



WELCOME CHRISTMAS

Week Two

Opening Prayer

God, be with us as we explore the topic of forgiveness and peace. May your peace be wrapped within our group conversations and felt by each of us as we listen to each other share. Amen.

Talk It Over

December is filled with fun traditions, special treats, and festive decorations. It's a time where we gather and reflect on the gift of ultimate love we have been given. In this series, we are taking a look at the Christmas Story through unique lenses, each pointing to hope that applies to our lives today. This week we reflected on the gift Jesus offers us of authentic peace.

- What is your favorite Christmas treat or tradition?
- Who is your favorite family member you share or have shared Christmas with?
- Can you recall a time in your life where you felt a strong sense of peace?

Read John 14:27(NIV) and Matthew 11:28-30 (MSG)

The kind of peace we see Jesus offering is not one we can follow as a formula to complete. It is a gift from God and we are invited to participate in that gift. Part of this process is impacted by the choices we make and the other part of receiving this gift of supernatural peace is outside of anything we can create or achieve.

- Do you feel at peace with God? If your answer is “yes”, describe in what ways. If your answer is “not really”, explain why you think that might be.
- Are you entertaining ideas that depict a God of condemnation instead of a God of gracious conviction? Where do you think those ideas come from?
- How is the condition of your soul? *Name the first word that comes to mind.*

Read Philippians 4:6-9 (NLT) and Phillipians 4:11-13

Contentment comes as we explore and express ways that we are grateful, and when we can live a life of submission toward God. This does not mean we do not work toward our dreams or our goals, but it means that at the end of the day, we know God is present and in control. It is from this place of contentment we often receive the gift of peace from Jesus.

- Do you see a connection between contentment and peace? Explain what you see.
- When you are restless does it impact your sense of peace? Share about what you have experienced.
- Paul mentions prayer and gratitude. What do you do when you feel pain or restlessness?

Read Romans 12:18 and Ephesians 4:32

Offering peace and forgiveness to others is hard work! We have to first start with ourselves and work with God by examining our hearts before him. As we receive healing we have more love, peace, and forgiveness to offer others.

- Have you been forgiven by someone in a meaningful way? Have you been able to forgive someone who was seeking your forgiveness? Share what you feel comfortable sharing about this.
- Can you identify areas of life where forgiveness seems harder? What wisdom do you have to offer around those situations?
- Can you see a connection between internal peace and forgiveness?

Read Hebrews 2:14-16 and Isaiah 9:6

It wasn't the Romans alone that killed Jesus on the cross but it was all humanity. Through the blood of Jesus God restores his love for us and fulfills his desire to be with us. The story of the cross gives us a beautiful reflection of our brokenness, God's love for us, and his path to redemption, restoration, and peace. His beautiful gift of forgiveness is available not just to us, but for us to extend to others.

- What are you willing to do to restore love to those in your life and to those who will come after you when your time here on earth is done?
- Is there someone you need to reach out to or bring into prayer in order to have God help you activate the strength to forgive? Tell us who is coming to mind and why.
- Reread Isaiah 9:6. As you read Isaiah 9:6 what word stands out to you most? How can this verse impact your Christmas season?

Closing Prayer

Come, Lord Jesus. Fill us with your peace and your love. Help us to spot you in this Christmas season in unique ways and continue to transform our hearts in ways that we receive you more fully. Amen.

Group Logistics [A Reminder for New Groups]

As your group heads to a close for the holidays, be sure everyone is on the same page regarding expectations. Is this a break? Are you going to restart with the next group launch? Consider ending your season with some sort of fun celebration.

How To Use this Discussion Guide

The guide is meant to serve you and your group as you intentionally create space to grow in friendship and faith. Use the guide as a tool to help your unique group.

With that in mind, consider reviewing the guide before your group to see if some content or questions might resonate more or less with your group. Don't feel pressured to read all the content or to hit all the questions. The guide is not meant to be something you power through for the sake of completing. Pick the content from the guide you feel will help foster friendship and faith in your specific group.

In addition, spend some time praying for your group each week, preparing your heart, and asking God for wisdom and guidance as you lead.