

# April: The Way of Peace

By Kimberly D. Reisman

Our world is not a peaceful place. On the contrary, it is filled with danger and strife, violence and pain. Jesus understood that reality. He knew human beings are fallen creatures. He knew we are broken and far from God's intended wholeness. The power of evil that flows from our fallen nature was no surprise to Jesus, which is why he taught that if we want to act as true children of God, we must love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matthew 5:44-45).

Following Jesus is about embodying a way of peace – being a peacemaker. This is not a passive endeavor. We are not to be peacekeepers or peace lovers. We are to be *peacemakers*: people who actively seek peace, actively endeavor to bring wholeness, actively work for reconciliation.

Because we are Christians, it is easy to assume we are the true peacemakers; we are the ones embodying a way of peace. A quick scan of social media, however, provides ample evidence of the hollowness of that assumption. We have dramatically watered-down Jesus' call to follow the way of peace. We have moved the demand to be peacemakers so completely into the spiritual realm that we no longer actually expect peace to become a reality in our lived experience.

And yet, Scripture tells us that peace is truly possible. The conflict, estrangement, anger, bitterness, unforgiveness, misunderstanding, and alienation human beings experience in our relationships is not what God intends for us. For that reason, Jesus Christ has broken down walls of hostility, reconciling people with God and one another (Ephesians 2:13-16). We really can experience peace in our relationships, the key is recognizing that the way of peace is intimately connected to forgiveness and reconciliation. We cannot experience peace without reconciling ourselves to God and to others.

This may seem like an impossible task, and it is without the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit enables us to claim the love that grounded Christ's self-giving on the cross as our ultimate value – a love that shares all the sufferings of the poor and weak while at the same time offering forgiveness to the guilty.

*Dictionary.com* defines a Christian as someone who “exemplifies in his or her life the teachings of Christ.” Jesus taught that peacemakers would be blessed and called the children of God (Matthew 5:9). When we follow in the way of peace, we are showing the world what children of God look like. We are living as children who have inherited the traits of their parents. This is a complex undertaking of great magnitude. And yet it holds great reward: to be called a child of God – *because we have acted like God*.

## **A Suggested Pattern of Prayer**

As you pray through the following prayer points, invite the presence of the Lord into your time of prayer. Each day's prompt has a Scripture reference for you to pray through. As you pray allow time to also listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying to you. When you have prayed through the Scripture and prayer point, you may be led to add your own prayers. Pray and consider what action steps might you take in response to the Lord's leading. Repeat this prayer pattern weekly for the month.

## **Daily Prayer Points**

**Sunday:** Pray through any divisiveness and anger, and toward reconciliation, remembering that eventually even Paul and Barnabas had to separate to continue their Kingdom work. (Matthew 5:44-47)

**Monday:** Pray through any bitterness and unforgiveness, and toward mercy and forgiveness. (Colossians 3:12-17)

**Tuesday:** Pray through any spirit of vengeance or ill-will, and toward genuine expressions of goodwill, planting seeds of peace and reconciliation. (James 3:11-13)

**Wednesday:** Pray through the tendency to accommodate Jesus into our worldviews, and toward being transformed into his way of life. Remember that following the way of peace is always an energetic and risky endeavor, filled with vigorous, complicated, costly, and insistent goodwill. (Ephesians 5:8-11)

**Thursday:** Pray through any self-righteousness, and toward a recognition that human conflict is never a clear situation of pure wickedness coming up against irrefutable good. (Ephesians 2:13-16)

**Friday:** Pray through any hardness of heart, and toward a willingness to restore community. (Matthew 5:23-24)

**Saturday:** Pray through worry, weariness, and discouragement, and toward the knowledge that God has begun a new work in our Methodist movement and will be faithful to complete it. (John 16:33)

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