

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Spiritual Leadership
Leader's Guide

FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION

LESSON 5: LIVING AT PEACE

INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Disciple Essentials module titled Forgiveness and Reconciliation. It can be difficult to accept God's forgiveness in our lives and extend forgiveness to others. Forgiving others goes against our natural inclination. But as we allow God to change our hearts and minds, we can experience reconciliation with God and with one another. This module explores the Biblical foundations of forgiveness, the process required for reconciliation, and how to promote living at peace with one another. It also examines forgiveness as it may be required between individuals or members of a community.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

The intended audience for these lessons is Christians who are maturing in their faith and desiring to serve God. The lessons will be especially helpful to those who are pastors, church leaders, mentors or teachers, but also anyone wishing to grow in their relationship with God.

The Leader's Guide is intended to help you as a leader in your preparation. These lesson outlines may be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials found online at www.discipleshipessentials.org.

Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

All other content is © 2019 Trans World Radio Canada, and may be used in any way you like as long as you use it with the purpose of reaching the world for Christ and do not charge for the use of the material. See more license details at www.discipleshipessentials.org/licensing.



FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION

LESSON 5: LIVING AT PEACE

PURPOSE

This lesson focuses on peace, where to find it, and how to maintain it in the context of conflict.

LEADER'S NOTE

Some parts of the world have not known peace in hundreds of years. There are conflicts that have existed long before you and your participants were born, and they have become a way of life with no end in sight. It is important to know that we, as Christians, are called to live at peace with God and one another, as well as being peacemakers whenever possible in our community. If your community is facing a lack of peace, consider ways that your participants could get involved in peaceful acts. The ethics of war and peace are complex, and some believe that war issues must be resolved first, before peace can prevail. Others believe that coming to the aid of a persecuted people is justifiable war. We must carefully consider what the Bible says about peace and how we pursue it. All of us play a role in the conflicts around us. Encourage your participants to seek peace and reconciliation whenever possible.

INTRODUCTION

Select two or three of the following questions to ask the group.

- ❖ When do you feel peaceful? What disturbs your peace?
- ❖ What does it mean to live at peace with others? Is this even possible?
- ❖ Why did Jesus say, "Blessed are the Peacemakers"? What does making peace have to do with being joyful and blessed?
- ❖ After you have reconciled with someone you were in conflict with, does everything go back to the way it was? What can hinder this?



STUDY

Instruct the group on the following points.

TEACH:

- ❖ **The Pursuit of Peace:** 'Peace' is a beautiful word. It creates an image of being at rest, the absence of war and fear, and simply experiencing joy and happiness. Some people describe it as quiet contentment, ease or repose. Think a moment about what peace means to you. Our world is anything but peaceful, and true peace does not come without a price. It is the end result of the reconciliation process. But how do we get there?
 - **God's Word on Peace:** God tells us that peace is something we pursue. We take steps to gain it rather than waiting for it to just happen. The Hebrew word for peace is SHALOM. It means the wholeness, well-being, fullness, rest, safety and security that God gives an individual or group. Consider what God's Word teaches about peace:
 - o [Romans 12:18](#)
 - o [1 Peter 3:11](#)
 - o [2 Timothy 2:22](#)
 - o [Romans 14:19](#)
 - **God's Call to Peace:** God commands us to not just allow peace, but to actively create it in our homes, our communities, our nations! We are to be peace makers. But we may not know how to pursue peace, or what to do when we don't feel it.

ASK:

When there is peace between two people or two groups, what is there a lot of? What is there a lack of?

When there is peace, how do the two parties behave towards one another?

What must the two parties turn away from and do if there is to be peace, according to the verses we just read?

- ❖ **Pursuing Peace with God:** Before we can have peace with others, we need to be at peace with God. If we do not feel quiet contentment and ease within our own heart, it will be difficult to take steps toward peace with others!
 - **Be forgiven:** Every one of us needs the forgiveness of God, and every one of us needs to forgive. This is because we are all sinners in need of forgiveness. No one is perfect. In fact the Bible says that if you feel you have nothing to confess before God, you are lying to yourself and to God! All of us, either intentionally or accidentally, sin against God and wrong others. We should regularly ask Him to show us the sins in our life; we must then confess these to Him and ask for His forgiveness. That is how we experience His peace.
 - o [1 John 1:8-9](#)
 - o [Psalms 32:5](#)



- **Be forgiving:** All of us will be wronged by others. We cannot choose whether it will happen, but we can choose our response to it. When circumstances arouse our anger, we can choose to feed that anger with thoughts of revenge and wrath – or we can choose thoughts of love and kindness. When we are quick to forgive others, we will maintain peace between us and them, and also between us and God. It displeases God when we ourselves have been forgiven but will not extend forgiveness to others. If you do not feel at peace with God, it may be because there is someone to whom you should extend forgiveness!
 - Matthew 6:14-15
 - Matthew 18:21-22

- **Be satisfied:** Discontentment in our life can cause us to feel a lack of peace. When we are discontent we are prone to jealousy, envy, greed and looking to other people to satisfy our deepest needs. God Himself is our source of peace and fulfillment as we deepen our relationship with Him.
 - Isaiah 26:3
 - 2 Thessalonians 3:16
 - John 16:33
 - Proverbs 16:7

TASK:

Quickly divide participants into small groups. Have each group read the following passage and discuss the questions. Then have each group report back with their answers.

- Read 1 Timothy 6:6-11.
 - *What affect does discontentment have on our peace with God?*
 - *How does discontentment impact our peace with other people?*
 - *What things are common for people you know to be discontent about?*
 - *How can we cultivate contentment in our life as we pursue peace with God?*

TEACH:

- ❖ **Making Peace:** Peace is complex because conflict has a multitude of sources. Anger, discontentment, sin, hatred and learned attitudes (such as racism) may all be part of the problem.
 - **Seek reconciliation:** If there is an opportunity to give or receive forgiveness, and reconciliation is possible, we must do it. Restored relationships can be a means of bringing people back to a good relationship with God. We should not wait for someone to come to us – we should go to them and seek reconciliation.
 - **Refuse to return:** Once forgiveness and reconciliation have occurred, we must refuse to return to the offense. This means not repeating the offense, but also refusing to allow the details to be repeated over and over in our mind, which can again lead to resentment and anger. It also means that we decide not to bring it up again or hold it



against the offender any longer. Once something is forgiven, we can learn from it and then move on with our life. Peace is impossible if the offenses are not laid to rest.

- **Follow Biblical relationship advice:** God's Word has much to say on the topic of relationships! When we relate to others in the ways listed below, we will not stir them to anger, but rather foster good feelings and tolerance. These actions will rebuild lost trust, and restrain future discord.
 - Use kind words (Ephesians 4:29, Proverbs 15:1).
 - Use few words (Proverbs 10:19, Proverbs 29:20).
 - Encourage each other (1 Thessalonians 5:11, Hebrews 10:24-25).
 - Be slow to anger (Proverbs 14:17, James 1:19).
 - Show mercy and grace to one another (Luke 10:36-37, Luke 6:36).
 - Be trustworthy (Proverbs 11:13, Proverbs 31:11).
 - Have self-control (Titus 2:2, 2 Peter 1:5-6).
 - Endure patiently with the faults of others (Galatians 6:2, Ephesians 4:2, 32).

- **Acts of love:** In addition, we should look for ways to love others. When people feel loved, accepted and cared for, there will be less strife. When we act in loving ways, praying for and caring for another, our love for them will grow. Plan specific meaningful actions to demonstrate your desire to have peace with them.

- ❖ **When Peace is Not Possible:** Sometimes peace is not possible. When someone has decided in their heart that they will be your enemy, your attempts at love and friendship may not be enough. God only asks that we do what we can as far as it depends on us. When it is not possible to face your enemy, or the issue of conflict is beyond your control, there are a few options:
 - **Pray for them:** Pray that their heart would be changed. Pray that whatever is causing their anger and hate would be dealt with, and they would be able to receive healing from God.
 - **Ensure your behaviour is above reproach:** Do all YOU can do to end the conflict. Sometimes this may mean limiting contact with them, and not giving them the opportunity to harm you more.
 - **Refuse to speak badly of your enemy:** When you slander your enemy, you are fueling hate and evil. Speak kind words, or if not possible, say nothing at all.

- ❖ **How Peace is Maintained:** When we have peace in ourselves, it must be actively maintained. When sin in our life causes potential relationship strain, we should seek forgiveness quickly in order to maintain peace. Some important points for maintaining peace:
 - **Maintain peace among non-Christians:** While we live to please God rather than people, we should be careful of how our actions come across to those who are not Christians. We should give them no reason to quarrel with us, even if we disagree



about spiritual issues. Do not attack them or engage them in heated debate (2 Timothy 2:23-24).

- **Maintain unity of the Spirit among believers:** Among those who are called brothers and sisters in Christ, avoid dissention, quarrels, debates, or disunity over non-essential matters. It is important that you share vision for your community, and encourage everyone to participate in the work of the Gospel together. Be filled with grace for one another, pray for one another, encourage one another in the faith (Ephesians 4:1-6, 1 Timothy 2:8).
- **Maintain love in your home:** When each member of your household treats the others with love and understanding, there can be peace in the home. Children learn behaviour from their parents. Sin, anger and selfishness will lead to conflict in the home. Youth may choose to rebel, but are often brought back by the love of their parents (1 Peter 3:1-7, Titus 2:4-5, Exodus 20:12, Ephesians 5:25).
- **Maintain peace with God and others:** When we maintain peace with God, we demonstrate God's peace to others. This honours God. Remember that it took the blood of Jesus to reconcile us to God. It will take sacrifice and effort on our part to seek forgiveness, reconciliation and peace with others! (Colossians 3:15, 2 Corinthians 13:11, Romans 14:19).



DISCUSSION

- ❖ Which of the following is most difficult for you in your relationships? What can you do to act differently? How do the verses speak to your situation?
 - o Bear patiently with the faults of others (1 Thessalonians 5:14).
 - o Use kind words (Ephesians 4:29, Proverbs 15:1).
 - o Use few words (Proverbs 10:19, Proverbs 29:20).
 - o Encourage each other (1 Thessalonians 5:11, Hebrews 10:24-25).
 - o Be slow to anger (Proverbs 19:11, James 1:19).
 - o Show mercy and grace to one another (Romans 12:10, Luke 6:36).
 - o Be trustworthy (Proverbs 11:1-3, Proverbs 25:19).
 - o Have self-control (Titus 2:2, 2 Peter 1:5-6).
- ❖ Are there circumstances in which it would be better to not make peace between two who are in conflict? Would that situation bring more glory to God than if they were at peace? If so, how?
- ❖ Why is peace within ourselves essential to having peace with others?
- ❖ Do you know anyone who tries to stir up controversy and debate wherever they go? Do they have peace? What do you think is at the root of their behaviour?

PRAYER

Close the lesson in prayer. Pray that your participants will have a desire to seek peace in their communities, and that they would reach out to those they must forgive. Pray that they will ask forgiveness from those they have wronged. Pray that the peace of God would rule in their hearts and minds. Thank God that He has made us ministers of reconciliation, sharing His love, grace, and forgiveness with others.