

Immersed in God's Word, X2D following Jesus – together

They took note that they had been with Jesus. ~ Acts 4:13

Monday, Jan 22 Theme: The Foundational Fruit of PEACE

*You will keep in perfect peace
those whose minds are steadfast,
because they trust in you. ~ Isaiah 26:3*

LOVE
JOY
PEACE



Pondering Point: While there are multiple Bible verses describing the benefits of a life with God's peace, this one is ideal because it repeats the Hebrew word for peace used back-to-back, *shalom shalom*. שָׁלוֹם שָׁלוֹם

As you can see above, it is often translated as *perfect peace*. Many have turned to John 10:10 to connect this idea to the *abundant life* Jesus describes as found in Him. This promise of perfect peace is offered to those who keep their focus on God – a mental eyesight *stayed on Him* or *gazing steadfastly* upon God. It is not a stretch to realize that when we, as Hebrews 12:2 describes, *keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith*, (NIV) part of the perfecting going on is the experience of peace. In fact, that peace has staying power even when understanding of our situation is lacking: *and the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus*. Philip. 4:7



Prayer: Father God, let my mental eyesight stay trained on You, trusting in Your loving Presence. Perfect my faith and grant me perfect peace even when situations are beyond comprehension. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



Check out Bible Project's video titled,
Shalom-Peace

<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/shalom-peace/>



Micro-Group Connections in the Discipleship Lifestyle



Micro-Group Moment (MGM): As you read this teaching from Matthew 18:19-20, view it through the context of a MG life for Jesus followers?

"Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."

During Lent, we will be looking into various micro-groups in the life of Jesus. For now, here are two things to appreciate about His MG lifestyle drawn from repetitive encounters with people:

- Jesus finds value in both Small Groups and Micro Groups and participated in both. So can you.
- Jesus lived more deeply connected with some families and individuals than others. So can you.

Micro-Relationship:

A connection you have with one, two, three, or four other people.

Spiritual Micro-Group:

A connection with one to four others that acknowledges God.

Matthew 18 shows that MGs (any group) can be built around God and yet be unhealthy. Personal offenses or festering issues can pull groups away from a God-centered focus. So can whining, personal agendas, or gossip. Jesus offers a recipe for returning such groups to powerful, Christ-centered gatherings. Let's finish today by praying for God's insight over the place of MGs in your life.



Prayer for the day: Heavenly Father, open our souls to the possibilities of participating in spiritual micro-groups. Let us see in Jesus the benefits of micro-group life and see You replicate that in our worlds. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Tuesday, Jan 23: God's Mission in Luke 84-56

Jesus said, "Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me."

TRANSFORMATION TUESDAYS

Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet.

Luke 8:46-48

In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed. Then he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace."



Pondering Point: Read the two-fold miracle account Luke 8:40-56 records, paying attention to possible emotions present for various individuals in the crowd: local ruler Jairus, the sick woman, the disciples, those bringing news of the girl's death.

Specifically think about the sick woman healed by touching the hem of Jesus' garment. Note that she is hesitant to come forward. She has violated numerous biblical and social rules. What might the Master say about this? Might He even dare to rescind the healing? Or chastise her impudent behavior?

It ends up being none of the above. Instead, He offers words of affirmation, starting with an oh-so-powerful designation, *daughter*. Daughter was a recognition of her place with God – one beloved despite years of suffering. Then, after acknowledging the role of her faith in bringing about her healing, Jesus removes any residual fear by telling her, "Go in peace." It gets emotional for me just to picture it happen. And all the while, Jairus and his sick daughter are in waiting mode, ever so patiently (not!), I imagine. But that is a story for tomorrow.



Prayer: Father God, remind us to celebrate the peace you bring to people like this woman who suffered for years. We ask that you bring such blessing of peace to the following people on our hearts: (list them now, including yourself). Let that peace touch the physical, spiritual, emotional, mental, and even relational parts of life. In Jesus' name and power we pray. Amen.

Wednesday, Jan 24

Your Identity in Christ

My Identity in Christ

While Jesus was still speaking [to the now-healed woman], someone came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. "Your daughter is dead," he said. "Don't bother the teacher anymore." Hearing this, Jesus said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed." Luke 8:49-50

**In Christ, we are sons and daughters of God,
enabled to live in perfect peace despite a troubling world**



Pondering Point: The most readily noticed *identity* experience in Luke 8:40-56 is the woman described in yesterday's Immersion. She is identified as a daughter of God and released with peace from Jesus. Here, in today's devotion, others experience their own version of peace and restoration through the Messianic work of Jesus: the Micro-Group of Jairus, His wife, and their daughter – even the MG of disciples Peter, James and John.

Part of the fruit of Jesus' ministry is not just healing itself as a physical component, but He brings about *shalom* – peace. This includes a physical side in these instances, but peace can reach way beyond physical relief – for them and us. I hope that you can appreciate these Jesus-followers' take on Shalom:

Now the word *shalom* has a wide range of meaning. The Aramaic word is *shalama* and is more closely related to the Arabic word *salam* which means *peace* but also means to *surrender*. Ah, there is the key to *perfect peace*, "I place everything in the hands of God." *Shalom* also means rest (*I could use that*), *healing, safety, and*

security, hey whatever goodies you name you will most likely find it in the word *shalom*. But we must keep in mind that Jesus is this *perfect peace*. The way we gain access to this *perfect peace* is by having our *minds stayed on him*. [Chaim Bentorah Ministries]



Prayer: Heavenly Father, I surrender everything to You – even Your timing. To say it like Jesus: into Your hands I commit my spirit (Luke 23:46) In His name I pray. Amen.

Thursday, Jan 25

Re-Center around God

*For he himself is our peace...
through him we both have access
to the Father by one Spirit.* ~ Ap. Paul, Ephesians 2:14a,18

Today's focus ties our peace theme with the mission of God. We view that mission through two lenses: That of Jesus and then of ourselves. Initially we have **God's MISSION: Jesus as Peacemaker**.

Despite the added length, I want you to read the following words of Paul; you can see the heart of peace that God has for us in relation to both Himself and toward others. Here is the context from which the phrase above was taken:

For he himself (Jesus) is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Ephesians 2:14-18

Next, we have **God's MISSION: You as Peacemaker**. *We are Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us* (2 Corinthians 2:20a, adapted). Produced out of God's peacemaking Son Jesus comes a new creation, a new *piece* of creation at it were, re-made or made new. We then, as new creations, take on the

character and mission of our peacemaking master Jesus; He who reconciled us to the Father is calling us to a ministry of reconciliation for others to God – and to each other. Here is the fuller reading:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Cor. 5:17-21



Author Kent Hughes describes peacemakers in contrast to what he calls their opposites: troublemakers, people who are mean-spirited, who stir up strife or create conflict. Troublemakers don't often reflect the character of Jesus. Of course, Jesus caused His share of trouble, as will many peacemakers too. But He didn't cause it through gossip and rumor; nor should we. One other thing about peace: Wanting peace and being at peace are not the same. Yes, the Apostle Paul tells us to *live at peace with everyone*. But taking in the whole verse, he writes "If possible, as far depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (Romans 12:18).



Review the week. Am I a peacemaker? A troublemaker? Neither? Do I seek peace? Do I look for trouble? Do I avoid conflict in a way that creates tension rather than peace?



Repent if necessary: Review key relationships with the Lord (family, work, etc.); ask for His perspective on interactions with these people. Don't skip over strained associations. Apologize to God for speaking negatively to or about others, for avoiding certain people, or for causing trouble for others.



Return as necessary: Ask Jesus to give you a right heart and spirit toward all people. Revisit God's extreme kindness in reconciling you to Himself – and let that serve as motivation to improve your own peace-making desires.



Prayer for the day: Lord God, I am grateful to be reconciled to You through Jesus Christ, my sin not counted against me. Though I cannot match Your level of peacemaking, let me mirror it as an ambassador for Christ. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Friday, Jan 26:

Discipleship Point



Pondering Point: Dealing with a connection between bearing the fruit peace, the role of peacemaking, and relationships between others, we turn to the last of three key components in the life of a disciple, taken from Hope's ABC's of discipleship.

RELATING WITH OTHERS.

In seeking to grow as disciples of Jesus, there are three crucial components God uses to bring about spiritual growth: His Word, His Spirit and His people. We need each other. In our experience, this component is most effectively carried out in the MG lifestyle described on Monday of this week: At least once a week, plan to connect with a group of people (2-15) to share life, including what you're learning or wrestling with God and His Word, how He's working on you. Encourage, admonish, laugh with, strengthen, and love each other in these get-togethers. It's the third component by which God matures His people. Don't ignore it.



Discipleship Prayer: Father God, I pray for strong relationships among my family, friends, church and other walks of life. I want to be a blessing to them – and to be blessed by You through them. Help us all to get over real and perceived slights so that we can truly laugh with, strengthen, and love each other with You central to us all. In Jesus I pray. Amen.

שלום PEACE

Our friends from *ThriveToday* introduce relational skills of the Bible in what they call the Foundational Five. Among them is Skill #2: Simple Quiet. I encourage you to see how this relational skill based in *Shalom* is described in a Youtube video titled, *E8 The Importance of Quieting*.



Saturday, Jan 27: Scripture's Story for the Week

The Cost of Peace
(and of Following Jesus)
Matthew 10:32-42



Pondering Point: As we seek peace through Jesus, who is indeed the Prince of Peace, we still must come to terms with His statement from Matthew 10, where He is quoted as saying *“do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but rather a sword.”* He then went on to describe as you'll find in this reading above that He would divide households and families. That is not His intended goal, but it is a potential consequence we can expect when we choose to “deny ourselves, pick up our cross” and follow Jesus.

If we claim to love God and follow Jesus, but let our family, friends or other interests dictate the terms of our relationship and obedience to God, then we put ourselves in the category Jesus describes as “not worthy” of following Him. In fact, if you yourself try to dictate the terms of the relationship with God, you fall in the same “un-follow” category.

Ironically, we try to convince everyone to follow Jesus because God is so loving – which is true. But alongside that call to follow is a cost to follow. It is known – follower beware – to put other relationships at risk because it changes the dynamic of said relationships. Of

course, the benefits outweigh the cost. But He still wants to know that there is a cost.



Prayer prompt: Lord Jesus, I want to be worthy of following You by making sure that I take up my cross and follow You. I do not want to love my life so much that I end up losing it. Rather I would love to give up my life to You commending it to Your care trusting that You will do what is best for me. Lead me in this concept both today and moving forward. Amen.

Sunday, Jan 28: Call to worship God, to gather together

Praise the LORD! I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation.

Psalm 111:1

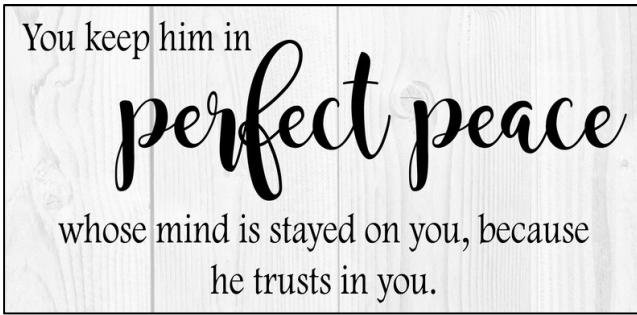


Pondering Point: The true, genuine worship is when man, through his Spirit, attains to friendship and intimacy with God. True and genuine worship is not to come to a certain place. It is not to go through a certain ritual or liturgy; it is not even to bring certain gifts. True worship is when the spirit, the immortal and invisible part of man, speaks to and meets with God, who is Immortal and invisible.

~ William Barclay



Prayer prompt: Lord Jesus, Prince of Peace, You came to bless us with a peace that the world cannot give, and You desire us to be agents of peace for others. so that may happen, help us stay rooted in Your peace to then bear the fruit of Your peace in our lives with others. Lead the way as we seek to be like You, Jesus, and act like the children of God that we are. Amen.



“Shalom is a cozy sense that everything is right. Relationships are right. Who we are makes sense. Our reactions to the world please us and God. Shalom is a major part of each joyful identity and community. We call this peace, but "harmony" would be a better word. Our brains are wired to prefer harmony. Harmony is God's gift to us. When we have lost our way and our connection to God, our Shalom is gone.”

p. 19, *Joy Starts Here*, Wilder, Khouri, Cousey, Sutton