

Live Peaceably

ROMANS 12:9–21

6



GOAL

Youth begin to understand love as the catalyst for a peaceful world.

- A Art
- AM Active/Movement
- AT Abstract Thinking
- C Conversation
- CT Concrete Thinking
- D Drama
- G Game
- M Music
- QC Quiet/Contemplative
- S Service
- T Technology
- X Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



PRAYER

God of peace, send your Spirit to guide today's session. Let the peace that you author begin with the words and actions I share. May your children know your hope. Amen.

THIS SESSION

Violence and unrest are commonplace in the world today. It scrolls across our screens 24/7. It is easy to become overwhelmed. Even as organizations try to promote peace, world peace can seem like a utopian dream. Does this mean that we should just give up any hope of a peaceful world? Jesus taught his followers to create new communities bound together by self-giving love rather than self-protecting walls. We are to create communities dedicated to peace, starting with ourselves. Peace is not something that simply happens. It is something that we actively work toward every day of our lives in little and big ways.

THE BIBLE STORY

Romans 12:9–21 provides a nice summation to this *Love God, Neighbor, Enemy* practice. Paul writes to the church in Rome about practical matters of what love *does*, helping to explicate what a new life in Christ looks like: Let honor be the only competition between you. Be wholehearted. Serve. Be hospitable. The passage also compels us to love our enemies, show hospitality to strangers, seek mercy instead of vengeance, serve one another with joy, and hate injustice. The instructions are so wide-ranging that it is hard to find a single phrase to summarize them. Perhaps “live peaceably” works; it seems to be the fruit of these robust expressions of love. If we get overwhelmed, Paul offers a grace-filled caveat: we are called to live peaceably “if it is possible, so far as it depends on [us]” (12:18). It is a nod toward our own frail humanity. The bar is high, but we are also human, and there are limits to what we are able to do.

CONNECTIONS WITH YOUTH

Youth are acutely aware of the many political and social issues in the world. Issues such as climate change and ongoing police brutality against racial and ethnic minorities may dampen their hope for the future. With encouragement, young people can also be optimistic, understanding that a brighter future is not simply something to hope for. It is something they must create for themselves and for our world.

SESSION PREPARATION

- “Meditation” (p. 48): Obtain a blanket or rug, and select meditative music.
- Depending on the options you choose:
- “Reviewing *Love God, Neighbor, Enemy*” (p. 51): Gather large jigsaw puzzle pieces and place in a container. Plan for six puzzle pieces per person. The pieces don’t have to fit together.

GETTING STARTED

- ☐ Rug or blanket
- ☐ Audio player or internet-connected device



The 5-1 centering activity is a great tool for reducing anxiety. Encourage the youth to use this practice in their day-to-day lives or whenever they feel anxious.

MEDITATION

QC

Play meditative sounds using a soundtrack (bit.ly/FMMedSounds, 3:01:07). As youth enter, invite them to sit quietly on the floor for meditation. Encourage them to take deep breaths and clear their minds while they pay attention to the meditative sounds.

After all youth have arrived, lead them in a brief centering activity that will focus on their five senses. Following each prompt, tell them to take five deep breaths. Ask them to think of five things they can see (deep breaths), four things they can hear (deep breaths), three things they can touch (deep breaths), two things they can smell (deep breaths), and one thing they can taste (deep breaths). Have them return their awareness to your learning space.



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

OPENING LITANY

QC

Welcome the youth with your usual opening activities. Explain that the theme of this session is “Live Peaceably.” After you read a line of the litany, have youth repeat in unison “when we live peaceably.” Their closing line is “may we live peaceably.”

We love God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind
when we live peaceably.

We love our neighbor as ourself
when we live peaceably.

We love our enemies
when we live peaceably.

Lord, in your mercy,
may we live peaceably.

- ☐ Paper
- ☐ Colored pencils

“I FIND PEACE WHEN . . .”

A

Invite the youth to think about a time when they felt most at peace. Recall where they were. What was happening? Who was there? How did it feel? Distribute paper and colored pencils. Encourage them to use words or pictures to respond to the prompt: “I find peace when . . .” Invite volunteers to share their artwork with the group.

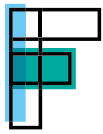
- ☐ Newsprint and markers

PEACE DEFINED

C

Write the word *PEACE* on newsprint. Ask the youth what peace means to them. Have them offer words or short phrases to define peace. Write their responses on the newsprint. After they have had an opportunity to share, offer the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* definition: peace is “a state of tranquility or quiet.”¹ Invite them to compare this with what is written on newsprint. Explain that this session will explore how God wants us to live in peace with one another. Continue to display the newsprint throughout the session.

1. *Merriam-Webster*, s. v. “peace” (n.), www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/peace.



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

Choose one or both options.

TO DO AND NOT DO

C

☐ Bibles

Slowly read aloud Romans 12:9–21. Read it a second time and invite people to call out all practical things Paul says to do and not to do. Use one or more of these questions for discussion:

- ➔ As the verses were read, what emotions came up for you? What could these emotions be telling you?
- ➔ Is it possible to do all of the things mentioned in this passage? Why or why not?
- ➔ Why do you think Paul thought it was important to write down all of these things?
- ➔ What guidance do you find in these verses for living a Christian life?

WHAT LOVE DOES

AT

☐ Bibles

☐ Paper and pens

Have the youth compare 1 Corinthians 13:4–7 and Romans 12:9–21. Form groups of two or three youth. Distribute paper, pens, and Bibles. Tell each group to make a T-chart on their paper. At the top of one column, write one Scripture reference, and write the second reference on the other column. Have groups compare the two passages by writing down verses or phrases that are similar.

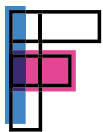
After the groups find similarities, discuss within their groups: How does one passage help us better understand the other passage? They may write their responses on their paper.

Gather the large group and discuss how their comparison work helps them to better understand both passages.



Example of Similar Verses

They might list “Love is not resentful (1 Corinthians 13:5)” and “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them (Romans 12:14).”



FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW

Choose one or more options.

PASSING THE PEACE

C

Explain that, in our worship services, we try to do what Paul encouraged the Christians in Rome to do: rejoice, pray, contribute, and bless. We share signs of peace, symbolizing and embodying our call to live peaceably with all. When we “pass the peace,” it is a time to extend the peace of Christ to one another. Use these questions for discussion:

- ➔ What does “the peace of Christ” mean to you?
- ➔ When invited to pass the peace in worship, what do you usually say?
- ➔ What are some other possible words or gestures of peace you could use to express desire to live peaceably with all?

REFUSING TO BE ENEMIES

T C

☐ Internet-connected device

Show the YouTube video “We Refuse to Be Enemies” (bit.ly/FMRefuse, 5:43) in which Daoud Nassar talks about choosing the way of love in his context. Invite youth to talk about their impressions, their questions, and

what stood out for them in the video. Use these questions to continue discussion:

- ➔ What is significant about the video's title "We Refuse To Be Enemies"?
- ➔ How does this title indicate a commitment to peace?
- ➔ Why is it important that those who want Nassar off the land begin to see him as a human being? How can this encourage peace?
- ➔ Nassar said that three words—faith, hope, and love—are the foundation of his work. How do these three words create a foundation for peace?

☐ Copies of Resource Page 1

SERENITY PRAYER

C

Distribute copies of Resource Page 1. Invite a volunteer to read aloud the Serenity Prayer. Explain that the prayer is attributed to Reinhold Niebuhr who wrote it in the 1930s. The prayer has taken many forms and has been widely used over the years. It has been notably adopted as a closing prayer for Alcoholics Anonymous meetings.

Have youth read the prayer silently, then sit quietly and reflect upon its words and message. Then invite them to talk about what the prayer says for them. Continue conversation with these questions:

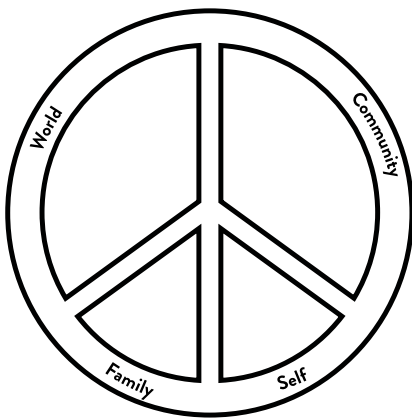
- ➔ Why do you think this prayer speaks to so many?
- ➔ What does this prayer teach us about living peaceably?
- ➔ How does the prayer connect with the Romans 12 passage?
- ➔ How does it connect with the practice of *Love God, Neighbor, Enemy*?



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

☐ Newsprint and markers



PEACE SIGN

On newsprint, draw the outline of a peace sign (see an example in the sidebar). Label the sections: World, Community, Family, Self. Invite youth to identify where they see the need for peace in each of the labeled settings. If your group has four or fewer youth, give them each a marker and have them write their responses in the sections on the peace sign. With groups larger than four, have youth call out their responses and have a volunteer write these on the peace sign sections.

Step back and review what has been written. Challenge youth to think of actions they can take to promote peace in response to the identified needs. Write these ideas on the outside of the peace sign. Invite youth to look over suggested ideas for action and circle one action they will commit to for living peaceably.

☐ Bibles
☐ Notebook paper and pens

TO LIVE PEACEABLY

CT AT

Distribute notebook paper and pens. Have youth draw a T-chart on their papers. Label one column "To Live Peaceably, Do," and the second column "To Live Peaceably, Don't Do."

Refer youth to Romans 12:9–21. As they consider what Paul wrote about the way of love, have them identify how they are to live. Encourage them to work independently and respond to these questions:

- ➔ What are you, in your context and daily life, being called to do?
- ➔ What are you called to stop doing?

Have them write their responses in their “Do” and “Don’t Do” columns. Ask the group how they can live these “Dos” and “Don’ts.” Conclude the activity by reading aloud Romans 12:18: “If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.”

REVIEWING LOVE GOD, NEIGHBOR, ENEMY

Remind youth that they have looked at six aspects of loving God, neighbor, and enemy. Encourage them to name the titles or themes of this practice. Be ready to offer help as they try to name these.

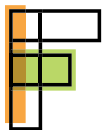
Distribute pens and pass the container of puzzle pieces around the group. Have each person take six pieces. Discuss the six aspects of this practice, one by one. Invite youth to identify concrete activities they can do as individuals and as a group to live each aspect.

While discussing an aspect, have each person choose one activity that they will commit to and write this activity on the blank side of one puzzle piece. After the six aspects are discussed, each young person will have six marked puzzle pieces to take home to remind them to *Love God, Neighbor, Enemy*.

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- ☐ Jigsaw puzzle pieces
 - ☐ Container
 - ☐ Pens



Love Extravagantly, Serve a Stranger, Show Mercy, Wash Another’s Feet, Be Courageous, Live Peaceably



FOLLOWING JESUS

DONA NOBIS PACEM



-
- ☐ Internet-connected device

The Latin phrase *Dona Nobis Pacem* can be translated as “Grant us peace.” The phrase is often sung as a prayer for peace. Show the YouTube video “Dona Nobis Pacem: A Holiday Greeting from PSU’s College of the Arts” (bit.ly/FMDonaNobisPacem, 3:05). May their song close your reflections on how to love God, your neighbor, your enemy, and everyone else. Thanks be to God for the call to love.

Pray this prayer or one of your choosing:

Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, give us courage to demonstrate extravagant, merciful love, washing one another’s feet so that your creation can live peaceably. Amen.

