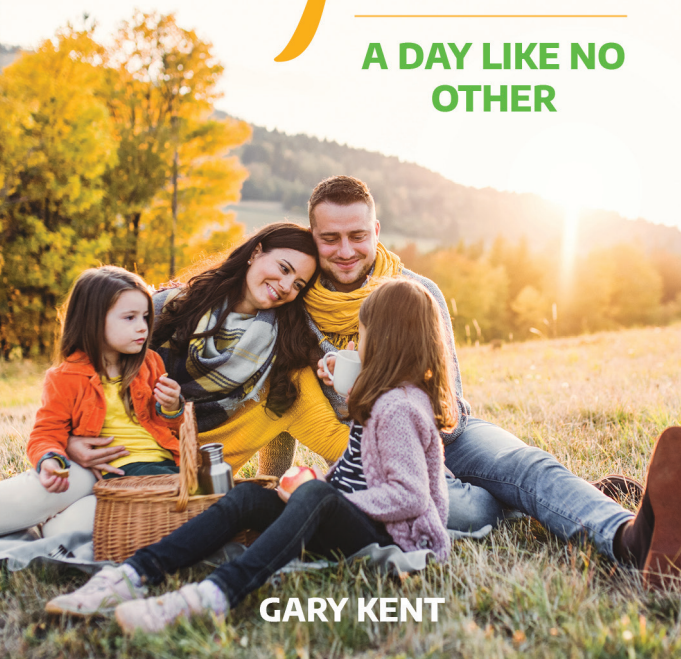




The Incredible
Journey

Experiencing God's *peace*

A DAY LIKE NO
OTHER



GARY KENT



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EXPERIENCING GOD'S PEACE

Do you ever feel as though the demands of life are closing in on you as tightly as 8:00am traffic in the city? Do you ever just wish you could fly away from the constant crush, the constant pressure? Let us learn a surprising way to do just that. You will discover an escape route that leads you straight into the peace of heart and mind.

It has stood the test of time. God's Book, the Bible is still relevant in today's complex world.

Most of us have some idea that we need to make a connection with God in order to experience lasting peace of mind. We need to get in touch with eternity in order to experience rest for our souls.

But that is far easier said than done. After all, God can seem pretty remote from where we stand, somewhere out there in a vast universe, somewhere out there among numberless galaxies.

He is an infinite being who dwells in unapproachable light. His ways are not our ways. He always has been, always will be. God seems to exist in another realm, outside of time.

We human beings, on the other hand, are stuck in time, stuck in the flow of everyday events, or the lack of a flow. Many of us live and work in a bumper-to-bumper world. We get caught up in the stresses and strains of getting ahead, or just getting by, or getting to work on time.

You know, we are all very much consumed by the here and now. We are surrounded by the noise and bustle of an urban landscape; we are often boxed in by the

demands of work and kids and school and all that we have to fit into our day.

We know we need to get in touch with God, with eternal values in some way. But the big question is, how do we get there from here?

Well, I believe the urban landscape itself gives us a clue. Think for a moment about why we have parks in the middle of our cities. Every metropolis has them. Why do we carefully cultivate these strips of green in the midst of all the skyscrapers and thoroughfares?

It is because all of us need an island. We need an island of calm in the middle of all the office bustle. We need an island of living, growing things in the middle of all the steel and concrete. We need an island of quiet in the middle of all the traffic noise.

Well, did you know that a wise, loving God has done something very similar for us. He has created an island for His harried, hassled children. It is not an island in any particular place. It is an island in time; an island in time designed to bring us great peace.

In the first few chapters of Genesis, we discover that God, at creation, gave us two important institutions. The first was marriage. Our Creator united Adam and Eve as one flesh. The second is described in chapter 2. And here at the beginning of the Bible, God gave us an oasis, an island.

Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made (Genesis 2:3).

At the end of the six days of creation week, God instituted the Sabbath. He

made the seventh day special, holy. He rested from His work. And this became an example for His people. They, too, were to rest from all their work on the Sabbath.

The book of Exodus shows us what we are to do with this island in time, this holy time. Exodus, chapter 20, and verses eight to ten describe graphically and beautifully these words:

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work (Exodus (20:8-10)).

What is the first thing you have to do to experience God's peace? Simply stop. Stop the rush.

Do you know why we do not experience more of God in our everyday lives? It is not so much that we are down here, and God is up there. It is not because God is

outside of time. We are the ones who are always out of time. We are the ones that do not have time for God. We are the ones that shut God out of our everyday lives.

We do not have to go far away to recapture peace and tranquility. We do not have to take a vacation half-way around the world. We just have to meet God in that special island, the Sabbath. We just have to make that weekly rendezvous with Him.

The New Testament reminds us that this rendezvous is something of which the Christian can take advantage.

In the book of Hebrews, the writer has written about the seventh-day Sabbath and what it means for believers, for Christians. He puts it this way:

There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased

from his works as God did from His
(Hebrews 4:9,10).

Entering into Sabbath rest means that we cease from our works and we rest in Christ, we rest in what Christ has done for us. We trust in His finished work of salvation.

Much more than we realise today, the Sabbath is truly a gift that can bring us peace.

So, stop your endless striving. Enjoy God's rest. That is the message of the Sabbath. It is how we can bring God inside of time, inside of our own personal weekly routine. God has made a day holy, the seventh day, in which we can experience His peace. He created a beautiful park right in the middle of our hustling, bustling lives.

The Sabbath is more than just a holiday. Holidays do not always bring us peace.

You see, friend, the Sabbath has got to be more than just a thrill ride, just another frantic holiday. So stop, look, and listen. Take in the sights and sounds that usually slide right by us in our hectic lifestyle. Break from your routine. Take an excursion into nature. Let the riches of the natural world speak to you. When you do that, you will begin to experience the richness of God's peace.

Entering into the Sabbath is like putting your hand into a clear, flowing stream. God's peace flows your way; it becomes something refreshing and real.

God tells us to do more than just stop on the Sabbath. He also tells us to put our roots down. The Sabbath is a day designed for us to re-establish our identity as children of God.

Hear what the prophet Ezekiel said on the subject:

Hallow My Sabbaths, and they will be a sign between Me and you, that you may know that I am the Lord your God (Ezekiel 20:20).

The Sabbath is a sign of our relationship with the Lord our God. In other passages we learn that the Sabbath is a sign of the “covenant” between God and His people. In other words, it’s a message from our Heavenly Father declaring: “You are a child of the King of the Universe. I claim you as My own.”

The Sabbath is a sign that we can always carry with us, a reminder of our special identity. We do not have to work hard to become God’s children. God the Father already claims us as His own, and He wants to remind us of that each week through His Sabbath.

Peace comes to us when we have established good roots, when we know

where we belong. Bonding with our Creator on the Sabbath is like sinking roots into rich, dark soil. It will cause us to grow and blossom as Christians.

The book of Deuteronomy shows us another truth that the Sabbath symbolises:

Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day (Deuteronomy 5:15).

The Sabbath, we find here in this passage in Deuteronomy, is also a memorial of God's deliverance. He is the great rescuer, and who did He rescue? People who had to work all the time. He rescued slaves in Egypt toiling day after day with no hope that their endless labour would ever give them freedom. That is who God rescued. His outstretched arm swept them from under the control of a tyrannical Pharaoh.

And what did Jesus do? He extended that rescue to all of humanity. By laying down His life, by dying on the cross, He rescued all of us who are slaves of sin. He freed us from the penalty of sin. He extended forgiveness and grace to us. Each one of us can come confidently before God the Father, because Christ has paved the way with His own blood. We can know that we belong at God's side.

People do not have peace today because they do not stop, and because they do not know who they really are. They are scurrying around constantly because they are trying to find a place where they really belong.

And God says, "I've created an island in time where you can sink good roots. I've created a park in the middle of your frantic life. Come into that park. Invest time in communicating with me. Accept Me as the one who created you.

Accept Me as the one who redeemed you.”

That is how we experience God's peace, right here, right now.

You know, when we talk about God as an eternal, infinite being, that is not just an abstraction. Do you know what it means for us? It means that God's love and joy and grace never run out; they are never exhausted. God is a bit like a great waterfall that never stops flowing. It just goes on and on.

God's peace, for example, is something that surpasses comprehension. It just keeps flowing to us in all its abundance.

Well, do you know what the Sabbath can become for each one of us in our lives? It can become a way to tap into that endless flow of peace. As we meet with God each week in that island in time, we can experience something of

God's consistency, His faithfulness, His unchangeableness. And that is another reason He is such a source of great peace.

Note these words in Exodus:

You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so that you may know that I am the Lord, who makes you holy (Exodus 31:13 NIV).

The Sabbath is a sign, a perpetual sign, between God and ourselves. It is always there; just as God is always there. It is to be celebrated "for the generations to come".

God is there for us each week. He makes a rendezvous with us each week. He is consistent; He is faithful from generation to generation.

The Sabbath stretches back to the beginning to creation, and it will continue

in eternity in the future. Isaiah, chapter 66, describes the Sabbath and Sabbath worship in a renewed earth and a new world after Christ's second coming.

The Sabbath is part of that eternal covenant between God and His people. It beautifully represents the "forever" relationship we can have with God.

And as we experience the Sabbath, as we experience this island in time, we begin to experience God's peace as something that flows on forever, something that sustains us.

We do not have to get bent out of shape by the little things that bother our lives, because we are part of the big picture, we are part of God's eternal plan. We do not have to try to control everything, because we know that God is in control. His purposes flow on and on. He sees the end from the beginning.

We do not have to desperately try to grab for more and more, because God is able to supply all our needs. His resources are inexhaustible.

The Sabbath assures us that we have a closeness with God. He is “our dwelling place throughout all generations”. He will never let us down because “His righteousness endures forever”. We can trust in Him implicitly as our Creator and as our Redeemer.

That is how we experience great peace in the here and now. That is how we find true rest for our hearts and minds. And that spiritually refreshing rest can make a dramatic difference in our lives.

A story is told about a young man who was taking a hike through the English countryside. He began climbing up a hill and looked down onto a peaceful landscape John Constable might have painted.

But suddenly, the wind picked up; clouds thickened overhead, lightning flashed, and the sky opened up with a downpour. The young man was drenched. He scrambled for cover, but the few trees on the hill offered little protection. He was getting soaked to the bone. And the lightning seemed to be striking very close.

Then he spotted a rocky outcrop near the top of the hilltop. He ran over and spotted a split in the rock, a cleft in the rock. It was just big enough for him to wedge himself in. And the rock thrust out above him, offer complete shelter from the rain.

As he was trying to hide there, the thunder roared, the lightning flashed. And then soon, the rainstorm was over. As he dried out, the young man remembered lessons that he had learned as a child, about God, lessons about the Heavenly Father and how God hides us in the shelter of His hand.

When he arrived home, he began to write down some lyrics. *Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee.*

Though you may not know, Rock of Ages became one of the most beloved hymns of all time.

The Sabbath is like a cleft in the rock. It is a wonderful way of resting in the Lord, a wonderful way to experience His peace.

We do not have to keep scrambling around looking for cover. We do not have to keep getting worn down by stress. We do not have to watch our lives slipping away in the rush of one day tumbling after another.

We can stop. We can get in touch with eternity. We can access the bigger picture. That is what the island of the Sabbath offers us. We stop, we dip our hands into the stream; we sink in our roots.

Why don't people experience peace today? Because they do not stop. Because they do not sink their roots deep.

It is not that God is outside of time. It is that we are always out of time. We do not realise that there is an awesome waterfall flowing very close to us.

You can begin to experience the wonderful peace of God right now. You can begin to experience genuine Sabbath rest.

It is a gift that God has given us, set in the midst of our hustling, bustling lives.

Isn't it time you took the time for God? Isn't it time to invest in the relationship that counts the most, both now, and throughout eternity?

I invite you to make a rendezvous with God, embracing the words of this prayer.

“Dear Father, thank you for creating us in love as Your children. Thank you for

rescuing us from sin and meaninglessness. We want to experience your peace. We need an island of calm in the midst of our hectic lives. We want to meet you in a special way. So, help us to begin experiencing Sabbath rest as you intended it. Help us to stop, to sink in our roots, to get in touch with eternity. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen."

I am so thankful, personally, for God's gift of the Sabbath. I know it has been the means of experiencing God's peace, of making that peace very real for both myself and my family. God has given you, too, a special "island in time" where you can meet Him and experience peace for the heart and mind.

NOTES

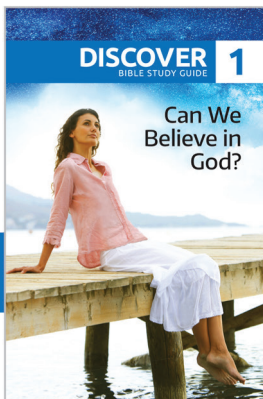
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Pastor Gary Kent is Speaker for The Incredible Journey ministry. He has produced and presented numerous documentaries on subjects including the Bible, Bible prophecy, world events and natural health. His passion is to share the good news of Jesus' imminent return.

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