

THE ART OF PEACE- MAKING.



THE LITTLE BOOK OF PEACE- MAKING.

"Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn, Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.

On the contrary: 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.'

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."
Romans 12:1-21, NIV

If we are honest with ourselves, in these present days, this beautiful, God-given world often feels like it is bereft of peace. A global pandemic, armed conflicts, insurrection, political and societal divisions, strife in homes, marriages and relationships... there just seems to be no end to it all.

There can be no doubt that we need peace more than ever and there is a certain urgency to engender, to foster and pursue peace in and for ourselves, our families and communities.

In the midst of the chaos, confusion, misinformation, conspiracy theories and the relentlessly despairing news cycle, how do we pursue peace within ourselves and with each other? How can we take personal responsibility to be agents of peace? How do we *make* peace rather than seek just to *keep* the peace? What does the Bible say about it and is it even possible to see peace reign on the earth in these turbulent times?

Whether you choose to delve into this 5-day devotional on your own or gather with a few friends, this is specifically designed for you to discover how you can personally begin to, or continue to learn the art of peacemaking through the central passage of Romans 12:1-21.

*So pull up a chair, grab your Bible, a notebook and pen
(and perhaps a cuppa) and let's go on this journey together.*

Through the heartfelt mercies of our God, God's Sunrise will break in upon us, to shine on those in the darkness, those sitting in the shadow of death, Then showing us the way, one foot at a time, down the path of peace.

Luke 1:78-79, The Message

DAY 1



"True peace is not merely the absence of tension: it is the presence of justice." - Martin Luther King, Jr.

SO WHAT IS PEACEMAKING?

To understand peacemaking we need to first talk about peace itself. Jesus Christ is our Prince of Peace, the ultimate Peacemaker.

'For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.' Colossians 1:19-20, NIV

He promises to give us His peace; a true and perfect peace that is not limited just to us personally, but a peace that is available to our families and communities. It encompasses within it, justice in our societies and a flourishing for all creation.

'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.' John 14:27, ESV

This peace is referred to as "Shalom" and holds within the layers of its meaning wholeness, completeness, soundness and prosperity. It is a peace that is inseparable from righteousness (right-standing in relationship) and justice.

As believers we have access to this peace when we accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour and it is a fruit of the Spirit that is within us:

'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness...' Galatians 5:22, ESV

When we actively pursue peace, we imitate Christ as our Prince of Peace.

To make peace is to put Christ's love in action.

When you think of peacemaking,
what does it conjure in your mind?

How is peacemaking different to
peacekeeping or peace-loving?

Dictionary definitions speak about the process of bringing about peace, reconciling adversaries, preventing arguments, brokering peace or consensus. Yet none of them truly encompass what peacemaking means for us as Christ's followers.

Sometimes it's helpful to begin by asking ourselves what it's not. Peacemaking is not conflict avoidance or tolerance at the expense of truth. It doesn't sweep things under the carpet to avoid uncomfortable or important conversations that involve differing perspectives.

Peacemaking is counter cultural. It seeks unity and harmony WHILE having the ability to respectfully disagree and to call to account actions which cause harm, and that which desires to incite division for division's sake.

Our world today desperately needs people who are PEACEMAKERS. World peace on most measures is deteriorating. ("The average level of global peacefulness deteriorated 0.34 percent on the 2020 GPI. This is the 9th time in the last 12 years that global peacefulness has deteriorated." Global Peace Index 2020)

What kinds of circumstances make you feel less peaceful?

The current Covid-19 pandemic has created the perfect conditions for the deterioration of interpersonal peace and increasing fear and uncertainty for our future; increasing isolation from each other and the health that living in community brings; increasing an US vs THEM mentality and increasing vulnerability.

Pre-emptively and actively focusing on making peace helps to reduce all these risks.

Over the next five days we are going to explore key thoughts and tools that we can use to develop and deploy in our efforts to be agents of peace in our world.

Ponder.
Pray.

What stayed with you from today's devotion?
What has grabbed your attention that you want to discover more about?
What verses do you want to linger over?

'Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves...'
Romans 12:9, NIV

DAY 2



EMPATHY in Peacemaking.

Read Romans 12:9-21. What can you glean from this passage of scripture that speaks to the characteristics of a peacemaker?

Write down some other characteristics of a peacemaker you can think of.

Along with mercy, peace, forgiveness, kindness and graciousness, EMPATHY is a key quality of peacemaking.

The word itself is not new to us as a Sisterhood. Pastor Bobbie has exhorted and encouraged us over the years to 'Choose Empathy', to allow it to frame our comings and goings and interactions whether personally or as we engage with issues in our world.

Peacemaking and empathy go hand in hand. It speaks to how we seek to listen, and understand one another, resolve our differences and restore relationships with God and one another.

Discuss or write down some thoughts about the following. Can you think of some current situations where these things apply?

EMPATHY

- Teaches us to understand where people who think differently from us are coming from
 - Decreases fear of others
 - Decreases polarisation and tribalism
 - Increases community building which reduces civil conflict
 - Empathy is a choice
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The wonderful thing about empathy is that it is something we can all continually grow in. People growing in empathy, ask questions and actively seek different perspectives, build each other up, watch the words they use and don't use language that can hurt or belittle someone.

Ultimately it enables us to see others as God sees them – understanding that all people are created in His image and are therefore inherently valuable to Him.

'As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.' Ephesians 4:1-32, NIV

In your day-to-day,
how do you seek to choose empathy?

List a handful of practical ways you can
grow in empathy in the next few days.

Ponder.
Pray.

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What verses do you want to linger over?

'Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn, Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.'
Romans 12:14-16, NIV

DAY 3



HUMILITY in Peacemaking.

How does Romans 12 speak of humility?

Peacemaking requires a posture of humility. Humility is one of the most unsung qualities of a disciple of Christ, yet it is powerfully disarming and opens the way for grace and truth in conversation and fellowship.

Christ Himself is our model for true humility:

'In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross!' Philipians 2:5-8, NIV

Discuss or write down some
thoughts about the following:

HUMILITY

- Is key to repentance for our part in creating conflict
- Is key to empathy; accepting that there are other points of view and a need to learn
- Increases our ability to learn and grow
- Reduces our fear and insecurity as we reduce our dependence on ourselves and increase our dependence on God

'For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgement, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.' Romans 12:3, NIV

Think of a time when you have had to exercise humility.
What was the outcome?



Ponder. Pray.

What stayed with you from today's devotion?
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What verses do you want to linger over?

'Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.'
Romans 12:2 NIV

DAY 4



WISDOM in Peacemaking.

If this past year has shown us anything, it is that we continually need to seek and search for wisdom. Fear of the unknown, ignorance or deeply-held beliefs can sometimes narrow our mindsets and can often cause us to listen to and give too much time to voices that are far from wise. There is no end to the barrage of information – we have to be able to discern between that which is fact and that which is fiction; that which is truth and that which is baseless.

Seeking wisdom means to think critically about what is presented to us; to pause, check where the information is coming from and whether it aligns with truth and the word of God.

Romans 12:7-8 says “...Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”

**How do we practically do what is right?
Discuss how this applies to wisdom.**

Discuss or write down some thoughts about the following:

WISDOM

- Is Critical Thinking 'the objective analysis and evaluation of an issue in order to form a judgement'
- Allows us to fight against misinformation
- Reduces the ability of our inbuilt bias to control our behaviour
- Increases our ability to recognise and adapt to the echo chamber
- Helps us evaluate different approaches to solving crisis and make wise decisions



What stayed with you from today's devotion?
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DAY
5

THE MISSION OF
PEACEMAKING:
LOVE IN ACTION

Why is peacemaking important for us
as a Sisterhood and as individuals?

SISTERHOOD

INDIVIDUAL

Write down your thoughts or discuss the following as it applies to the different spheres of your life.

For example: home, parenthood, caregiving, neighbourhood, workplace, community groups, school, tertiary institutions, public service.

- Jesus called us to be peacemakers (Matthew 5:9)
 - Peacemaking is “love in action” (Romans 12:9-21)
 - Peacemaking reaps the fruit of righteousness (James 3:13-18)
 - Secular research tells us that when women are included in peacemaking in global contexts that peace lasts longer. (“An International Peace Institute study of 182 signed peace agreements between 1989 and 2011 found that when women are included in peace processes, there is a 35 percent increase in the probability that a peace agreement will last 15 years or more.”)
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Peacemaking is not passive. It is active, requiring our intentional engagement with God and others.

As women, God has given us a unique perspective and it reveals itself especially when women actively participate in peace processes; peace is found to be more achievable and long-lasting. This is because the peace that women often seek is transformative, inclusive and justice oriented.

That sounds like something we can all be a part of - whether in our own homes, communities or as global citizens.

‘For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and receives human approval. Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.’ Romans 14:17-18, NIV

As individuals and as a Sisterhood, let’s personally make every effort to be peacemakers in our world; to serve one another with grace, pursue reconciliation, speak the truth in love and engage with our world with empathy, humility and wisdom.

‘The Lord’s justice will dwell in the desert, his righteousness live in the fertile field. The fruit of righteousness will be peace; its effect will be quietness and confidence forever.’ Isaiah 32:16-17, NIV

Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to highlight the things He wants you to focus on from this devotional in the coming days.

Ponder.
Pray.

What has grabbed your attention that you want to discover more about?

What verses do you want to linger over?

What practical things can you do to grow as a peacemaker?

Are there things you want to learn more about?

Are there people in your world you need to pursue peace with?

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FURTHER READING AND CONTEMPLATION SCRIPTURES TO PONDER AND PRAY THROUGH.

On Peace...

'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.' Matthew 5:9, NIV

'Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.' Colossians 3:15, NIV

'Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.' Hebrews 12:14, NIV

'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.' John 14:27 NIV

'Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.' James 3:18, NIV

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." John 16:33, NIV

'Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.' Psalm 34:14, NIV

'When a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.' Proverbs 16:7, ESV

'Let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it.' 1 Peter 3:11, ESV

On Empathy...

'So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.' Matthew 7:12, NIV

Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.[a] 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.[b] 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." Matthew 22:37-40, NIV

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. James 3:5, NIV

'Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other.' Psalm 85:10, NIV

'See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.' 1 Thessalonians 5:15, ESV

'Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.' Ephesians 5:1-2, NIV

On Humility...

'And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.' Mark 11:25, NIV

'Leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.' Matthew 5:24, NIV

'But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.' Luke 6:35, NIV

On Wisdom...

'But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.' James 3:17-18, ESV

'Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.' Philippians 4:6-7, NIV

'Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.' Proverbs 3:5-8, NIV

'Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.' Ephesians 4:29, NIV

'Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark.' James 3:5, NIV



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THERE'S MORE TO
DISCOVER ABOUT
THE COLOUR
SISTERHOOD
AND THE ART OF
PEACEMAKING

HERE.