An Encapsulated View of the Best from Christian Publishers

Peace With God:
The Secret of Happiness
by Billy Graham
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From the Classics Collection

A Quick Focus

The Book's Purpose
● Describe and illustrate the world in crisis
● Explain the clear and simple steps to a new life offered through faith in Christ
● Guide the new Christian through his or her first steps
● Extend a personal invitation to those who are undecided

The Book's Message
The moment you were born you began the search—the search for something outside of yourself, something more important than anything in life, something you know you need but can’t describe. You are not alone. All mankind is on the same quest. All mankind is seeking comfort, guidance, and peace. There is only one dependable source of the peace that surpasses understanding.

And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart (Jeremiah 29:13).

Three Main Points
● Assessing the Situation . . . . . . . . 2
● Advancing the Solution . . . . . . . . 5
● Applying the Antidote . . . . . . . . . 6
Assessing the Situation

In your loneliest moments, have you ever wondered if anyone else feels empty inside? Is anyone else searching for something he can’t describe but knows he needs? Am I the only one with this emptiness inside? You may have thought, “No one else is on the Great Quest. All others have found their way. They know what they want and have it. I am totally alone on this path to nowhere. I am the only one who is lost!”

The truth is that you are not alone. Everyone is on this same path, seeking answers to the uncertainty, moral disease, and meaninglessness that afflict the world. All are reaching out for direction, relief, and contentment. We live in a time marked by anxiety. Seldom in all history has mankind had to cope with so much fear and doubt. We desperately want peace, yet at every turn we are bombarded with the reality of war. We momentarily think we have found our way only to find ourselves once again lost and bewildered. We feel hopeless that we will ever find that for which we so desperately seek.

One of our initial paths to happiness could be labeled Political Freedom. If everyone in the world could select his own government to include effective leaders and a value base that made life worth living, we would all be happy, we thought. But, we did not succeed in creating a better world. Everywhere we look we see political corruption, hypocrisy, and exploitation. Although political freedom is important, it does not provide the happiness and peace we long for.

Education was another initial path we followed. Perhaps, if we combined political freedom with education, we would find what we were searching for. But it did not take long to realize that, although we are the most informed and literate civilization in history, we are also the most confused. Though our minds are filled with knowledge, our hearts are barren.

Then we decided to strive for a higher standard of living. Surely that would fill us with contentment. We have beautiful houses, new cars, fast computers, and unending sources of entertainment in this shiny economy of ours. Are we happy? Are we content? Do these wonderful “things” provide fulfillment, explain why we exist, or teach us what we need to know? No, the emptiness persists.

The path of science has provided many things we thought we wanted; unfortunately, it has also produced threats to every living thing on this planet.

There are many other paths we have tried or are currently following—paths of pleasure, paths of power, paths of fame and of fortune. Each one will lead us nowhere but further into the muck.

America is basically bored. We have become so empty that we have forgotten how to entertain ourselves. We pay others to entertain us, to make us laugh, to help ease, even for just a few minutes, the terrible feeling of being empty, lost, and alone.

We live in a topsy-turvy world, one filled with confusion. But the confusion that envelops us has a plan—Satan’s plan! Satan’s goal, as the great deceiver, is to craftily lead us into self-deception. He wants us to believe that things are getting better when the opposite is actually happening. With all of the progress, we have not solved the most basic issue of humanity—to live together contentedly and at peace. We momentarily think we have found our way only to find ourselves once again lost and bewildered. We feel hopeless that we will ever find that for which we so desperately seek.

We do not have to go back to ancient times to see what happens to a nation of empty people…. Nature abhors a vacuum, but it is up to us as individuals to determine with what our inner vacuums shall be filled…. Why are we empty? Because the Creator made us for Himself; and we shall never find completeness and fullness apart from fellowship with Him.”

God created us with the capability to be bored with ourselves and our surroundings. Since it is God’s nature to never do anything without purpose, He gave humankind the capacity for boredom for a reason. Boredom serves as a measurement of the condition of our inner spirit. One who is thoroughly bored is like a vacuum. The question is, With what are we attempting to fill our spirits?
The Indestructible Bible

The Bible has prevailed through the darkest ages of mankind, and its promises have remained unchanged through it all. Its theme is the story of God’s provision of Jesus Christ as the redeemer for all sinners. God inspired the Bible to be written so that all would know He is Son to save them, He is wisdom to guide them, and He is love to comfort them. The Bible is the one sure “how to” manual in a dark and frightening world.

It took 1,600 years and 40 authors—scribes of God—to write the Bible.

“During these sixteen hundred years, the sixty-six books of the Bible were written by men of different languages, living in different times, and in different countries; but the message they wrote was one. God spoke to each man in His own language, in His own time.... When the great scholars gathered together the many ancient manuscripts written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, and translated them into a single modern tongue, they found that God’s promises remain unchanged, He is great message to man had not varied.”

In the United States, the Constitution is the highest law, just as the Bible is the highest law of God. The Bible includes God’s plan:

- It states God’s spiritual laws.
- It imparts God’s enduring promises.
- It reveals God’s plan of redemption.

Christianity rejects no part of the Bible nor adds anything to the Bible. The Bible is truth.

“Truth is timeless. Truth does not differ from one age to another, from one people to another, from one geographical location to another. Men’s ideas may differ, men’s customs may change, men’s moral code may vary, but the great all-prevailing Truth stands for time and eternity.”

There is no hidden message in the Bible. Its clear and eternal message is the fact of Jesus Christ and He is offer of peace with God. Jesus taught God’s message—He is laws and way of salvation—within the authority of God Himself for Jesus is part of the triune God. Therefore, Jesus is truth and is “the same yesterday, and today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).

When we ask ourselves, “What is God like?” the simple answer is that He is like Jesus. Jesus made God visible to mankind.

A scholar might say, “God is the expression of everything in nature and life, that all living beings are one with God, that life itself is an expression of His Divine Being.”

A philosopher might describe Him as “the original and immutable force behind all creation, that He is the Master Dynamo who keeps all the worlds in motion—that He is the Power without beginning or end.”

We also hear that “God is absolute, that He is All in All, and that no one can possibly know any more about Him.”

God is all of this and so much more. He is like a diamond with many facets, many attributes. Following are four of the many:

God is Spirit

First, the Bible describes God as spirit (John 4:24). What does Jesus mean by the word spirit? He answers this question Himself in Luke 24:39 when He says, “Handle me, and see; for a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.”

Therefore, we know that God is not contained in nor limited to a body. He has no specific shape; He knows no boundaries; He cannot be seen by human eyes. He has no limitation so He can be everywhere at once. He sees all, hears all, and knows all.

He has no limitations to His power, love, and mercy—He hears the prayers of every person who calls to Him. For some, this is a difficult to understand. Our limited minds want to ascribe our limited existence to God so that we can try to comprehend Him. We try to fit Him into a box constructed by our limited experiences. This is impossible to do because God is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable. His being, wisdom, holiness, justice, power, goodness, and truth are far beyond our understanding and cannot be limited to our existence.

God Is a Person

Second, the Bible makes it known that God is a person. Most of the attributes of man are also attributed to God. We see phrases such as “God does” and “God loves” all through the Bible. A person expresses personality—he or she thinks, wishes, desires, and feels. We have continued on page 4
a difficult time comprehending that God has all of these same attributes. We again try to understand from the perspective of our human limitations. If we were capable of understanding that personality is not limited to a physical being, it would revolutionize our comprehension of God. God is not contained in a body, yet He loves, He thinks, He feels, He forgives. He understands and sympathizes with our sorrows. He is a person.

Third, the Bible clarifies that, in addition to being a spirit and a person, God is a holy and righteous being. Throughout the entire Bible, God describes Himself as a holy God who is perfect and absolute. He cannot tolerate sin of any kind, a situation that creates the chasm that separates mankind from God. As sinners, mankind was powerless to reach God, a dilemma that requires Jesus to bridge that great divide. God, in H is great mercy, took our place. He sent and sacrificed H is Son so that we could have access to Him.

Fourth, the Bible declares that God is love (1 John 4:8). We often use the word love very loosely—"we love chocolate," "we love the color blue," "we love our son's teacher." It is easy to see why we can mistake the phrase, "God is love" to mean "fluffy" things such as life will always be happy, sweet, and beautiful—certainly no one will be punished for sin. But love means something very different to God. God is absolutely holy and just, and because of this all sin must be punished. It was God's love that provided Jesus as the way of redemption. It was God's love that hung Jesus on the cross!

The love of God is impossible to describe or to understand until we accept it and experience it. This is not done with our minds or through our works. As mentioned earlier, mankind is limited and unable to do deal with anything as infinite as the love of God. The love of God is ours only through faith in H is Son, Jesus Christ. Once we accept and believe in H im, the peace of God fills us and there is no room for doubt.

So we now know that God is spirit, that H e is a person, that H e is holy and righteous, and that H e is love.

If God is so wonderful, why is there so much suffering, wickedness, and sorrow in the world?

To answer this question, we must examine the story of Adam and Eve in the garden, from the first chapter of Genesis. In the beginning, God created a perfect world and placed in it a perfect man. God gave Adam eternal life and freedom. He gave Adam freedom of choice. With the very first man, the responsibility and consequences of choices began. Freedom is only real if one has the right to select his course of action. In order to do so, there must be more than one option. So, God created the perfect place and a perfect man, created in H is image, and gave him the freedom to choose his way. Then, as wise parents do, H e waited to see what choice the man would make.

Adam chose, and all of humanity has suffered the consequences. Adam set the pattern that all mankind was to follow. God is not to blame for the condition of the world. The blame is Adam's alone. He chose the lies of the tempter over the truth of God! Ever since, mankind has been trying to regain what Adam lost.

You might be thinking, "But this isn't fair!" We are still suffering for a choice the first man made! This is true, but, because of the limitations of the created man, it is impossible for mankind to correct the situation. Some think that if we just improve our environment we will improve mankind so much that only right choices will be made.

We must recognize, however, that the first sinful choice was made in a perfect environment. Since then, we have plunged ever deeper into sin despite our efforts to the contrary. We are basically miserable and we cry out for help. Still, over and over again we chose as Adam chose—the wrong way. We despair and we rail against God! We blame H im for our situation, find fault with H is mercy and love, and question H is wisdom and judgment.

Because of Adam's choice, the earth that once produced only beautiful and good things now produces both good and bad.

"Cursed is the ground for your sake, in sorrow you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to you; and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you will eat bread until you return unto the ground; for out of it you were taken: for dust you are and unto dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:17–19).

Because of Adam's choice, man would toil and know hardship all the days of his life to provide for his family. Woman would know sorrow and pain. Both would know death—spiritual death, physical death, and eternal death. We have been trying ever since to reverse this curse, but we are sinners by inheritance and cannot, through our own efforts, escape our birth-
right. But God, in His infinite mercy, compassion, and love, sent H is Son. Jesus readdressed temptation. When the devil showed H im all that could be H is if H e rejected God to follow him, Jesus would have none of it!

"Our blessed Lord said, ‘Away from me, Satan. For it is written, Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only’ (Matthew 4:10). He completely triumphed over the Tempter to reveal to all peoples of all succeeding generations H is sinless character. H e is our victory!"

Every day we face the same test that was given to Adam. Every day we must choose between the tempter’s cunning promises and God’s eternal and absolute Word. Again and again we fail.

"God, meanwhile, in H is infinite understanding and mercy, has looked on, waiting with a patience and compassion that passes all understanding. He waits to offer individual salvation and peace to the ones who will come to H is mercy. The same two paths that God set before Adam still lie before us. We are still free to choose. We are living in a period of grace while God withholds the eternal punishment we so justly deserve."

There is a satanic influence involved in the sad condition of the world today. The Bible tells us: “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8). Be careful! Do not doubt that the devil exists! He is very real, he is clever, and he knows you personally! Because of him, there is a constant struggle between good and evil. Every minute of every day we are tempted and therefore face the same test that Adam failed. We continue to fail, for sin is the most terrible and devastating fact in the universe.

"We have seen that the most terrible, the most devastating fact in the universe is sin. The cause of all trouble, the root of all sorrow, the dread of every man lies in this one small word—sin. It has crippled the nature of man. It has destroyed the inner harmony of man’s life. It has robbed him of his nobility. It has caused man to be caught in the devil’s trap."

Since that moment in the Garden of Eden when Adam made that tragic choice, mankind has been asking, “How can I get out of this mess? What do I need to do to be free of this?”

Advancing the Solution

God has provided the solution. “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). The Bible contains many facts about God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. This Trinity is a mystery we cannot understand. What we can understand, however, is the amazing sacrifice God provided so that we could have victory over sin. Jesus was that sacrifice. When sinless Jesus hung on that cross for you and me, what also hung there was the depth of man’s sin, the love of God, and the way of salvation. On that cross Jesus died in our place—He suffered what we deserved.

But, that was not the end. Jesus rose from the dead and H is resurrection proves the following truths:

- Jesus was undeniably God—H e was Deity in the flesh.
- God accepted Christ’s atoning work on the cross (Romans 4:25).
- Mankind is assured a righteous judgment (Romans 5:19).
- Our bodies will also be raised in the end (1 Corinthians 15:20).
- Death will ultimately be abolished so that someday we will be face-to-face with Jesus and we will have bodies like H is (1 John 3:2).

It is not enough to know the facts about God and H is Son. The solution to our sin problem is not an intellectual one. You cannot think your way back to God. You cannot worship or moralize your way back to Him either. There is only one way back to God. Jesus provides the answer: “Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3). Jesus is asking for a conversion.

What is conversion? Conversion is to turn around or to change one’s mind. In a religious realm, conversion is to be regenerated, to repent, and to receive grace. 

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There is a vast difference between believing on an intellectual level and experiencing total conversion. Many people have an emotional experience that they refer to as conversion, but they never go on to fellowship with Christ nor change their lives in any way. An actual conversion is a life-altering experience.

In some people, changes in lifestyle are evident immediately; in others, changes take place over time. Ultimately the result is the same:

"In conversion as you stand at the foot of the cross, the Holy Spirit makes you realize that you are a sinner. He directs your faith to the Christ who died in your place. You must open your heart and let Him come in. At that precise moment the Holy Spirit performs the miracle of the new birth. You actually become a new moral creature. There comes the implantation of the divine nature. You become a partaker of God's own life. Jesus Christ, through the Spirit of God, takes up residence in your heart."

The converted person will love the good he once hated, and hate the sin he once loved. There will even be a change of heart about God. Where he once may have been careless about God, living in constant fear, dread, and antagonism to God, he now finds himself in a state of complete reverence, confidence, obedience, and devotion.

**The Devil.** When you accepted Christ as your Savior, Satan suffered a tremendous defeat and so he is angry. Though he can never rob you of your salvation, he will do everything he can to lead you into sin and rob you of your assurance and peace. Remember, “No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way of escape so that you may be able to endure it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

**The World.** Filled with pleasures, fashions, aims, opinions, and evil companions, the world tends to lead us into sin. Many of these things are not sinful in themselves but become so when abused. Remember, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world” (1 John 2:15).

**The Flesh.** The inward tendencies of our old nature are still present within you. War now exists between the old nature and the new. The battle is between the self-life and the Christ-life. Remember, “the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh” (Galatians 5:17).

These three enemies are common to all Christians and are part of every Christian life. The only effective action that will lead to victory is to renounce them. We cannot compromise with them. We cannot bargain with them. Nor can we show hesitation.

The wonderful news is that we are not alone in our battles! Jesus promised that He would never leave us or forsake us. He gave to us the third person of the Trinity—the Holy Spirit. He is the comforter who comes beside us and abides with us forever (John 14:16).
**APPLYING THE ANTIDOTE**
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This powerful Being will be with you every step of the way. The Holy Spirit will comfort you and guide you. He will help you to grow and mature in your Christian walk. You can be an active part of the process if you do the following:

- Read the Bible daily: the Bible provides spiritual food you need to grow.
- Learn to pray: communicate with God—the Holy Spirit will teach you.
- Rely on the Holy Spirit: the Holy Spirit dwells within you—let Him be in control.
- Attend church regularly: worship, serve, and fellowship with other Christians.
- Be a witnessing Christian: you are an ambassador of the King of kings.
- Be ruled by love: you should love others as God loved us and sent Him to die for us on the cross.
- Be obedient: let Christ have first place in the choices of your life.
- Learn to meet temptation: do not entertain temptation; take your eyes off temptation and focus on Christ.
- Be a wholesome Christian: avoid extremes; be clean of body and pure of heart.
- Live above your circumstances: serve and glorify Him just as you are.

Your journey is just beginning. As you go forward, you will find that your Christian foundation will affect every facet of your life.

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**If You Are Still Unsure**

Do you want your sins forgiven? Do you want your guilt removed? Do you want to be with Christ forever in His Kingdom? This assurance can be yours right now.

“For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God: not of works” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Give yourself to Christ now ...

“O God, I am a sinner; I am sorry for my sin; I am willing to turn from my sin. I receive Christ as Savior; I confess Him as Lord; I want to follow Him, and serve Him and others in the fellowship of His church. In Christ’s Name, Amen.”

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The mission of Christian Book Summaries is to enhance the ministry of thinking Christians by providing thorough and readable summaries of noteworthy books from Christian publishers.

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Peace with God: The Secret of Happiness by Billy Graham is a “modern classic” first published in 1953. It has been translated into 11 languages and is held by 2,035 library systems throughout the world. The most recent edition was published in 2000. Summarized by permission of the publisher, W Publishing Group, a division of Thomas Nelson, Nashville TN. ISBN: 0849942152. 288 Pages. $12.99. Available at your favorite bookstore or online bookseller. Also available online at various websites, including Christian Classics Ethereal Library (www.ccel.org).

The author: “My one purpose in life is to help people find a personal relationship with God, which, I believe, comes through knowing Christ,” says evangelist and author Billy Graham. Mr. Graham has preached the gospel to more people in live audiences than anyone else in history—nearly 215 million people in more than 185 countries and territories. Hundreds of millions more have been reached through television, video, film, and webcasts. Mr. Graham has written 25 books, many of which have become top sellers. His memoirs, “Just As I Am,” published in 1997, achieved a triple crown, appearing simultaneously on the three top best-seller lists in one week. In it, Mr. Graham reflects on his life, including more than 60 years of ministry around the world. From humble beginnings as the son of a dairy farmer in North Carolina, he shares how his unwavering faith in Christ formed and shaped his career. Billy Graham and his late wife, Ruth, have three daughters, two sons, nineteen grandchildren and numerous great-grandchildren. He makes his home in the mountains of western North Carolina.

Summarized by: Bonnie Church is a website content manager, editor, freelance writer, and avid gardener. She and her husband, Doug, are proud parents of six and grandparents of ten. She is a graduate of the University of Minnesota. Bonnie, Doug, and their family live in Colorado Springs, Colorado.