

Jehovah Shalom - Leaders' Guide

Judges 6: 11-24

3 September 2023

Questions:

1. What do you think of when you hear the word peace?

Read Judges 6:11-24

2. The angel's salutation to Gideon begins with the phrase "The LORD is with you." Gideon has quite the response in verse 13. Does that kind of response sound familiar to you?

In the sermon I said that in my experience "this more than anything is the most common perspective about the presence or absence of God in the midst of trying times."

3. Gideon was skeptical that he was the person to deliver the Israelites. God's response in vs. 16 was "But I will be with you." In the sermon James said that that phrase could also be translated in the present tense. What two important take-aways are there from the present-tense translation?
 - a. *God has NOT abandoned us: "But I AM WITH you. I always have been. It is you who, like the prodigal - and we all are, at times, the prodigal - it is you who have strayed from me."*
 - b. *"Furthermore My being WITH you is all you need to accomplish whatever needs doing." See John 15:5 and Philippians 4:13.*
4. In the sermon James mentioned two English uses for the word peace. What are they? Are there more?
 - a. *The cessation of external conflict between individuals, groups, tribes, nations.*
 - b. *Inner tranquility - though that too could be seen as a cessation of internal conflict, but often is not.*
5. What are the additional nuances of the Hebrew word Shalom?

“The meaning of the 3 letter root, shin, lamed, mem, has to do with wellbeing, prosperity, completeness, wholeness - and in the context of its use in the Bible, particularly the restoration of those qualities. One of the phrases you may have heard Tim use from time to time in his sermons is “full flourishing”. THAT is what shalom is getting at.”

6. What did James suggest was perhaps the most powerful force away from wholeness and full flourishing? Do you agree?

Fear.

Read Philippians 4:4-8

7. What two spiritual disciplines does our Philippians reading highlight? And why are they necessary?
 - a. *The prayer of petition - because otherwise we will be tempted just to stew in our fears. We do have somewhere to go with them.*
 - b. *Praise and Thanksgiving - because our anxieties and fears will tell us that **all** is danger and hopelessness and despair, and the discipline of praise and thanksgiving will remind us that there is more - much more - in our lives and world than those things we fear.*

8. What do you fear and how can God’s Shalom address those fears?

This is an open question which you can leave with the group for reflection.

However, if there is a well-established level of trust in your group it may be very valuable to be able for members to share their fears with others - and to explore together how God’s Shalom can address those fears.