

Our key verse for this Names of God series is Psalm 9:10. I'm going to read a version of Psalm 9:10 with missing words, and let's see if you can fill in the blanks. "Those who know (your name) trust in you, (Lord), for you have never forsaken those (who seek you)."

Today we're talking about Jehovah Shalom, which means the Lord our Peace. What do you think of when you hear the word peace?

Here's a huge life question that we adults can especially spend time pondering, and I think you're old enough to think about. Is it possible to have peace in our hearts when life—situations and people—around us is not peaceful?

When we look at the Bible, a lot of stories include times when a person's life was the opposite of peaceful. What are some words opposite of peaceful? (*stressful, chaotic, scary*) Today we're going to talk about Gideon in Judges chapter 6. Gideon was an Israelite. What things do we remember about the Israelites? (*Israelites were slaves in Egypt. God delivered them and parted the Red Sea so they could escape. He led them through the wilderness for 40 years until they were ready for the Promised Land.*) The Israelites had been SO excited to get to the Promised Land where they would be able to have land of their own and build houses. God did miracles to bring them to this wonderful land, and His presence was with them on the journey. But once they got to the Promised Land they settled into the daily schedule of waking up and doing their work and having plenty of food to set on the dinner table, then going to bed and doing it all over again the next day...they forgot about God. They relaxed into the lie that they could have God with the capital G in their lives and have other gods, too. Their neighbors and friends who were not Israelites would go and do traditions that included praying to statues they would call god even though they were only stone.

Like so many sins, these traditions probably made the Israelites curious and kind of excited about trying something even though they knew it was wrong.

We know from the Ten Commandments that worshiping a god who is not the one true God is a sin. And sin always has consequences.

The Israelites sinned over and over and over, and their hearts turned against God. So He allowed them to be taken over by a group of people called the Midianites. The Israelites left their nice homes and comfortable places and hid in caves and cliffs. When they needed to go take care of their gardens and get food or take care of their livestock, the Midianites and other groups would sometimes hurt them and ruin all of their crops and kill their animals. The Israelites were living in fear that they would get beaten up or worse. Their lives sound really hard right now. What do you think?

The Israelites lived like this for 7 years, and then they remembered the God with a capital G who had rescued them before. They cried out and asked God to help them. Back to Gideon! Gideon was hiding and making some wheat into something he could eat. An angel came to him and said, "The Lord is with you, Mighty Warrior." He goes on to tell Gideon he is sending him to go and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Gideon responds a lot like Moses when God spoke to him from the burning bush. He looks at himself, and he says his family is the weakest of all the families and he is the least of his family. Who do we need to look to when God asks us to do something? We turn our eyes to God and who we know Him to be. That's one of the reasons this study of the nature of God is so important for our lives.

Gideon built an altar in that place and called it Jehovah shalom, the Lord our Peace. God later in the book of Judges does a miracle through Gideon to free the Israelites from the Midianites.

God in His mightiness and strength and care for us is the reason we can have peace when our lives are not peaceful. He is the all powerful God who offers all powerful peace. Even when our lives have things that cause us fear or even when everything we care about is threatened—which is how the Israelites felt—God is our peace that passes all understanding. He is Jehovah Shalom, the Lord our Peace.