

DISCUSSION GUIDE

· In The Waiting: An Advent Series ·



December 4, 2022

ADVENT: THE WAITING PEACE

Welcome to the Discussion Guide - designed to help you think more deeply about the sermon topic as you engage with others through thoughtful conversation, biblical exploration and real-life application.

➤ CONVERSATION STARTERS

In the first week of Advent, when did you experience God's hope?

➤ EXPLORATION

This week we move into week 2 of the season of Advent as we focus on the gift of peace, the kind that only God can give. As we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, we also have to keep moving forward in our daily responsibilities. Knowing that Christ makes it possible for us to experience true and lasting peace even during the challenges we face is a true gift. Before you begin to talk through the message this week, we encourage you to pray this prayer together, that God will help you experience peace where you need it the most.

Lord, Thank you for the gift of your son Jesus who is the Prince of Peace. Release us from anxiety and fear as we seek you together, so that we may live in peace with you, with ourselves and with one another.

Amen

When you think about peace, what comes to mind? A peaceful person? A special place where you have

experienced peace in the past? A state of mind? As you read the following scripture, imagine yourself in the scene, just going about your daily life. What might you be thinking or feeling?

Luke 2:8-14 (read aloud)

What a scene! The shepherds were just going about their business working an average night shift and in an instant everything changed. The text tells us they were terrified. But take a closer look at verses 13 and 14. This display was to announce that the God of the highest heaven was bringing peace to those on whom his favor rests. They went from one ordinary moment to the next an unbelievable turn of events and the world would never be the same.

Share about a time in your life when everything changed in an instant. How did it affect your sense of peace?

3 Ways the Bible Talks About Peace

Peace With God:

- **Romans 5:1** Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God
- **Colossians 1:19-20** by making peace, through his blood, shed on the cross

Peace With Ourselves:

- **Isaiah 26:3-4** You will keep in perfect peace the one whose mind is stayed on you
- **Romans 15:13** May the God of hope fill you with joy and peace as you trust in Him

Peace With Others:

- **Romans 12:18** If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone

- **Hebrews 12:14** Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy

Consider the following:

- How are you with God? How is your soul?
- How are you with you? How is your being?
- How are you with others? How are your relationships?

As much as you are comfortable, share which of these areas you need God’s peace the most right now.

Just like the shepherds, we all have life changing moments. Those moments may cause challenges in our relationships, finances, health, sense of security, etc. It can be difficult to experience peace in those moments. We need to slow down and pay attention to how we are feeling.

Look at the following list of words and pick out the one that best describes you right now.

- Anxious: frustrated, ashamed, restless
- Peaceful: calm, relaxed, comforted
- Happy: delighted, relieved, satisfied
- Traumatized: shocked, disturbed, damaged
- Angry: annoyed, manipulated, irritated
- Sad: depressed, weepy, heartbroken
- Loving: thankful, refreshed, pleased
- Alone: isolated, abandoned, avoidant

‘How We Love’ Milan & Kay Yerkovich

The peace that Christ gives us is a gift. Our responsibility is to be aware and honest with God, ourselves and others about how we are actually feeling so that we can be open to receiving the gift of peace.

John 14:25-27 (read aloud)

It is incredible to recognize that Jesus spoke these words about peace shortly before he was betrayed, arrested, beaten and crucified. He knew what was coming and that his followers would need peace in the days ahead. He wanted to be sure they knew peace was available to them. So what is the peace Jesus is talking about?

“In the Bible the word for *peace*, *shalom*, never means simply the absence of trouble. It means everything which makes for our highest good. The peace which the world offers us is the peace of escape, the peace which comes

from the avoidance of trouble and from refusing to face things.”

Barclay Bible Commentary

The kind of peace the world offers is deeply tied to circumstances when we feel secure, comfortable, sheltered, and safe, only then can we experience peace. But Christ gives something different. Even in times of turmoil, we can experience abiding peace.

Philippians 4:4-9 (read aloud)

These verses clearly show us the part that God plays in giving us peace and the responsibility we have to steward that gift. There is no formula, but there are formational practices that help us recognize and receive God’s gift. Some of these practices include prayer, gratitude, right thinking, and praise.

In his book, *Anxious for Nothing: Finding Calm in a Chaotic World*, Author Max Lucado says,

“The presence of anxiety is unavoidable, but the prison of anxiety* is optional.”

Jesus is inviting us to experience the gift of peace that is only available to us through his birth, life, death and resurrection.

> TAKE AWAY

Take some time to talk through the following question and commit to praying for one another throughout the week.

What are some ways you will be intentional this week to be open and ready to receive God’s gift of peace?

ADVENT PRAYER

God, we ask you to fill us with the incredible peace that Jesus has made available! May Your Spirit, guide and guard our hearts, our minds, and our souls in Christ Jesus, for your glory and for our good! Amen

*Experiencing occasional anxiety is a normal part of life. However, people with anxiety disorders frequently have intense, excessive and persistent worry and fear about everyday situations. If you are experiencing this, please know you are not alone. We are available to help you find resources.