



MON 1-10

- ✓ SCRIPTURE 2 Corinthians 13:11
- ✓ THOUGHT "Dear brothers and sisters, I close my letter with these last words: Be joyful. Grow to maturity. Encourage each other. Live in harmony and peace. Then the God of love and peace will be with you." [NLT] Paul gives us good advice about how to experience the peace of God. Think of something you can do or say this week that will encourage someone in your life and bring harmony to your relationship.
- ✓ PRAYER Loving God, open my eyes to see small ways that I can be an encourager for others this week. Help me remember that I am an agent of your peace in this world, and it is up to me to cultivate it in my life. Amen.

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TUES 1-11

- ✓ SCRIPTURE Colossians 1:19-20
- ✓ THOUGHT "Because all the fullness of God was pleased to live in him, and he reconciled all things to himself through him—whether things on earth or in the heavens. He brought peace through the blood of his cross." [CEB] Jesus is the true source of peace. In his life, we have an example of the type of behavior that pleases God. Take a moment to pray about ways you might need to adjust your words and conversations so that the peace of Christ is evident.
- ✓ PRAYER Lord Jesus, I want my life to look like yours. Bring this to mind when I am engaged in heated conversation. Remind me that unity and peace are important to you. Amen.

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WED 1-12

- ✓ SCRIPTURE 1 Timothy 3:16
- ✓ THOUGHT "Without question, the mystery of godliness is great: he was revealed as a human, declared righteous by the Spirit, seen by angels, preached throughout the nations, believed in around the world, and taken up in glory." [CEB] The mystery of God was revealed to us in Christ. This belief in who Jesus is, brings humankind together, sharing a bond that should be preserved at all costs.
- ✓ PRAYER Amazing God, thank you for revealing to us a glimpse of who you are in the life of Christ. We thank you for the connectedness that you have created with fellow believers. Help me to be a part of building that bond between us. Amen.

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THURS 1-13

- ✓ SCRIPTURE Philippians 3:14
- ✓ THOUGHT "The goal I pursue is the prize of God's upward call in Christ Jesus." [CEB] Have you ever found yourself so engrossed in a societal issue that you have felt more passionate about it than you are about the ways of God? We are called to work against injustice, but if in doing so, we find ourselves behaving in a way that is outside of the way Christ taught us to live, then we might be out of balance!
- ✓ PRAYER Loving God, I am sorry if I have allowed my passion about any one issue, derail me from behaving in a loving and kind way. Help me to test my words and be sure they line up with the ways of Jesus. Amen.

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FRI 1-14

- ✓ SCRIPTURE Romans 3:23
- ✓ THOUGHT "For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard." [NLT] This truth is important to remember when we find ourselves in a disagreement with someone. Rather than vilify the opposition, we can remember that we are united in our need for God's grace and grace from one another. None of us have perfect wisdom and understanding!
- ✓ PRAYER Almighty God, you alone understand all things. You alone possess perfect wisdom. Help us make space for the ideas and opinions of others, knowing that you created them just as you created us, and we are in the same boat of trying to make sense of this world. Amen.

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SAT 1-15

- ✓ SCRIPTURE Colossians 3:14
- ✓ THOUGHT "And over all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity." [CEB] Love unites. Spend some silent time today considering your friends and family. Are there any bonds that need strengthening? Ask God for wisdom and growth in the ways that you show love specifically with your words.
- ✓ PRAYER God of grace, help me filter everything I say through a filter of love. Sometimes I find satisfaction in winning an argument, but in the end, what I want are strong, close, and loving relationships. Help me be slow to speak and quick to listen. Help me find satisfaction in carefully choosing words that build up others. Amen.

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GROUP GUIDE

- ✓ **PRAYER** God, we acknowledge that you are already here. May our hearts be open to your presence and direction. Amen.

- ✓ **BIG IDEA** During this series, we could easily spend small group time debating the hot topics; however, since our goal is to build unity, the group discussion guides are centered around that concept. Unity in the church requires a common ground of the Gospel. The love of Jesus is what unites us and brings us peace. He himself is our peace, and the ways he taught us to live are key to bringing us together.

- ✓ **DISCUSS**
 - When you hear the word "peace" what comes to mind first?

 - Read Ephesians 2:14-22 aloud. When we hear that Christ himself is our peace, we might tend to think of inner peace. But in this context, Christ is the unification that ends the hostility between Jews and Gentiles (non-Jewish people). The implication is that hostility and division between people groups is something that concerns God! What does this imply for the church? If we agree on the major things like the life, death, and resurrection of Christ as the source of love, grace, and peace, does justification exist for division over other issues?

 - Galatians 5:20-23 says, "But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!" [NLT] Do you think it is possible for us to truly live peacefully without the ways of Christ present in our lives and relationships?

 - How might our political climate change if our political discussions were laced with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control? Have you ever experienced such a discussion? Why or why not?

 - Do you find yourself separating these qualities of Christ from your political thoughts and discussions? What kind of difference might it make in our own lives and in the life of our church if we considered them inseparable?

- ✓ **Pray** Lord Jesus, we thank you that you do offer us inner peace, but let us not stop there. Help us always to remember that your love, grace, and peace is meant to bring people together, erasing hostility. Help us take this mission personally, creating unity in our relationships and in the Church. Amen.