

# Let Peace Reign



Love, Justice,  
and Dignity in  
God's Kingdom

Drew Jackson



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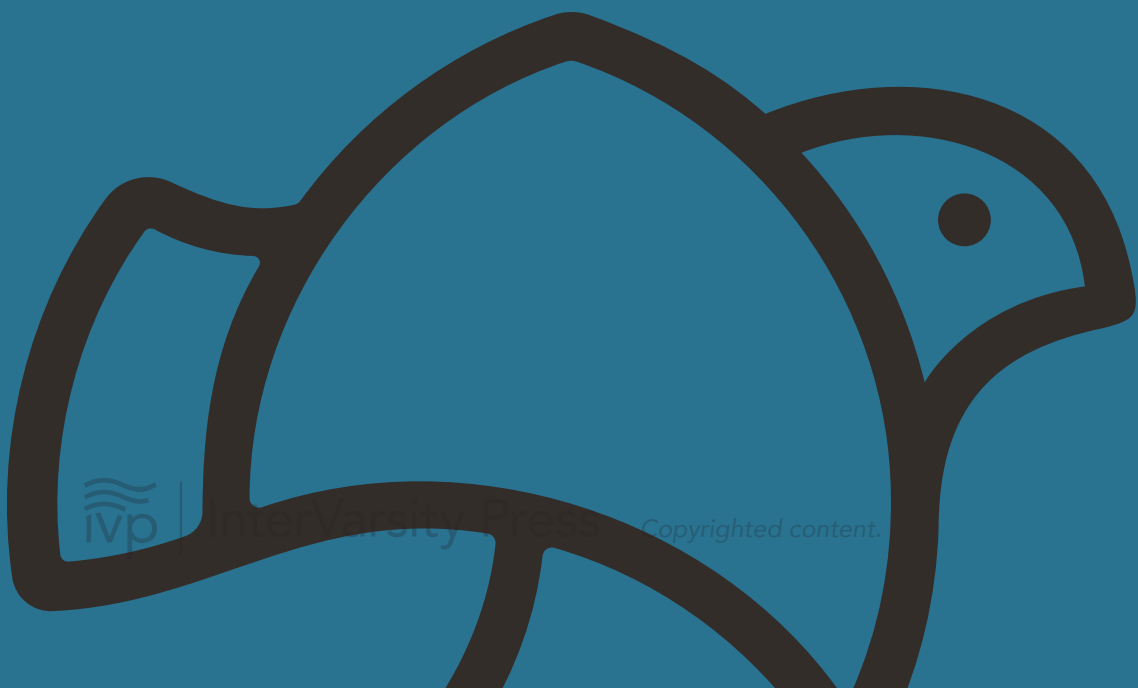
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SESSION ONE

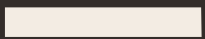
# The Story of Peace



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# The St Peace



Establishment

Disruption

Call

Climax

Consummation



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# ory of

**This week is about a story.**

**It is about the story of all stories.**

**In this story, you will find your place.**

We begin Session One with an exploration of the concepts of peace and justice within the story of God. Whether you're passionate about justice, eager to learn how to become a peacemaker, or unsure about how justice and the gospel coincide, we're glad you're here. We recognize that some of you have been journeying as peacemakers and justice seekers for quite some time, while others might be exploring these concepts for the first time. That's okay. Wherever you're at right now, take a moment to prepare your body and heart for engagement with this week's session. If you're doing this as a group study, come with a posture of humility and openness to other people's perspectives.



# Pulse Check

*Share some of your answers from the introduction's reflection questions.*

- 01** Why have you shown up for this journey?
- 02** What makes you want to learn more about peace and justice?
- 03** How do you define *peace*? How do you define *justice*?

# Preparation

To prepare for Session One, follow the grounding practice and read the accompanying prayer. Be present with those you are with, and be attentive to what God might impress on you during this time.

We start with a grounding practice because the world we live in is always on the go. We're often expected to show up, produce, and execute. This is a time for us to come together and consider shalom—God's dream for us to be whole, flourishing, and at peace. Shalom is God's dream for us to be fully human. This grounding practice reminds you to slow down, breathe, and invite the God of Peace to settle you before you begin with the group study.

## GROUNDING PRACTICE

### Take three Deep Breaths

**Inhale: God of Peace**  
**Exhale: I am Here**

**Inhale: God of Peace**  
**Exhale: I am Yours**

**Inhale: God of Peace**  
**Exhale: I am Ready**



## Poem by Drew Jackson

# MADE FOR PEACE

It starts with a Word. A very good Word spoken by Creator. Goodness within and goodness between, binding us together, all things tethered by Love.

### **Shalom.**

But then there's a breaking, a fracture within this cosmic bond, knocking protons and electrons out of orbit. No longer moving in unity, but now existing with great autonomy.

### **Shattered.**

We've been lost. Unbound from our identity, searching for our vocation, working to locate ourselves within this great wide world.

### **Seeking.**

But then comes the in-breaking. The very good Word made flesh and bone, sought us out and made this shattered world home, all to bring us back to the beginning—back to shalom.

### **Slaughtered.**

Because we resist with tight fists, holding onto our way. But Life cannot be held within tombs and in graves. Once again, fresh breath was blown into this clay.

### **Sent.**

To rebind and restore. With new vision for this mission we were created for. Fully reflecting this imprinted Image, as we work to bring pax back to existence.

### **Peace.**

# Manifesto

*Shalom is the perfection of God's creation, a state in which all parties are able to flourish in relationship to one another in the fullness of who and what God has made them.*

## **Colossians 1:15-20**

*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.*

God is the author of peace, and peace is essential to life. Peace is inherently relational as peace and justice cannot be known in isolation, and God has invited us to co-labor with him in this pursuit. As God restores our dignity and sets right the relationship between us and God, we in turn reflect the image of God in the world by restoring peace within ourselves and our communities, between us and the systems and structures that govern, and between us and all of creation.

**Scan the QR code to watch the Session One Myth & Material video. As you watch the video, write down any statements that stand out to you or thoughts that you have.**



# Myth

*Peace is achieved through oppression and suppression.*



# Material

*Jesus calls us to be peacemakers.*



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 01** In what ways does our world oppress, suppress, and overpower to achieve its version of peace?

- 02** What is the difference between the peace of this world and the peace of Jesus?

- 03** What would a more just and peace-filled world look like? How might God be calling you to work with him to make peace in this world?

# Benediction

*May the Spirit of God bless you with insight and revelation as you take this journey toward peace.*

*May you be led by Jesus to glimpse a new world where love is the language we speak and shalom binds us together.*

*May you be filled with a holy expectation that will not rest content until you encounter the living God.*

*And may you awaken to the reality that you are a child of God created to make peace in the midst of a desperate world.*

*Amen.*

*Go in Peace.*

# Motion

## *Centering Down Meditation*

\_ a guide by spiritual director  
Osheta Moore

There are many pictures of peacemaking and peacemakers that we have to contend with. To some, peacemakers are gentle, kind, and passive people who resist conflict at all costs. To others, peacemakers are brave and selfless people who do things like offer themselves as human shields in war-torn countries or spend years studying diplomacy or peacemaking. When we do not have a picture of peacemakers and peacemaking that includes us—just as we are in our regular lives—then Jesus' Beatitude teaching on peacemaking feels tone-deaf and unrealistic. Shalom, however, is God's invitation to flourishing and wholeness, and from that overflow we create peace in the world around us.

Throughout this upcoming week, we're going to meditate on a reflection from Howard Thurman. Thurman was a major influence on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. It is said Dr. King carried the Bible and a copy of Thurman's *Jesus and the Disinherited* constantly because Thurman's commitment to holistic activism—one that engages body, mind, soul, spirit, and nonviolence—was essential to the civil rights movement.

Centering down is a contemplative practice that asks you to clear your mind of all the distractions that prevent you from sensing God's closeness and the Spirit's encouragement.

### HOW TO MEDITATE WITH THE PASSAGE

**Read the reflection from Howard Thurman.**

**Ask yourself: "What is keeping me from feeling centered?" Spend five minutes in silence.**

**What pictures come to your mind when you think of centering down? Read the passage again, this time imagining yourself as centered.**

**This week, journal or ponder the questions Thurman asks.**



# How Good to Center Down!

*Howard Thurman*

How good it is to center down!  
To sit quietly and see one's self pass by!  
The streets of our minds seethe with endless traffic;  
Our spirits resound with clashing, with noisy silences,  
While something deep within hungers and thirsts for the still  
moment and the resting lull.  
With full intensity we seek, ere thicket passes, a fresh sense  
of order in our living;  
A direction, a strong sure purpose that will structure our con-  
fusion and bring meaning in our chaos.  
We look at ourselves in this waiting moment—the kinds of  
people we are.  
The questions persist: what are we doing with our lives?—  
what are the motives that order our days?  
What is the end of our doings? Where are we trying to go?  
Where do we put the emphasis and where are our values  
focused?  
For what end do we make sacrifices? Where is my treasure  
and what do I love most in life?  
What do I hate most in life and to what am I true?  
Over and over the questions beat upon the waiting moment.  
As we listen, floating up through all of the jangling echoes of  
our turbulence, there is a sound of another kind—  
A deeper note which only the stillness of the heart makes  
clear.  
It moves directly to the core of our being. Our questions are  
answered,  
Our spirits refreshed, and we move back into the traffic of  
our daily round  
With the peace of the Eternal in our step.  
How good it is to center down!<sup>1</sup>



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