



*Peace*  
ADVENT

**ABIDING WITH GOD AND  
RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH MAN**

**WEEK  
TWO**



## READ

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

**ISAIAH 9:6-7 (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)**

## UNDERSTAND

Think about your calendar in the coming weeks. What's the craziest thing you have on the schedule? Maybe it's a long day of travel, or a week filled with school activities, or an afternoon shopping for those last minute gifts on a budget, or a visit from a family member who is anything but easy to have around.

Whatever it is, when you think about it, it probably leaves you feeling anything but peaceful.

The truth is, it's easy to let the busyness and stress steal the peace that's meant to mark this season. Remember, that peace is exactly the point of the season; peace is what Christ came to Earth to bring us. It's not the peace that comes from an easy holiday, or a stress-free vacation, or a family who doesn't fight (though that kind of peace is

certainly nice!).

No, the peace that we remember at Advent is a peace that goes much deeper than that. It's a lasting peace—the kind that is only possible in and through Christ. His call is to not just let peace be in our hearts, but to allow it to rule in our hearts. In other words, the peace of Christ should be the guiding force in our lives. And when it is, we'll be the kind of people who spill that same peace out to everyone we come in contact with, no matter what is going on in our lives.

As your calendar fills up and the hectic days of the holidays threaten to take over, remind yourself of the peace that we celebrate at Advent. Do whatever you can to be a person who pursues and reflects that peace this holiday season.



## RESPOND

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why is peace often so hard to come by during the holiday season?
2. What is the difference between the temporary peace of the world and the lasting peace of Christ?
3. What do you think your life would look like if you let peace rule in your heart?
4. What is one thing you can do to pursue peace this holiday season?

### FAMILY TIME

One of the best things you can do this holiday season is make the choice to pursue peace as a family. Read Colossians 3:15 as a family. Talk about what it means to be a person who chooses peace. Then, commit to doing that as a family!

To do that, sit down together and come up with a “Peace Agreement.” Make a list of the ways you are going to commit to choosing peace during the holidays. This can include things like helping each other out with chores, offering to share your toys, committing to not call each other names, attempting to avoid arguments, and doing fun activities together. After you’ve created your list, have everyone

in your family sign it as an agreement that they are going to do their best to pursue peace.

Then, post the list somewhere your family can see it as a reminder of the agreement you’ve made with each other. At the end of the holiday season, do something special as a family to celebrate the ways you choose peace over the last few weeks. Talk about the times it may have been hard to pursue peace and acknowledge the ways in which choosing peace made your household feel better.

Finally, prayer together as a family that you’ll continue to commit to pursuing peace in your household in the coming year.

# Prayers of Peace

Here are five prayer prompts to invite and nurture a spirit of peace into each day this week. Use this guide with your family or small group.

## WHEN YOU ABIDE

On your own: What is causing your stress, worry, or anxiety? In a world where worry, not peace, prevails, give each of your stresses to the Lord and ask Him to stir up His Good News again.

Pray together: *God, thank You that You came to be our Prince of Peace. When we feel tempted to give into stress this holiday season, let Your peace rule in our hearts. We want to be people who pursue and show Your eternal peace to everyone we come in contact with this season. Amen.*

## WHEN YOU WORSHIP

On your own: In a season when every heart should be happy and light, many of us are struggling with the heaviness of life. Write down three ways the Lord uses the church as a space for peace in your life.

Pray together: *Lord, we give you all glory and honor and praise. We confess that our hearts are too often filled with wonder of a different kind: wondering when the bills will be paid, when the terror will stop, when rest will come. But You alone are the Prince of Peace and the Lord of Lords. We exalt Your name and worship You alone. Amen.*

## FOR YOUR SMALL GROUP

On your own: How do you mask your stresses and worries? Reflect and discuss on how your mask might serve as a hindrance in your small group.

Pray together: *Father, we want this holiday season to be filled with light instead of darkness. Please help us discard our emotional masks and be real before You as well as Your people. Father, help us make this holiday season an offering of praise to You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

## FOR THOSE YOU SERVE

On your own: How can you be an instrument of peace for those you serve this Advent season?

Pray together: *God, our Refuge and Shelter, You are ever present among us. And You are ever present among the hurting, with whom Your heart dwells. Guide us as we seek to follow Your example by giving of ourselves, that we too might be present among people in need. Amen.*

## FOR YOUR INTERSECTIONS WITH THE WORLD

On your own: Last week you listed out the names of people in your intersections who do not know Christ--spend time asking the Lord to help you land on five people who you will commit to praying for next year. How can you create a space of peace for them in your interactions?

Pray together: *Ever-present God, who walked in the garden with Adam and Eve, who went with the Israelites into the wilderness, who took on flesh and dwelled among us, help us to embody Your incarnation—to be a tangible presence of peace among children and families in need. Help us to give not just of our resources but of ourselves, that we might learn to love others as You love us. Amen.*

# Small Group - Peace

## THE TRUE VINE

FROM SHE READS TRUTH | AMANDA BIBLE WILLIAMS

I'm the queen of focusing on the wrong things.

My daughter makes an amazing piece of 9-year-old art and declares it dedicated to her mom (that's me!)—and I silently lament the sea of paper covering the floor and the glue stick smashed into all the creases of the dining room table.

A long-lost friend says she and her family are coming to visit for a weekend—and I spend more time worrying about the condition of the guest room than rejoicing in the long conversations and late-night laughter to come.

My husband spends hours creating new storage solutions for our mudroom (slash laundry room, slash pantry, slash coat closet, slash place the dog stays during dinner so he won't eat food off our plates)—and I involuntarily scowl that my tired, dirty, three-compartment clothes hamper will no longer fit. (Three compartments! You can understand my sadness.)

And here, in John chapter 15, Jesus says this:

“Remain in me, and I in you. Just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it remains on the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me”

(vv. 4-5, emphasis mine).

This is what He says. But do you know what I hear? I hear, “Bear fruit.” Or, to be more specific, “Hey, you, why aren't you bearing fruit?” I, the Queen of Focusing On The Wrong Things, read Jesus' words and hear all of the goal and none of the grace. I want the end but forget the means.

Yes, bear fruit. Yes, love others. Yes, give grace to a world that will misunderstand and even hate us. But look back through John 15. Jesus is not commanding His disciples to bear fruit. The command is to remain. When we remain—when we abide in the never-ending, unconditional, forever love of Christ—then the fruit will come.

We bear fruit when, and only when, we are grafted into the True Vine. His Holy Spirit in us is the fruit producer; we are simply the branches who have the privilege of displaying His fruit.

Jesus Christ comes to make us new. He comes to redeem the dead branches that we are and give us abundant life! Remaining in Him—resting, dwelling, abiding in Him—is the only source of our strength, our goodness, our peace, our fruit.

Let's focus our eyes on the True Vine today. Let's be about the business of remaining in Jesus, and trust His Spirit to be about the business of bearing fruit in our lives.

Lord, teach us what it means to remain when all we want to do is produce. Help us to rest in your never-stopping love. Amen.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- What peace do you experience when the author says, “Jesus is not commanding His disciples to bear fruit. The command is to remain.”?
- What rhythms have you established to ensure time alone with the Lord each day?

# SOAP STUDY ON PEACE

## ISAIAH 9:6-7 (NIV)

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# SOAP STUDY ON PEACE

## COLOSSIANS 3:15 (NIV)

**S** *Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.*

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# SOAP STUDY ON PEACE

## JOHN 15:5-8 (NIV)

**S** *I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.*

**O**

**A**

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