

Know Peace

ISAIAH 11:1–9; MATTHEW 5:9; MARK 4:35–41

GOAL

Adults seek to understand the breadth and complexities of God’s vision of peace presented in Scripture and creation and explore practices toward balancing an inner sense of peace and outer actions for peace.

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



Visit our YouTube channel, bit.ly/FMYouTubeGFR, for conversation starter videos.

PRAYER

Holy God, you author and embody peace in ways too vast for me to fully comprehend. Inspire me with your peace that I may point toward your vision of a peaceable kingdom. Amen.

THIS SESSION

To practice making peace assumes that participants know what peace is. They capture a glimpse of God’s vision of peace through scriptural images, teachings, and texts. While no one image captures all the complexities of peace, this first session aims to help participants formulate a basic understanding of God’s peace, shalom, while exploring various ways to cultivate peaceful practices for themselves and to engage in outward-focused practices of making peace in the world.

THE BIBLE STORY

Matthew 5:9 is a foundational verse that threads through each of the sessions in this practice. It is found in Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7). God blesses those who seek to make peace, for they shall be called children of God.

Isaiah 11:1–9 contains two powerful images of peace. Verses 1–5 describe the Jesse tree and the shoot that shall grow out of its root. God’s spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel and might, knowledge and fear of the Lord shall fill this faithful branch. It shall be a model of faithfulness and righteousness for all to see. The text continues in verses 6–9 by presenting a series of unlikely paired images that each display mutuality, forbearance, safety, and coexistence on God’s holy mountain; a description of a peaceable kingdom.

Mark 4:35–41 displays Jesus’ power over the natural elements of storm and sea. In subduing them, Jesus shows his command of peace over chaos and fear. The gift of peace calms inward and outward storms.

SESSION PREPARATION

Depending on the options you choose:

- “Knowing Peace” (p. 5): Write the quotations about peace on newsprint. Prepare to summarize “Introducing the Practice” from the *Adult Reflection Guide* (p. 7).
- “Religions for Peace” (p. 7): Preview the Religions for Peace homepage (www.rfp.org) and scroll through the headlines and images.
- “Peacemaking Churches” (p. 7): Preview the Disciples Peace Fellowship website (www.disciplespeace.org). Identify ways they help their members and congregations practice peace both inwardly and outwardly.
- “What Peace Means to You” (p. 8): Find a recording of the children’s song “Peace like a River.”

GETTING STARTED

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Welcome participants and allow time for gathering activities particular to your group (*introductions, offering, prayer concerns, and announcements*). Review the summary of the practice found in the Unit Overview on page 4 of the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Explain that a more detailed discussion of the practice can be found in the foundational essay that begins on page 43 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Encourage participants to read the essay during the course of the next four sessions.

OPENING RITUAL: A PRAYER FOR PEACE

Pray with music as you sing or listen to “Dona Nobis Pacem,” found in the *Glory to God* hymnal #752, or sing along with or listen to the YouTube video “Dona Nobis Pacem” (bit.ly/FMPacem, 2:04). These Latin words are a prayer that means “Give us peace.” As the tune becomes more familiar, try singing the song in Hebrew or Arabic (printed in each session of the *Adult Reflection Guide*).

Close your prayer with the following sentences:

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
Let me be one who tries to live as a maker of peace. Amen.

INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

CONVERSATION STARTER VIDEO

Inform participants that the four aspects of “Make Peace” discussed in the foundational essay do not align perfectly with the four sessions in the age-level curriculum pieces, including the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Nevertheless, all the ideas from the foundational essay are found in the four sessions, and the videos provide helpful ideas.

Show the “Make Peace” video and the “*Make Peace* Session 1” video from the Growing Faith YouTube channel (bit.ly/FMYouTubeGFR). Lead a brief conversation about participants’ thoughts and questions the videos prompt as you introduce the session.

KNOWING PEACE

Prepare and post the following three quotations on a piece of newspaper.

- Jesus: “Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called children of God.” Matthew 5:9
- Tony Stark/Iron Man: “Peace means having a bigger stick than the other guy.” Marvel Comics Universe.
- Jane Addams, Martin Luther King Jr., and others: “True peace is not merely the absence of war, it is the presence of justice.”

Ask participants to tell their definition or understanding of *peace*. Note and affirm the variety of responses they give. Call their attention to the prepared newspaper. Read aloud the three statements. Discuss:

- ➔ Which of these statements reflects or influences your understanding of peace?
- ➔ When, if ever, can each of these statements be valid?
- ➔ How can we know peace when there are such varied complexities involved with peace?

This and all sessions require that the leader and participants have their copy of the *Adult Reflection Guide* with them.

Hymnal or internet-connected device with “Dona Nobis Pacem”

Internet-connected device

Prepared newspaper

Refer to “Introducing the Practice” on page 7 of the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Summarize the information in this section. Read together the final paragraph. Invite participants to respond to what they read.

Pens

PRACTICING PEACE

Refer to “Introducing the Practice” on pages 7–8 of the *Adult Reflection Guide* and allow a few minutes for participants to review it. Share reactions to the information in this section. Discuss the questions on page 7. Have participants list practices that help them find inner peace in the space provided on page 8. Encourage discussion of their listed practices.

FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

Choose one or both options.

Bibles
 Internet-connected device

THE WOLF AND THE LAMB

Display an image of Edward Hicks’s painting *Peaceable Kingdom*, found at bit.ly/FMPeaceableKingdom. Read aloud Isaiah 11:1–9 and invite participants to identify the images from the text displayed in the painting. Refer to the sidebar on page 9 in the *Adult Reflection Guide* and describe the distinction between *peaceful* and *peaceable*. Ask:

- ➔ When you study this image, what do you see that is *peaceable*?
- ➔ When have you seen glimpses of these images played out around you?

Invite participants to take turns reading aloud the paragraphs in “The Wolf and the Lamb” on page 9 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Discuss:

- ➔ How do Isaiah’s words warn of God’s judgment?
- ➔ How do his words point toward God’s vision of hope?
- ➔ In what ways does Hicks’s *Peaceable Kingdom* display God’s judgment and hope?
- ➔ How does studying these words and images help you to better know peace?

Bibles

A STORM AT SEA

Have participants read together Mark 4:35–41 in reader’s-theater style. Invite one volunteer to read Jesus’ statements and another to read the narration. The other participants say aloud together the disciples’ words. Ask:

- ➔ Where do you find peace in this scene?
- ➔ What does this scene indicate about Jesus’ power?
- ➔ What is the relationship between power and peace?

Invite participants to take turns reading aloud the paragraphs in “A Storm at Sea” on page 10 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Have participants identify the metaphors in the story. Ask:

- ➔ Have you ever been in a metaphorical storm and felt the peace of Jesus? What was it like?
- ➔ Have you ever offered shelter or comfort to someone who has been beaten up by a storm’s waves? What was it like?
- ➔ What does this text tell you about offering and receiving peace?

FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW

Choose one or more options.

CULTIVATING INWARD AND OUTWARD PEACE

Refer to “Finding the Practice Then and Now” on page 11 in the *Adult Reflection Guide* and read aloud the opening paragraph. Tell participants that you will explore the inward and outward peacemaking witness of Dorothy Day, co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement, and Trappist monk Thomas Merton.

Form two groups and assign one group to read the first paragraph in “Cultivating Inward and Outward Peace” on page 11 in the *Adult Reflection Guide* and focus on Dorothy Day. The second group will focus on Thomas Merton by reading the second paragraph in “Cultivating Inward and Outward Peace.”

Direct each group to the internet articles listed in the sidebar for additional information about their assigned person. At least one person should skim an article to identify examples of Day or Merton nurturing inward peace; other persons skim and identify commitments for justice and outward manifestations of peace.

Gather as one group and invite participants to tell the others what they learned about ways these two people cultivated inward and outward peace. Discuss:

- ➔ In what ways did the person’s inward actions support their outward actions for peace?
- ➔ In what ways did the person’s outward actions for peace nurture their inward peace?
- ➔ From these examples, what can you surmise about the relationship between commitments to inward and outward peace?
- ➔ How do these inform your understanding of God’s vision for peace?

RELIGIONS FOR PEACE

Introduce Religions for Peace, a global organization of world religions that join together to ensure that all people enjoy peace, harmony, and prosperity. Show the organization’s homepage (www.rfp.org) and scroll through the headlines and images, noting the variety of commitments and activities of the organization. Discuss:

- ➔ Which of these activities do you consider peacemaking efforts? Why?
- ➔ What outcomes could arise from world religious groups working together toward peace?
- ➔ How does this organization’s work inform your understanding of the complexities of God’s vision for peace?

PEACEMAKING CHURCHES

Refer to “Peacemaking Churches” on page 12 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Read the paragraph about ways Christian churches have approached bearing witness for peace. Invite participants to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of “total pacifism” and “just-war tradition” as approaches to peace in the world. Ask:

- ➔ Which approach to war and peace is the most effective, in your opinion?
- ➔ How can there be room for both approaches to be valid in today’s world?

Internet-connected devices



Dorothy Day: “A Biography of Dorothy Day” by Jim Forest, bit.ly/FMDorothyDay.



Thomas Merton: “Thomas Merton: The Monk Who Became a Prophet” by Alan Jacobs, bit.ly/FMThomasMerton.

Internet-connected device



Discover the mission, vision, and guiding principles behind Religions for Peace: bit.ly/FMAboutRfP

Internet-connected devices



Option: Locate information about your denomination’s peacemaking efforts. Identify web links for participants to explore these ministries.

Continue reading about Disciples Peace Fellowship on page 12. Explain that the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) holds to a “peace church” tradition. Have participants go to the website (www.disciplespeace.org) and look for ways they help their members and congregations practice peace, both inwardly and outwardly.

PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.



Yin-yang refers to a concept originating in ancient Chinese philosophy where opposite forces are seen as interconnected and counterbalancing. There’s light and dark, day and night, good and evil, yin and yang.

Pens or pencils



At the beginning of the next session, they will be invited to tell about their experiences with the identified practices.

Internet-connected device

BALANCING PEACE PRACTICES

Refer to the yin-yang image on page 12 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Use the definition of yin-yang from the sidebar to discuss the concept of balancing peace practices. Ask:

- ➔ How do you describe the balance between inner spiritual practice and outward-focused justice work in making peace?
- ➔ Why is this balance necessary?
- ➔ How can the yin-yang image serve as a reminder of the need for balancing peace practices?

INWARD AND OUTWARD PRACTICES

Refer to “Practicing the Practice” on page 13 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Read aloud the opening paragraph to this section. Ask:

- ➔ Why does making peace include both nurturing one’s spiritual life and turning outward toward our neighbors in justice and peace?

Call participants’ attention to the two lists of practices for making peace listed on pages 13–14. Read each suggestion and discuss as a group. Invite volunteers to comment if they have engaged in any practice and what experiences or insights they can share with the group.

Have participants work individually to review the lists and try to imagine themselves engaging in the inward and outward practices. Have them circle at least one activity on each list and record today’s date in the margin to indicate activities they will try to practice in the coming week. Encourage them to record notes about their experiences on page 14 in their *Adult Reflection Guide*.

FOLLOWING JESUS

WHAT PEACE MEANS TO YOU

Show the YouTube video “What Does Peace Mean to You?” (bit.ly/FMPeaceMeaning, 3:59).

Refer to “Following Jesus” on page 15 in the *Adult Reflection Guide* and summarize the first two paragraphs. Ask:

- ➔ After exploring this session, what do you think it means to know peace?
- ➔ What will you do to know peace more deeply?

Find and play a recording of the children’s song “Peace like a River.” Have participants notice how the words and music speak to them.

Conclude the session with the same prayer used to begin, with participants saying in unison:

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
Let me be one who tries to live as a maker of peace. Amen.