

Life Group Questions

The Seed of Peace / Pastor Rob / Isaiah 9:6-7 / Dec 12-13, 2020

The God who makes order out of chaos desires that ALL of life be arranged according to his design. The Hebrew word for this is “shalom,” usually translated as “peace” into English. The world longs for peace at every level: in hearts, homes, neighborhoods and between nations. The Bible shows that a true hope for lasting peace must come from outside ourselves. The book of Isaiah is one long exhortation to completely trust in God, and Isaiah refers several times to the coming Ruler who will ultimately provide true and lasting peace.

Reconnect

Come together with these preliminary questions:

- What do you think are the main reasons for a lack of peace in the world?
- What do you think are the main reasons for a lack of peace in our souls?

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, we pray the words of the psalmist who said, “In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.” This world often feels like an unsafe place to us, and we regularly find ourselves looking for security by taking control or by trusting others. We ask that you will teach us to trust in you alone and by doing that, we will learn to be guided and guarded by your peace. Open our eyes to wonderful things from your Word. We ask this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Message Recap

Review the message using the questions

1. What stood out to you most in this week’s message?
2. What was the most meaningful thing that you heard in the message? Why?
3. What questions are still lingering?

Choose discussion and application questions

Reflect on Isaiah 9:6-7 and the message by discussing the questions.

1. **The context: Isaiah exhorts Israel to trust God completely during a chaotic and life-threatening time**
 - a. Read Isaiah 26:3. What does it mean to have one’s mind “stayed’ on God? How does this verse speak to you at this time in your life?
 - b. The difference between optimism and Christian hope: optimism stems from a belief in human ability while Christian hope goes outside of ourselves. How is this difference important for the way we live the Christian life?
 - c. In what areas of life do you find it particularly difficult to trust God?
2. **Jesus engages us personally: a child is born for us!**
 - a. Jesus’ incarnation (the Word became flesh) makes him different from every other leader. Why is this important to you personally?

- b. About the incarnation, Dorothy Sayers wrote that “God had the courage to take his own medicine” and that “he can exact nothing from man that he has not first exacted from himself.” What do you think she meant by this? How does this deepen your love and appreciation for God?
- c. How do you the principle of the incarnation (the way of Christ) at work in your own life? That is, what does it mean for you to be “incarnate” in the place and among the people where he has planted you?

3. Jesus personally carries us: the government is on his shoulders!

- a. What are some ways you have been disappointed by human leaders? Read Psalm 146:3-4. What do you think is the reason for your disappointment?
- b. Pastor Rob said, “What separates Jesus from every other ruler is that he can oversee, all at once, the big issues of the entire universe and each of our unique concerns.” How does this speak to you?
- c. Pastor John Piper listed five things that Jesus will carry for us: our sins, our anxieties, our burdens, our need for justice and our entire lives. Which of these is most important to you at this time?
- d. What specific burden to you need to “roll onto the Lord” today?

4. Jesus’ reign of peace will grow increasingly and gradually

- a. God’s will is that Jesus’ reign of peace will keep growing. How does this specifically comfort you today?
- b. Are there any ways that you can serve as a peacemaker?
- c. How has peace become a greater reality in your life since you have known Christ?

5. Reflection questions / guidance

Pastor Rob offered 3 reflection exercises or questions at the end of his message. You could take some time to practice or discuss these in your group.

- a. Use Psalm 131 to settle your heart before the Lord: “O Lord, my heart is not lifted up; my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great or too marvelous for me. But I have still and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child is my soul within me.”
- b. Identify specific fears, sins or burdens that you are carrying. Through prayer, lay these upon Jesus.
- c. Is there an absence of peace in your relationships? How can the practice of the cross (dying to self) help resolve those relationships?

Digging Deeper

Read **Philippians 4:4-7** and then discuss the questions.

1. What does the text say?
2. What is God teaching you through this passage?
3. How is God prompting you to respond?

Choose Your Next Step

What next step will you commit to for the upcoming week (and beyond)?

- Individual**
 - Spend 10 minutes to identify the anxieties and burdens in your life? Be honest with yourself and with God, and identify these sources by name?
 - Practice praying Psalm 131 in light of your burdens, concerns and doubts.

- Identify the anxiety you see in others and the brokenness of relationships. Consider ways that God can use you to restore peace.
- **Christian community**
 - As you have identified specific anxieties or burdens in your life, find 1 or 2 Christian friends to share this with.
 - Ask for prayer support from brothers and sisters, as you rely on the Spirit's help to trust God more fully.
- **The world**
 - We pray the old and well-known prayer, "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace." In your world, what are ways that you can be an instrument of peace?

Closing Prayer

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me bring love.

Where there is offence, let me bring pardon.

Where there is discord, let me bring union.

Where there is error, let me bring truth.

Where there is doubt, let me bring faith.

Where there is despair, let me bring hope.

Where there is darkness, let me bring your light.

Where there is sadness, let me bring joy.

O Master, let me not seek as much

to be consoled as to console,

to be understood as to understand,

to be loved as to love,

for it is in giving that one receives,

it is in self-forgetting that one finds,

it is in pardoning that one is pardoned,

it is in dying that one is raised to eternal life.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, our great Peacemaker. Amen.