

:: summary

Margin is the space between our daily responsibilities and our human limitations, space for feeding the soul with unscheduled time with God, rest and recreation. The problem is, most Americans are really good at filling open space with the frenzy of activity we call "busyness." In this season of Advent, as we anticipate the arrival of Jesus that we celebrate on Christmas, and as we look forward to the time when he will return, how can we prepare him room in our hearts and lives when we leave no margin, even for ourselves?

Luke 1:56 "Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home."

:: explore and discuss it

In the deep places of the heart, every person longs for peace and wholeness – the kind that's found in the presence of God and was introduced back into the world through Jesus, but a lack of margin leaves no room in our lives to receive the gift God offers to us.

So, what clutter is crowding your heart and mind as you think about preparing room in your heart for Jesus, the Prince of Peace, in this season?

Read Luke 1:26-38; 46-56

Considering the many factors that might cause a lack of peace and frenzied activity in our lives if we were Mary, including her age, engagement to Joseph and the awesome responsibility given to her by God, what we see instead is a response of faith and obedience that gives way to joy and true peace.

How can this be and what can we learn from Mary?

Read Matthew 11:28-30

The Hebrew word in the Bible used for peace is *shalom*, which means wholeness, completeness, or perfection as a divine attribute, perfectly embodied in the person of Jesus. In this passage, Jesus, the Prince of Peace, gives us assurance of the peace we will find in him, and he invites us to discover it as we prepare room for him to make his dwelling place with us in our lives.

What is Jesus making available to us when he offers us "rest"? How might that change the way we experience our lives in this season as we anticipate his arrival?

:: make it personal

Where do you need to know Jesus as the Prince of Peace in this season of life?

How might God be calling you to create margin so that you can experience the peace and rest He offers?

:: pray it

Take time in prayer to pause in God's presence and offer yourselves to Him the way Mary did, making room to receive what God has to offer. Ask for Jesus to show you areas in your life that need to be cleared out as you prepare him room in this season. Invite the Holy Spirit to help you experience that peace he promises even now in the midst of your circumstances.

We live in a unique time of anticipation – we look forward to celebrating Jesus' birth, and we live in light of the promise that he will return. True, lasting peace is coming, so let's join Mary in praise and preparation!

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