



**God. Self. Others. Trials. Purpose.**



## WEEK 5

### Peace In Purpose

By: Dr. John Freeland

“And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.”

Luke 1:76-79



## INTRODUCTION

Have you ever yearned for a peace that transcends everyday worries and troubles? How about a peace that guides you through life's difficulties and uncertainties? The people of Jesus's day were desperate for peace. Of course, "peace" to them meant evicting Rome from the Promised Land. In this chapter, we walk with John the Baptist, a man whose very purpose resonated with profound peace. Through his life and teachings, we rediscover that true peace is found not in the absence of challenges, but in aligning our purpose with the ultimate source of peace – Jesus Christ.

John's mission, as prophesied by his father Zacharias, was clear: "to prepare the way for the Lord" (Luke 1:76). He wasn't merely a preacher or a leader; he was the DOT, paving the way for the Messiah, the Prince of Peace. But John understood that genuine peace begins not with external changes, but with internal transformation. We find no peace when our relationship with God is not right. To know God, to really know God to the extent that He is our chief aim, and we

find satisfaction in Him alone, this is peace. We're talking about the peace that if everything was stripped away from us but God we would still be at peace. That's the kind of peace John the Baptist was talking about.

John's call to repentance and forgiveness wasn't just about ticking religious boxes; it was about clearing the clutter in our hearts, making space for the transformative light of Christ. This chapter dives into the heart of John's message and how we, like John, carry that message as our chief purpose in life. We will explore how aligning our purpose with Christ's mission can bring genuine peace into our lives. And, we'll discover how cultivating a deeper relationship with God, built on genuine repentance and forgiveness, can guide us out of the shadows and onto the path of peace. Prepare to open your heart, examine your purpose, and have your mind transformed so you can discover the true meaning of peace – a peace that passes all understanding and fills your life with lasting joy and purpose.





**DAY 1 | WEEK 5**  
**The Prophetic Promise of Peace**  
By: Dr. John Freeland

“And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, Judea and the wider world were in a state of darkness.”

(Luke 1:76)

## THE PROPHETIC PROMISE OF PEACE

Day 1 | Week 5

This is best defined as a spiritual blindness towards God and the path to salvation. When we look at the Greek word translated “darkness” we discover a deeper meaning than we may realize. This darkness produces an ignorance of divine things. It hides ungodliness and immorality and empowers sin. This darkness woos people into spiritual ignorance. The inhabitants of Judea and the Gentile world were content in this land of spiritual darkness and unaware of their need for escape.

Fortunately, amidst this darkness, God sent John to prepare the way for a greater Light. John embodied the hope of spiritual transformation, an awakening from the darkness of spiritual slumber. The imminent arrival of the “Sun of Righteousness,” Jesus, would dispel the shadows and bring eternal light (Malachi 4:2). The time to remove this darkness and save God’s people from death had come. John had a purpose.

As Forerunner of the Christ, John was an active and powerful instrument in God’s hands. His purpose was to cultivate fertile ground within the hearts of the people, preparing them to receive and embrace the transformative message of Jesus. John was the prophetic instrument of God sent to prepare the way for Christ. He was an honored, yet humble, instrument in the hands of God. He called for repentance and offered a baptism of repentance. His ministry would see the hearts of many of his people come to believe in and follow the Lord Jesus.

Read Romans 5:1. This verse reminds us that we only have “peace with God” through faith in Jesus. This peace isn’t merely an absence of conflict, but a profound peace found through reconciliation with our God. John played a crucial role in facilitating this reconciliation by calling for repentance and paving the way for Jesus. John’s prophecy emphasized that the coming



Messiah would bring more than a peace in the traditional sense. The Messiah would bring back “Shalom,” which encompassed well-being, truth, and justice. The prophecy promised a renewed world, free from suffering and injustice, ushered in by God’s Messiah.

John began as a helpless baby. Amazingly God chooses to work through us despite our sinful nature. It is easy to underestimate the transformative potential within ourselves and others when we fail to recognize that God will, and does, work through us. God has unlimited power, yet we tend to minimize what God can do through those who are faithful to Him.

Salvation required nothing less than the Son of God incarnate to enter a fallen world. From David’s throne He will rule with peace, justice, and righteousness. The prophetic mission of John the baptizer, and the salvation mission of the Christ, are products of a loving God. Jesus Christ is the greatest gift of that love, in which all its tenderness and all its power are gathered up for our blessing. John had a purpose, and so do we.

**Questions for further reflection:**

1. John's role was to prepare the hearts of the people for the coming of the Prince of Peace. In what ways do you see yourself in John's role?

2. What intentional changes do you need to make to welcome God's presence more fully?

3. Read John 14:27. In what ways have you searched for peace that are contrary to this Scripture. What practices or habits in your life might you change to walk more fully in the peace Jesus gives?

**DAY 2 | WEEK 5**  
**Knowledge of Salvation**  
By: Dr. John Freeland

“to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins,”

(Luke 1:77)

## KNOWLEDGE OF SALVATION

Day 2 | Week 5

In 2 Corinthians 5:18-20, Paul gave no qualifiers or disqualifiers. Jesus came to save the whole world, not just a few good or important people. Jesus died for every person who was ever born and ever will be born. In Luke 6:27-28, Jesus said, “Love your enemies,” thereby challenging us to extend love and forgiveness even to our enemies. What an impossible task! But it becomes possible when we recognize the depth of God’s love for us, a love that extends beyond our limitations and imperfections. Embracing this radical love empowers us in our purpose to proclaim peace and forgiveness to a world that thrives on conflict.

God forgives sin when we come to Him in repentance and faith in Jesus. As ministers of reconciliation our purpose is to bring peace to those around us by acting like John the Baptist, preaching the hope of salvation, the promise of forgiveness, the message of redemption, and freedom in Christ. The

freedom John preached wasn’t merely deliverance from earthly hardships. The freedom found in Christ is freedom “from sin” and power over sin. This freedom is the foundation of true peace, attainable only through sincere repentance and embracing God’s forgiveness. Forgiveness is one of the most difficult things Jesus commands of us. Forgiving ourselves is hard enough, but to forgive those who have sinned against us?! And love our enemies too?! The natural mind cannot do this.

Read Romans 12:2. We are naturally conformed to the pattern of the world into which we were born. We cannot help ourselves. We are flesh, and our minds are flesh. A mind fixed on the flesh craves the things of the flesh. A mind of this nature cannot be at peace, nor can it freely forgive. Therefore, a renewing of the mind must take place. Transformation must occur before any of us can fulfill our purpose to be “a voice crying in the wilderness” (John 1:23).

Not only does our purpose depend on this transformation, our own peace hinges on it. Romans 12:2 connects a transformed mind with the doing of God's will. The trouble is, it is easier to be conformed than it is to be transformed. Being conformed is natural while being transformed is supernatural; and the natural mind cannot know the will of God, His pleasing and perfect will. Only a transformed mind can know the will of God and experience peace in purpose.

We see this in the life of John the Baptist. He lived in the wilderness, wore camel hair clothes (itchy), ate locusts (yuck, probably a seed pod and not the bug, still yuck!), and called out people's sin who could have his head. That's not normal. John refused to conform because he had been transformed. He knew the will of God and he walked in it. John had peace in purpose. He sometimes had doubts (he even sent his disciples to ask Jesus if he was the Messiah (Matt. 11:2-6)). But he knew the will of God. He knew the message of God. And, he had peace in his purpose because he followed the will of God for his life.

## Questions for further reflection:

1. Take time to ponder the depth of God's mercy and forgiveness in your life. How has experiencing His forgiveness brought you peace and transformed your relationship with Him?

2. Reflect on James 3:17-18 and Romans 12:2. What steps do you need to take to facilitate the transformation of your mind? How can you cultivate the qualities of peacemaking wisdom in your daily life?

3. In light of 2 Corinthians 5:18-20, in what ways do you now act as a "minister of reconciliation"? In what ways, and with whom, do you need to be a "minister of reconciliation?"

**DAY 3 | WEEK 5**  
**Light in the Darkness**  
By: Dr. John Freeland

“because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven”

(Luke 1:78)

## LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

Day 3 | Week 5

God's mercy shines like a rising sun, dispelling darkness and fear. Jesus illuminates the truth of God's love bringing clarity to our lives, dispelling the darkness of sin and ignorance, thereby bringing peace to our hearts and minds. Jesus did not come as a conquering force who would overthrow Rome and give national sovereignty back to the Jews as expected. Jesus came to deliver us from sin and bring peace and reconciliation.

Technically, light is electromagnetic radiation that is visible to the human eye. It illuminates our surroundings and allows us to perceive colors, shapes, and textures. Light can be produced naturally, such as sunlight, or artificially, like the light from lamps or LEDs. What is darkness except the absence of light? Light penetrates everywhere, illuminating and revealing. Jesus's presence isn't about overpowering darkness; it's about spiritual transformation. Jesus came as a light that

vanquishes darkness rather than a power that drives out another power (i.e. Rome).

John 8:12 proclaims Jesus is "the Light of the world." As "Light of the world" we see not only His enduring presence (Light) but transformative power. This light isn't a fleeting phenomenon; it's an invitation to walk in His footsteps, radiating His love and peace into the world. The "Light of the world" came incarnate to be present with his people. Jesus's transformative power changed the world and the people around Him, and He sends us to continue His mission as the light of the world (Matt. 5:14-15). Isaiah 9:2 beautifully echoes the theme of light dispelling darkness: "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned." This verse reminds us that even in the shadow of death when Christ, the great Light, arose He brought spiritual light and life to all who would receive it.



Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, “The church that is not living at the edge of crisis is simply irrelevant.” The church becomes an instrument of peace in its community when it actively seeks reconciliation and forgives those who have wronged it. John the Baptist preached against the injustices practiced by King Herod, the Temple priests, and the Pharisees. These injustices were contrary to the mercy of God and John believed those guilty should repent. Bonhoeffer also said, “Silence in the face of injustice is complicity with the oppressor.” Speaking out against injustice and advocating for peace in the presence of oppressive systems are vital acts of Christian witness that reflect the light of Christ in a world yearning for justice and peace.

Peace, shalom, is the presence of justice, not just the absence of violence. “Shalom” offers a deeper understanding of true peace. In a world where idolatry and injustice seek to destroy true peace, being peacemakers, ministers of reconciliation challenges us to actively pursue justice, lament injustice, and work toward a transformed world. Shining the light in an ever darkening world is not easy. It certainly wasn’t

easy for John or Jesus, but they each had a purpose. We have a purpose; to shine the light on sin and injustice, yes, but more importantly to live peace-filled lives and proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor (Luke 4:19).

## Questions for further reflection:

1. Reflect on areas of darkness or confusion in your life where you need the light of Christ to bring peace and understanding. How can you be a reflection of that light, bringing hope and peace to others in spite of your own need?

2. What injustices do you see around you? Which ones bother you the most? Which ones can you work to end?

3. John the Baptist's message reminds us that each of us has the potential to reflect God's light, bringing hope and healing to a world in need. On whom will you shine the Light of Christ this week?

**DAY 4 | WEEK 5**  
**Freedom From Fear**  
By: Dr. John Freeland

“to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to  
guide our feet into the path of peace.”

(Luke 1:79)

## FREEDOM FROM FEAR

Day 4 | Week 5

Today we look at the transformative power of Jesus Christ and how He brings us freedom from fear. Finding peace in Christ empowers us to become instruments of peace, leading others away from the shadows of fear and guiding them towards the light of God's love. Through Jesus, we find freedom from the chains of fear and discover security in His promises. Following Christ is not only about personal peace. It also means leading others towards it.

Shalom is not the absence of strife, but peace amid strife. Finding peace isn't about overcoming challenges alone. It's about trusting in God's presence, even in life's storms. It is trusting that God will never leave or forsake us (Heb. 13:5). James 4:7-8 encourages us to submit ourselves to God and resist the devil, promising that God will draw near to us. Similarly, 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 reminds us of our role as "Christ's ambassadors," commissioned

to share the message of reconciliation and guide others towards God's peace.

It is tempting to make being peacekeepers more difficult than it need be. Our greatest hope is that the work belongs to God, as well as the results. This doesn't excuse us by any means. In fact, it challenges us all the more to be actively engaged in helping others find the peace that is found in Christ alone. Fear steals not only our peace but also our hunger for "world peace." Many have thought of world peace as the destruction of nuclear weapons and tanks being made into tractors.

As Isaiah 2:4 says,  
“He will judge between the  
nations and will settle disputes for  
many peoples.

They will beat their swords into  
plowshares and their spears into  
pruning hooks.

Nation will not take up sword  
against nation, nor will they train  
for war anymore.”

Isaiah’s prophesy will come to  
pass when Jesus returns, but for  
now, world peace cannot wait  
upon the absence of war and  
destruction of military weapons.  
World peace depends on God’s  
ministers of reconciliation shining  
the Light of Christ in every dark  
corner, announcing the Gospel of  
Peace, and driving away fear.

Despite the world’s brokenness,  
God’s promise of “shalom” still  
remains. Every believer is called  
to play a role in this restoration by  
working toward a more peaceful  
and whole world. As ministers of  
reconciliation, ambassadors of  
peace, we cannot sit idly by while  
our neighbors live in fear. Nor  
should we be overcome with fear  
because the God of all peace will  
soon crush Satan under our feet  
(Rom. 16:20).

Read 1 John 4:18. This verse tells  
us something very important:  
“perfect love drives out fear.” The  
only perfect love is God’s love.  
Fear doesn’t hold a candle to the  
love of God. When we love with  
the love God has placed in us,  
we drive fear out. We find peace  
in purpose when we “love God  
with all our heart and with all our  
soul and with all our strength and  
with all our mind; and, love our  
neighbor as ourselves.”

## Questions for personal reflection:

1. Consider the fears or anxieties that are weighing on your heart. How can trusting in God's protection and sovereignty bring you peace?

2. How does living in a fallen world challenge you as a minister of reconciliation to shine the Light of Christ in every dark corner?

3. In what ways does Romans 16:20 give you hope? In what ways does it feel like it doesn't apply to you?

**DAY 5 | WEEK 5**  
**Peace, Our Ongoing Mission**  
By: Dr. John Freeland

“He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”

(Micah 6:8)

## PEACE, OUR ONGOING MISSION

Day 5 | Week 5

We conclude this week of study on Luke 1:76-79 by carefully considering one other Scripture that shines light on what it means to be peacemakers. Micah 6:8 connects these seemingly separate actions to the path of peace. In these two passages Luke 1:79 and Micah 6:8 we find strong parallels that inform our understanding of each passage. In these parallels we discover that to “Act justly” (Micah 3) is “to shine on those living in darkness” (Luke 1). “To love mercy” (Micah 3) is to shine the light “in the shadow of death” (Luke 1). Finally, “to walk humbly with God” (Micah 3) is “to guide our feet into the path of peace” (Luke 1). “He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” (Micah 6:8)

To “act justly” echoes John’s call for repentance, preparing hearts for Jesus, the Light that dispels ignorance and guides us away from “darkness.” The imagery in

Luke 1:79 is taken from travelers, who, being overtaken by night, are forced to wait patiently for the morning light, so they may know which way to go. Many of the roads in Judea and the Galilee were dangerous as marauders lay in wait for those traveling alone. To be caught on the road alone at night was a fearful thing. Like travelers in the ancient Judean wilderness we wander lost and apart from God. In this state we sleep in the shadow of death not knowing what lies in wait. In this context the Sun of Righteousness is a vivid hope (Malachi 4:2).

To “love mercy” resonates with John’s message of God’s forgiveness and offering hope and redemption even in the shadows of sin and guilt. By embodying compassion and forgiveness, we shine a light that relieves suffering and guides others towards healing. Sin is an evil master. It brings with it a heavy load of guilt and shame, which drives us to all manner of foolishness attempting to forget our sin and live with our past.



Sin's darkness suffocates our hearts with guilt and shame. Darkness, born of our own sin, warps our hearts and blinds our eyes to the mercy of God. The Light of Christ penetrates this darkness and offers forgiveness and reconciliation. As we move into His light, the burden of sin diminishes, replaced by the blessed assurance of God's grace. Then the peace of Christ can rule in our hearts. It is a peace that knows no limits and is not dulled by the chaos and confusion of a fallen world.

To "walk humbly with God" means to lower one's station or status before others and particularly before God. God shows favor to the humble, and they are easily taught by God. To "walk humbly with your God" speaks of trusting in divine guidance and accepting His plan for peace. Ultimately this means surrendering our will to His will. "Peace" implies trusting in His will, even when it challenges our understanding. "Walking humbly with God" means being guided on the path of peace. To guide others, we must humble ourselves before God and in so doing have a passion for guiding others on this path of peace.

The great hope of those who act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God is the promise of finding and walking Jesus's path of peace. But we must not settle for selfishly walking the path without bringing others with us. This would be counterproductive to reconciliation. Those who are just, love mercy, and walk humbly would naturally want others to discover and walk the path of peace with them. John had a purpose, and so do we.

**Questions for further reflection:**

1. When you picture yourself on a darkened road in the Judean wilderness are you afraid? Why or why not?

2. What does it mean to you to love mercy?

3. As you humbly walk the path of peace with God who should you bring with you? How will you do this?





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