

# The Fruit of the Spirit: Peace

## Lesson Four

radiate

### Settling In: About 10-20 minutes

- 1) Make a note to yourself who, if anyone, is missing from your home group this week:
- 2) Spend some time finding out how everyone is doing: make a note for prayer requests.
- 3) Introduce a time of conversational prayer. Make it clear that group members are not required to participate if they are not comfortable.

or

- 4) Play Tim Hughes, "The Beauty of Your Peace" from *When Silence Falls*.
- 5) Take turns reading aloud the following Bible passages.
  - a) Is 26:3
  - b) Pr 14:30
  - c) Jn 14:27
  - d) Phil 4:7

This is only for your information...don't make a big deal of who is missing to the members who are present.

Conversational prayer means each member taking turns praying for various concerns with reasonably short and to the point prayers.

Think of these studies as a palette to paint from. You can rearrange, omit, or augment the materials in the study to fit your home group.

### Opener: About 10 minutes

- 1) Is it possible to enjoy perpetual peace in this world? Why or why not?
- 2) Is there such a thing as "too much peace"? Explain.

### Mini-teach: About 10 minutes

#### Three Arenas of Peace:

- 1) The NT word for peace means "to be set at one again."
  - a) The very definition presumes a state of conflict that is resolved.
- 2) Arenas of Peace:
  - a) Personal Peace: by which we usually mean peace of mind.
    - i) What are some other words we use for personal peace? (Tranquillity, serenity...)
    - ii) Many people search all their lives for inner peace and are able to experience nothing but turmoil.
    - iii) Other people mistake complacency for peace; they end up being tranquilized into inaction.
  - b) Relational Peace: by which we usually mean friendship.
    - i) What are some other words for peace? (harmony, reconciliation...)
    - ii) Some people mistake detachment or apathy for relational peace; they lack the passion to even have necessary conflict.
    - iii) Others fear confrontation so much that they are willing to tolerate anything to avoid conflict. This is not real peace either.
  - c) Societal Peace: by which we usually mean international or domestic order and stability.
    - i) What are some other words we use for societal peace? (Calm, stability, non-aggression, cessation of hostilities...)

The Greek word for peace is εἰρήνη eirene, i-ray'-nay

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- ii) No one living in the 20<sup>th</sup> or 21<sup>st</sup> century can escape the vivid images of the horrors of war. Young and old alike yearn for lasting world peace.
  - iii) However, sometimes social stability is valued so highly by those in power that injustices are overlooked. According to the Bible, God places a high value on both peace and justice for the oppressed.
- 3) The Bible deals with all three arenas of peace. God wants us to have peace in our lives and he gave us some clear direction for how to build peace.

### Discussion 1: *About 15 minutes*

#### Personal Peace

- 1) "Those of steadfast mind you keep in peace—in peace because they trust in you." (Is. 26:3, NRSV)
- a) What do you think Isaiah means by a "steadfast mind"? Is there any clue in this verse?
  - b) On what are we to keep our mind steadfastly focused upon?
  - c) What is our trust in God based on, in other words, why should we put our trust in God?
  - d) Would anyone be willing to share a story of how having trust in God brought you peace in a difficult situation?
- 2) "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid." (John 14:27, NRSV)
- a) How does Jesus distinguish the peace that he gives?
  - b) Describe the kinds of peace that the world gives. What's wrong with that?
  - c) Jesus tells us to not let our hearts be troubled or afraid. Do you think we really have any control over that? Why or why not?
  - d) If we do have some control over our hearts, then how can we steer clear of fear?
- 3) "To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace." (Rom. 8:6, NRSV)
- a) What does it mean to "set your mind"? How much control do we have over what we dwell on?
  - b) Read some other translations of this verse. What terms do they use for "flesh"?
  - c) If we understand the "flesh" as our sinful nature, how would "setting your mind" on it lead to death? Do you think Paul means (only) literal physical death?
  - d) What would it mean to have a mind full of death instead of a mind full of life?
  - e) How can we have a mind full of life and peace?
- 4) "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4:7, NRSV)

For this lesson, I would suggest that you omit one of the three discussions.

The Greek word for "flesh" is **σάρξ sarx**, *sarx*. Perhaps the best way to understand it is as the sinful urge that tempts us from within. The NIV translates **σάρξ** as "sinful nature". For an excellent treatment of "the flesh" see Dallas Willard's *Renovation of the Heart*, particularly p.159ff.

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- a) Why is important that the peace of God can surpass our understanding?
- b) The peace of God stands as a sentry, guarding our hearts and minds...from what?

### Discussion 2: About 15 minutes

#### Relational Peace

- 1) "Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding." (Rom. 14:19, NRSV)
  - a) Why doesn't Paul simply say, "let us pursue peace"? What "makes for peace"? What kinds of solutions to conflict produce real and lasting peace?
  - b) What might be some other words for "mutual upbuilding"?
  - c) How can "mutual upbuilding" lead to relational peace?
- 2) "...making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Eph. 4:3, NRSV)
  - a) This verse is talking about unity within the church. According to this verse, do we create the unity of the Spirit ourselves?
  - b) What is our responsibility toward the unity of the Spirit? How much effort does it deserve?
  - c) What is it that binds the unity together? What kinds of things can undo the gift of unity?
- 3) "If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all." (Rom. 12:18, NRSV)
  - a) Is it always possible to live peaceably with everyone? What is our obligation?
  - b) If we choose to live peaceably, what kinds of attitudes and actions are inappropriate, especially in times of conflict?

Perhaps a modern equivalent might be pursuing win/win resolutions to conflict.

Unity is a gift from the Spirit of God. However, we are responsible to maintain the unity.

"Bond" comes from the word for shackle or chain.

### Discussion 3: About 15 minutes

#### Societal Peace

- 1) "The cow and the bear shall graze,  
their young shall lie down together;  
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.  
The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,  
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.  
They will not hurt or destroy  
on all my holy mountain;  
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD  
as the waters cover the sea." (Is. 11:7-9, NRSV)
    - a) Assuming world peace is a goal of most governments, how would you say we are doing so far? Cite several examples from recent news that would indicate we have not yet achieved world peace.
- Society of International Law, in London, states that during the last 4, 000*

The "holy mountain" represents Zion...the mountain of the temple of the Lord. However by the time of the NT, Zion comes to represent something more. Jesus is not as concerned with the temple as with the Kingdom of God. Paul uses Zion as a symbol of the Kingdom of God extensively. This passage looks forward to a future time, at the end of the age, when God's peace is brought to the nations.

*The Personnel Journal*

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*years there have been only 268 years of peace in spite of good peace treaties. In the last 3 centuries there have been 286 wars on the continent of Europe alone. J. K. Laney, Marching Orders, pp. 50 ff*

- b) This passage from Isaiah is a highly symbolic portrait of God's future that he has planned for the world. What is the significance of the creatures he pairs together?
- c) Is God's concern only for the "holy mountain" (Zion)?
- d) This portrait of peace is God's plan for the future of the earth. What does that say about those who work for peace in the world today?

reported this incredible statistic: since the beginning of recorded history, the entire world has been at peace less than eight percent of the time! In its study, the periodical discovered that of 3530 years of recorded history, only 286 years saw peace. Moreover, in excess of 8000 peace treaties were made, and broken. Moody Bible Institute's *Today In The Word*, June, 1988, p. 33

- 2) "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,  
    "Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
        and on earth peace among those whom he favours!""  
    (Luke 2:12-14, NRSV)
  - a) Look at the context of this verse. What is happening here?
  - b) Was Israel at peace when this announcement came?
  - c) What does this say about God's will for the earth?
- 3) "...through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations." (Rev. 22:2, NRSV)
  - a) What is this verse describing? When is this prophecy to be fulfilled?
  - b) What provision has God made for the nations? How does this relate to the theme of peace?

The announcement of the birth of the Prince of Peace came during difficult times in Israel. While on the surface the nation was at peace, it came at the point of the Roman sword. The only peace the world knew at that time was the Pax Romana.

### Closer:

Journal: What practical steps can you take to build peace:

In your heart?

In your relationships?

In the world?

Have a suggestion to make this Home Group Guide better? Email us at: [contact@radiate-uk.com](mailto:contact@radiate-uk.com)