Gideon trembling in fear? _____

Several years ago, there was a popular song titled, "Little is much if God is in it." Do we really believe this? Do you and God make a majority? Do you feel the power of God when he calls you to do something of eternal purpose? _____

- Do you recall a similar conversation Moses had with God? Read Exodus 4:1,10,13.
1 Moses answered, "What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, 'The LORD did not appear to you'?" 10 Moses said to the LORD, "Pardon your servant, Lord. I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue." 13 But Moses said, "Pardon your servant, Lord. Please send someone else."
- How did Moses view himself when God called him to bring his people out of bondage in Egypt?

- How important is our opinion of God's ability to equip us for every task he is calling us to do?

- God knows how we view ourselves. Do you believe his view differs from what we see when we look in the mirror? What does God see when he looks at us? _____
- What does God offer if we will simply take a little bitty step of faith and obey? _____

DAY FIVE

- There are times when we do not know where God is leading us or what God is calling us to do. We must simply do the next right thing. What is the next right thing you know to do?

- Here are four wonderful verses of encouragement for those who would respond "yes" to God's call. After you read each one write out your thoughts below.

 - Psalm 46:1 *God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.*

 - Proverbs 18:10 *The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run into it and are safe.*

 - Nehemiah 8:10 *Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.*

 - Isaiah 41:10 *So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

- After accepting the offering Gideon brought, we are told the angel of the LORD disappeared. What realization hit Gideon and caused him to tremble in fear?

- What did God promise him? _____
- How is the promise in Judges 6:12, 16 similar to the promise God gave Moses in Exodus 3:12? How does knowing this fact change everything? _____

- What does the name Jehovah-Shalom mean to you personally? _____

In the table below, highlight the word "I" and "my" every time it appears, then briefly describe what you learn about God's call, power and faithfulness from that verse.

Exodus 6:1-8	Judges 6:7-9, 16	What did you learn about God's call, his power and his faithfulness?
<p><i>Then the LORD said to Moses, "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of my mighty hand he will let them go; because of my mighty hand he will drive them out of his country." 2 God also said to Moses, "I am the LORD. 3 I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself fully known to them. 4 I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, where they resided as foreigners. 5 Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered my covenant. 6 "Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. 7 I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. 8 And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD.' "</i></p>	<p><i>When the Israelites cried out to the LORD because of Midian, 8 he sent them a prophet, who said, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I brought you up out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. 9 I rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians. And I delivered you from the hand of all your oppressors; I drove them out before you and gave you their land.</i></p> <p><i>Judges 6:16</i> <i>The LORD answered, "I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive."</i></p>	

We can call on the name of God, Jehovah-Shalom in our time of trouble. We have seen several examples of God's power to save his people. Does knowing God has the power and the desire to help you through a difficult season bring you peace? _____

We have studied several names of God over the past few weeks. Which name brings you the greatest comfort, and why? _____