



GOING DEEPER

DISCUSSION GUIDE

APRIL 14, 2019

Discussion Guide

EVERYDAY PEACEMAKERS

CONNECTING:

45 MINUTES

(THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE YOUR GROUP WITH A WAY OF CONNECTING WITH ONE ANOTHER SO THAT YOU MIGHT PARTNER IN THE WORK GOD IS DOING IN YOUR LIVES.)

- IN WHAT WAYS DID GOD MOVE IN YOUR LIFE THIS WEEK? IN WHAT WAYS DID YOU RESPOND TO HIM?
- WHAT WAS YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE THIS WEEK? IN WHAT WAYS, IF ANY, DID YOU INVITE GOD INTO THIS CHALLENGE?
- HOW HONEST HAVE YOU BEEN WITH US? (GRACIOUSLY THANK GROUP MEMBERS FOR THEIR HONESTY IF THEY STATE THEY HAVE HELD BACK.)

GETTING STARTED:

10 MINUTES

- WHAT HAVE BEEN YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH PEACEMAKING? IN YOUR MIND, HAVE THESE BEEN SUCCESSFUL? COULD YOU ELABORATE?

DIVING INTO THE TEXT:

60 MINUTES

(THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE YOUR GROUP WITH A SIMPLE ROAD MAP THROUGH THE TEXT. FEEL FREE TO USE THESE QUESTIONS IN WAYS THAT BEST FIT YOUR GROUP AND THE DYNAMICS OF YOUR OWN MEETING.)

- USING THE GUIDE, DISCUSS THE CONCEPT OF RANSOM AND ITS USE IN SCRIPTURE.
- READ MARK 10.35-45 ALOUD. PAUSE. READ THE TEXT ONCE MORE, SEEKING TO PUT YOURSELF IN THE PLACE OF JAMES OR JOHN. PAUSE. READ THE TEXT ONCE MORE, SEEKING TO PUT YOURSELF IN THE PLACE OF

ONE OF THE OTHER DISCIPLES. PAUSE. READ THE TEXT ONCE MORE, SEEKING TO PUT YOURSELF IN THE PLACE OF JESUS.

- AS YOU EXPERIENCE THE TEXT, WHAT IS IT LIKE TO BE PART OF THE SITUATION FROM THE DIFFERENT VANTAGE POINTS? WHAT MIGHT BE SOME OF THE RELATIONAL DYNAMICS INVOLVED?
- IN YOUR MIND, WHAT SEEMS TO BE AT THE HEART OF THE REQUEST OF JAMES AND JOHN?
- IN WHAT WAYS, IF ANY, DOES JESUS' ANSWER PROVIDE A MEANS OF ACHIEVING THE DESIRE OF THE BROTHERS, ALBEIT BY A DIFFERENT MEANS? COULD YOU ELABORATE?
- IN THE TEXT, JAMES AND JOHN WANT TO ACCOMPLISH THINGS FOR THE KINGDOM. THEY BELIEVE THEY NEED POWER AND AUTHORITY TO DO IT. JESUS ENCOURAGES THEM TO USE SERVICE, A GIVING OF ONE'S LIFE WHICH LEADS TO FREEDOM FOR THE OTHER TO ACCOMPLISH THINGS FOR THE KINGDOM. WHERE DO YOU SEE THESE APPROACHES IN THE CHURCH TODAY? WHAT IS THE RESULT?
- WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK LIKE TO APPLY POWER AND AUTHORITY TO THE PROCESS OF PEACEMAKING? SERVICE IN THE FORM OF GIVING ONE'S LIFE FOR ANOTHER? WHICH DO YOU FEEL MIGHT LEAD TO A LASTING PEACE? WHY MIGHT THIS BE THE CASE?
- WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK LIKE FOR YOU TO USE SERVICE AS A MEANS OF PEACEMAKING? IN WHAT WAYS, IF ANY,

MIGHT THIS BECOME TWISTED INTO A FORM OF POWER AND AUTHORITY? WHAT MIGHT HELP ONE TO AVOID THIS TWISTING?

- WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK LIKE TO PRACTICE THIS MEANS OF PEACEMAKING IN YOUR GROUP? IN YOUR COMMUNITY OF FAITH?
- CONSIDER CONCLUDING BY ENCOURAGING ONE ANOTHER ON THE JOURNEY OF PEACEMAKING.

CONTEXT, BACKGROUND, AND COMMENTARY

RANSOM THEORY OF ATONEMENT

ONE OF THE EARLIEST METAPHORS THE CHURCH USED TO DESCRIBE THE WORK OF CHRIST WAS THAT OF RANSOM, LIKELY BECAUSE JESUS HIMSELF USED THIS LANGUAGE TO DESCRIBE HIS WORK (MARK 10.45; MATTHEW 20.28; 1 TIMOTHY 2.6) HOWEVER, THE WORD ITSELF HAS ITS ROOTS IN THE ANCIENT, NON-LITURGICAL PRACTICE OF FREEING A PERSON FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF SERVITUDE OR BONDAGE. IN THE GRECO-ROMAN WORLD, SLAVERY WAS NOT A POSITION FROM WHICH ONE HAD NO ESCAPE. MONEY COULD BE RAISED TO BUY ONE'S FREEDOM. THIS PAYMENT WHICH SECURED THE FREEDOM OF THE ONE ENSLAVED WAS A RANSOM.

WHILE THE GRECO-ROMAN CONCEPT OF RANSOM IS FOUND IN NON-LITURGICAL SETTINGS, THE IDEA WITHIN LITURGICAL CONTEXTS CAN BE FOUND IN BOTH THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS. THE MAJORITY OF THE USES OF A RANSOM-MOTIF IN THE OLD TESTAMENT OCCUR IN DISCUSSIONS OF GOD REDEEMING ISRAEL OUT OF THEIR EGYPTIAN BONDAGE AND BABYLONIAN EXILE (DEUTERONOMY 7.8; ISAIAH 35.10). HOWEVER, THE IDEA OF THE OLD TESTAMENT KINSMAN REDEEMER FITS WELL INTO THE IDEA OF RANSOM (RUTH 4). WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE IS THAT IN THESE OLD TESTAMENT CONTEXTS, A PRICE IS PAID BUT THE EXACT NATURE OF THE PRICE IS NEVER MENTIONED. THE CENTRAL FOCUS IN THESE PASSAGES IS ON THE FREEDOM OBTAINED, NOT THE PRICE PAID TO OBTAIN FREEDOM.

JESUS' USE OF THE RANSOM MOTIF STANDS AS THE EPICENTER OF ALL OTHER NEW TESTAMENT OCCURRENCES OF THE CONCEPT. JESUS STATED HE WAS GIVING HIS LIFE AS A RANSOM

FOR MANY (MARK 10.45). IN THIS CONTEXT, THE PRICE PAID IS STATED: JESUS' LIFE. HOWEVER, NO FURTHER DETAILS ARE GIVEN, LEADING TO MANY THEOLOGICAL DEBATES CONCERNING TO WHOM THE RANSOM WAS PAID. RATHER, IN KEEPING WITH THE OLD TESTAMENT PRACTICE, THE FOCUS OF JESUS' WORDS LIES WITH THE FREEDOM OBTAINED, NOT THE PRICE PAID.

WHAT IS CLEAR IN BOTH OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT CONTEXTS IS GOD FREELY AND WILLINGLY PAYS THE COST OF FREEING HIS PEOPLE FROM ALL THAT ENSLAVES THEM, GOING SO FAR AS GIVING HIS LIFE AS PAYMENT. THEREFORE, A RANSOM THEORY OF ATONEMENT IS ONE WAY OF EXPRESSING THE REDEMPTIVE WORK OF GOD. HUMANITY FINDS ITSELF ENSLAVED AND GOD PAYS THE PRICE TO FREE US. AS WITH ALL THEORIES OF ATONEMENT (SUBSTITUTIONARY, VICTORY, EXAMPLE, AND OTHERS), THE EXACT MACHINATIONS OF GOD'S ATONING WORK ARE LEFT UNSTATED. WHAT IS BROUGHT TO THE FORE IS THE TRUTH THAT REDEMPTION LIES SOLELY IN THE REALM OF GOD, THE WORKINGS APPEARING DARKLY IN THE BACKGROUND WITH AUTHORS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT USING DIFFERENT METAPHORS IN THEIR ATTEMPTS TO DESCRIBE WHAT GOD ALONE HAS DONE.

THE TEXT

MARK 10.35-45: *GIVING ONESELF FOR PEACE*

IN MARK 10, JESUS IS IN THE MIDST OF HIS FINAL JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM (MARK 10.32). AS HE AND HIS DISCIPLES DRAW NEARER TO JERUSALEM, JESUS PERIODICALLY PAUSES TO EXPLAIN THE EVENTS WHICH ARE ABOUT TO TRANSPIRE (MARK 8.31-9.1; 9.20-32; 10.32-34). JESUS DECLARES HE WILL BE BEATEN, TRIED, AND EXECUTED BUT WILL RISE FROM THE DEAD ON THE THIRD DAY. HOWEVER, AS OFTEN AND CLEARLY AS JESUS ATTEMPTS TO EXPLAIN THE UPCOMING SCENARIO, HIS DISCIPLES FAIL TO UNDERSTAND, AT TIMES GRASPING ONLY PIECES OF WHAT JESUS HAS SAID, CASTING OTHER PIECES AWAY AS IF JESUS DID NOT SAY THEM OR WAS MISTAKEN (MARK 8.32-33). IT WAS DIFFICULT FOR THE DISCIPLES TO ACCEPT THE CONCEPT OF SUFFERING MESSIAH AND HOLD IT IN TENSION WITH THE CONCEPT OF VICTORIOUS MESSIAH. IN THEIR MIND, THE MESSIAH COULD NOT BE BOTH. AS THE CONCEPT OF VICTORIOUS MESSIAH WAS THE CULTURALLY ACCEPTED EXPRESSION OF THE MESSIAH-FIGURE

IN THE JEWISH PROPHETS, JESUS' DISCIPLES HELD TO THIS IDEA ALONE, AND RAN ALL JESUS SAID ABOUT HIS UPCOMING VISIT TO JERUSALEM THROUGH THIS GRID. JESUS WAS GOING TO GO TO JERUSALEM, AND WHEN HE GOT THERE, HE WOULD BE CROWNED AS THE VICTORIOUS KING. WHILE THERE MIGHT BE SOME STRUGGLES WITH THOSE THAT RESISTED (THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS), THE END RESULT WOULD BE JESUS SITTING UPON THE THRONE.

THE PRESENT SCENE FOLLOWS THE THIRD TIME JESUS HAS ATTEMPTED TO DESCRIBE HIS PASSION. AS WITH HIS PRIOR ATTEMPTS, HIS DISCIPLES MISUNDERSTAND. IN THIS CASE, IT IS JAMES AND HIS BROTHER JOHN WHO MISUNDERSTAND. HEARING JESUS DESCRIBE THE EVENTS WHICH WILL TRANSPIRE IN JERUSALEM, THE BROTHERS APPEAR TO HEAR JESUS DESCRIBE THE EVENTS WHICH WILL PRECEDE JESUS BEING CROWNED AS KING. IN ANTICIPATION OF THIS CORONATION, THE BROTHERS ASK FOR SEATS OF POWER AND AUTHORITY IN JESUS' KINGDOM. THEIR MOTIVATION IS LEFT UNSTATED. NEGATIVELY, THEIR REQUEST IS A BLATANT POWER GRAB. HOWEVER, THERE SEEMS TO BE NO MALICE IN THE TEXT. JAMES AND JOHN SEEM TO UNDERSTAND THE NATURE OF THE MESSIAH'S KINGDOM. IT IS PROBABLY BETTER TO UNDERSTAND JAMES AND JOHN TO BE ASKING FOR SEATS OF POWER SO THEY MIGHT PARTICIPATE WITH THE IN-BREAKING OF THE MESSIAH'S REIGN. THEY WANT GOD'S PLAN TO UNFOLD AND THEY WANT THE POWER AND AUTHORITY TO HELP MAKE IT HAPPEN. (SEE ALSO LUKE 9.51-56 FOR AN EXAMPLE OF THESE BROTHERS' DESIRE TO USE POWER TO BRING ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF GOD.)

RECOGNIZING THE BROTHERS' MISUNDERSTANDING, JESUS ATTEMPTS TO REDIRECT THEIR THINKING. HE ASKS THEM IF THEY ARE ABLE TO WALK THE PATH JESUS IS ABOUT TO WALK WHICH WILL LEAD TO HIS EXALTATION AS KING (PHILIPPIANS 2.5-11). IN THE CONTEXT, JESUS USES CUP AND BAPTISM AS SYNONYMOUS TERMS WHICH REFER TO THE FATE GOD HAS DETERMINED FOR HIM, A FATE WHICH INVOLVES SUFFERING (PSALM 75.8; JEREMIAH 25.15-29; HABAKKUK 2.16). JAMES AND JOHN READILY AGREE THEY ARE ABLE TO WALK THROUGH THE EXPERIENCES GOD HAS IN STORE FOR JESUS. KNOWING THIS IS FAR FROM POSSIBLE AND RECOGNIZING

THE DEEP MISUNDERSTANDING OF THE BROTHERS, JESUS STOPS TRYING TO REDIRECT THE BROTHERS AND SETTLES FOR AFFIRMING THAT SUFFERING IS A LIABILITY FOR THOSE WHO FOLLOW JESUS. HOWEVER, POSITIONS OF POWER AND INFLUENCE IN THE KINGDOM ARE FOR THOSE WHOM GOD HAS ALREADY DETERMINED.

WHAT IMMEDIATELY BECOMES APPARENT IS THIS CONVERSATION HAS BEEN HAD IN FRONT OF THE OTHER TEN DISCIPLES, THE RESULT BEING TEMPER FLARE. LIKELY WHAT THE OTHER DISCIPLES HEARD WAS NOT THE BROTHERS' DESIRE TO ENACT GOD'S KINGDOM BUT THE PRACTICAL OUTWORKING THAT THEY WOULD BE UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF JAMES AND JOHN. JESUS QUICKLY ADDRESSES THE SITUATION BY DESCRIBING HOW THINGS ARE ACCOMPLISHED AND ENACTED IN THE MESSIANIC KINGDOM. IN THE ANCIENT WORLD, POWER AND AUTHORITY WERE USED TO LEAD. POWER AND AUTHORITY WERE NEEDED TO GET THINGS DONE AS A RULER. HOWEVER, IN THE MESSIANIC KINGDOM, SERVICE, NOT POWER AND AUTHORITY, WERE THE MEANS OF LEADING, SEEING THINGS WERE ACCOMPLISHED. JESUS POINTS TO HIS OWN LIFE AS THE EXAMPLE OF THIS TRUTH. JESUS WAS A SERVANT, ONE WHO WAS GIVING HIS LIFE TO BRING ABOUT KINGDOM REALITIES, THE FREEDOM OF PEOPLE. IT APPEARS THAT JESUS' LESSON WAS LEARNED, AT LEAST BY JOHN, BECAUSE IN HIS FIRST LETTER, HE REMINDS HIS AUDIENCE THAT KINGDOM REALITIES ARE BROUGHT ABOUT BY LAYING DOWN ONE'S LIFE FOR OTHERS (1 JOHN 3.16).

REAL LIFE WITH BLAKE:

PEACEMAKING IS HARD WORK. IN MY MIND, MAKING PEACE SHOULD CONSIST OF BRINGING TWO PARTIES TOGETHER, TELLING THEM TO KISS AND MAKE UP. THE ONLY PROBLEM IS THIS DOESN'T WORK. IF I CAN GET THE TWO PARTIES TOGETHER, AT BEST AN AGREEMENT IS MADE TO STOP FIGHTING. AT WORST, THE WAR CONTINUES IN MY PRESENCE. IN BOTH RESULTS, PEACE IS NOWHERE TO BE FOUND. I HAVE WATCHED THIS SCENARIO PLAY OUT TOO MANY TIMES TO THINK IT IS SIMPLY THAT I AM JUST DEALING WITH HARD-HEARTED PEOPLE. I HAVE DONE THIS ENOUGH TO KNOW THE PROCESS ITSELF IS FLAWED. YOU CANNOT MANEUVER PEOPLE TOWARD WHOLENESS. YOU CANNOT MAKE PEOPLE RECONCILE. YOU CANNOT FORCE PEACE, AND THIS Baffles ME.

IN THIS WORLD, PEOPLE MAKE THINGS HAPPEN. THEY EXERT THEIR WILL, THEIR INFLUENCE, THEIR POWER AND THINGS

HAPPEN. ACTUALLY, WHAT HAPPENS IS REALITY IS BENT TO THEIR WILL. IF YOU WANT SOMETHING TO HAPPEN, YOU SIMPLY HAVE TO HAVE ENOUGH POWER AND INFLUENCE TO MAKE IT HAPPEN. PEACEMAKING DOESN'T SEEM TO WORK THIS WAY. IN FACT, THE MORE POWER AND INFLUENCE YOU POUR INTO THE PEACEMAKING PROCESS THE MORE PEACE BREAKING SEEMS TO OCCUR. SO, WHAT DOES WORK? INTERESTINGLY, SERVICE SEEMS TO WORK BEST.

WHEN I APPROACH A PERSON AS THEIR SERVANT, AS ONE WHO IS WILLING TO SPEND HIS TIME, ENERGIES, AND RESOURCES TO BRING FREEDOM AND WHOLENESS, FREEDOM AND WHOLENESS BLOSSOM FORTH. WHEN I APPROACH THEM WITH POWER AND INFLUENCE, THINGS FALL APART. I SUPPOSE I SHOULD NOT BE SURPRISED. IN THE FIRST SCENARIO, I AM FOR THE PERSON. IN THE SECOND SCENARIO, I AM FOR ME. BEYOND THIS, I SHOULD RECOGNIZE THAT JESUS ALREADY SAID THIS WAS THE WAY TO BRING PEACE, FOR THIS IS THE WAY HE BROUGHT PEACE. JESUS WAS FOR US, GIVING HIS LIFE SO WE MIGHT BE FREE, WHOLE, AT PEACE.

SO, WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN REAL LIFE? I AM JUST BEGINNING TO EXPLORE THIS. FOR ME, IT STARTS WITH SETTING ASIDE MY AGENDAS, MY FORMULAS, MY EXPERIENCES SO I CAN APPROACH A PERSON IN AN OPEN-HANDED WAY. THIS IS HARDER THAN IT SOUNDS FOR ME. I FIND I HAVE AN GREAT WEALTH OF IDEAS, FORMULAS, AND AGENDAS FOR PEOPLE. AFTER ALL, I AM A BEAUTIFUL EXAMPLE OF A TYPE-A PERSONALITY. I HAVE A PLAN FOR MY LIFE AND YOURS. I AM FINDING, I DON'T STRIP THESE AWAY AS MUCH AS I BECOME AWARE OF THEM SO I CAN AVOID THEM. SECOND, I HAVE TO SEEK TO BE FOR THE PERSON, WHICH MEANS I CULTIVATE A WILLINGNESS TO GIVE WHAT IS NEEDED SO THE OTHER MIGHT FLOURISH. HERE I RUN INTO MY SELFISHNESS AND SELF-CENTEREDNESS. I DON'T LIKE THE COSTS REQUIRED TO SET SOMEONE FREE, COSTS WHICH I MUST PAY IN TERMS OF TIME, ATTENTION, DEVOTION, AFFECTION, AND RESOURCES. HOWEVER, WHEN I TAKE THESE TWO STEPS, I LOOK A LITTLE BIT MORE LIKE JESUS, AND AS PEOPLE EXPERIENCE JESUS, THEY EXPERIENCE PEACE.

REAL LIFE WITH YOU:

PEACEMAKERS MEND DIVIDES, BUT MENDING DIVIDES IS HARD WORK. WE HAVE BEEN TAUGHT THAT MAKING PEACE IS AS SIMPLE AS BRINGING TWO SIDES TOGETHER TO FACILITATE A PROCESS WHICH ENDS WITH EVERYONE BEING FRIENDS AGAIN. IT IS NOT THAT SITTING TWO PARTIES DOWN ISN'T PART OF THE PEACEMAKING PROCESS. IT IS THAT WHAT IT TAKES TO GET

PEOPLE TO THE TABLE BREAKS MORE THAN MAKES PEACE. IN THE SAME MANNER, WHEN WE ARE SEEKING TO BRING PEACE TO AN INDIVIDUAL'S LIFE, LEADING THEM TO PEACE REQUIRES MORE THAN MARKING OUT THE "RIGHT" PATH AND ENCOURAGING THEM TO LIVE IT. AGAIN, THIS OFTEN BREAKS MORE THAN MAKES FOR PEACE. WHY MIGHT THIS BE THE CASE? IN BOTH SCENARIOS, WE HAVE USED POWER, INFLUENCE, AND PERSONAL AGENDAS TO LEAD SOMEONE TO PEACE. SIMPLY PUT, WE ARE MOVING PEOPLE ABOUT LIKE PAWNS TO A PLACE OF PEACE. NO ONE LIKES TO BE MOVED ABOUT. PEACE IS A GIFT WHICH CAN ONLY BE RECEIVED AND WE CAN'T FORCE PEOPLE TO ACCEPT GIFTS.

SO, HOW DO WE LEAD PEOPLE TO PEACE? JESUS TEACHES US THAT LEADING PEOPLE TO PEACE INVOLVES OUR SERVICE NOT THE EXERTION OF OUR INFLUENCE. WHEN WE DRAW NEAR TO GIVE OF OURSELVES, IT IS DIFFICULT TO EXERT INFLUENCE BECAUSE WE ARE ABOUT THE PERSON, NOT OURSELVES. AS SERVANTS WE ARE MORE ABLE TO PAY ATTENTION TO REAL NEEDS NOT PERCEIVED NEEDS. WE CAN SEE PEOPLE NOT LABELS. WE SEE POSSIBLE PATHS FORWARD NOT PRESCRIBED STEPS. IN OTHER WORDS, WE MAKE ROOM FOR THE SPIRIT TO WORK, TO WORK THROUGH US AS A CONDUIT OF GRACE WHICH BRINGS ABOUT PEACE.

THIS WEEK, PONDER HOW YOU HAVE SOUGHT TO BRING PEACE AND ITS RESULTS. CONSIDER WHAT IT MIGHT LOOK LIKE TO DRAW NEAR AS ONE WHO SERVES, WITHOUT AGENDA, INFLUENCE OR POWER. IN SMALL WAYS, PRACTICE THIS WAY OF BEING. SIT AND LISTEN WITHOUT PROVIDING A QUICK ANSWER. NOTICE AND DRAW NEAR INSTEAD OF CORRECTING AND DIRECTING. BE WITH A PERSON IN THEIR PAIN RATHER THAN VIEWING THEM AS A PROJECT. IN ALL OF THIS, PRAY FOR THE SPIRIT'S GUIDANCE. NOTICE WHAT THIS IS LIKE AND TALK TO GOD ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE.



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