

The Story of Pax

*A Six-Week Study on
Peace and Justice*



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We are Pax, a faith-based organization with the vision to transform the 21st century through the peace of Jesus. Our mission is to inspire and equip the next generation through slow, beautiful, Jesus-centered-content by people of color.

Through our content, artistry, we collaborate to create a better world. For more information about our discipleship materials or partnership opportunities, please visit us at madeforpax.org.

This guide is a beta resource that we are still refining. If you find any errors, issues, or have any insights into how we can improve this guide, please reach out to us at eli@madeforpax.org. We want this resource to last and we really appreciate your feedback.

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Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

Pax

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**A resource by and for
people of color.**

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With Pax —

Do you believe the world can be changed?

Your relationships mended?

Your past addressed?

Your future improved?

Our churches active?

Our land healed?

Our bodies protected?

Our politics reformed?

With Pax, this is possible.

With the Pax of Jesus--

All things are being made new.

With Pax, a better world is nearing.



Welcome

Welcome to the leader's guide for the six-session small group discipleship study called the Story of Pax!

In this guide we lay a foundation for why this study is essential to your setting and help you feel equipped to lead this study with confidence and humility. Whether you are a seasoned pastor or new to leading a small group study, we have designed this guide to equip you with the information necessary to do a great job in leading. We believe in you, and God has always used communal gatherings to explore and learn about amazing things together in this world.

We also offer some tips on leading a small group of individuals through each of the six sessions. Whether you are a paid member of a faith-based organization, a pastor, volunteer, grassroots organizer, or first-time leader, we hope this information will empower and equip you with some best practices for leading people in the way of pax.

A Little About Us

Who We Are

Pax is a faith-based organization dedicated to inspiring and equipping the next generation through slow, beautiful, Jesus-centered content created by people of color. We carry this mission out through a multi-sensory publication called the Pax StoryArc that offers a unique discipleship pathway that helps us become more like Jesus. We also resource faith-based organizations and the next generation with high quality biblical courses that will help us grow in just living and peacemaking in local settings. We believe that the 21st century can be transformed through individuals and communities banding together to promote peace and a movement of justice.

Values

We are guided by four core values that undergird and frame everything we do. You will see these values integrated throughout the Story of Pax course.

Story

We listen to and feature stories as the means of growing in our faith.

Simplicity

We strive to be understandable in all we create.

Solidarity

We stand with those who have experienced forms of marginalization.

Scripture

We understand Jesus and the Christian faith through the Scriptures.

Our Discipleship Pathway

We created a custom discipleship pathway that is integrated into sessions 2-6 of this course. The four path points of the StoryArc are *Manifesto*, *Myth*, *Material*, and *Motion*. Through each of these components, we unpack one big idea. These four *m*'s are meant to help the participant follow the chronology of the big idea from concept to call to action.



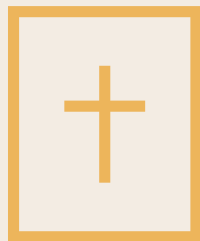
Manifesto

Proclaim the good news of Pax in the world.



Myth

Discern the lies and false narratives that surround us.



Material

Reveal the biblical witness of Pax in the world.



Motion

Participate in the active work of Pax in the world.



MANIFESTO

MYTH

MATERIAL

MOTION



The aim of Pax StoryArc is for a person or group of people to move through a process of ideas with a beginning, middle, and end. This discipleship pathway guides you through each week's class. From the opening Scripture reading (Manifesto) to the ending spiritual practice (Motion), these path points are the stepping stones that guide your journey with Jesus, God's Spirit, and your small group to learn how peacemaking and justice are central to faith and life.

We have a short video we encourage each leader to watch. Please also review weeks 2-6 to see how we designed each week around the StoryArc design. Be sure to watch the short video we made to explain further. Please visit madeforpax.org/storyarc to watch.

Our Pedagogy

Jesus-Centered

We center our content, message, and educational material around Jesus.

The one person we could all stand to focus more on is Jesus. If we could all divert a measure of our digital time in the direction of someone worthy, it is Jesus. We, at Pax, desire to center everything we do on the person, work, and kingship of Jesus. He is the hope, the solution, and our path toward peace. Jesus is our peacemaking King.

Slow

We believe in the slow movements of spiritual formation in a climate of fast-food discipleship.

We resist the type of fast-food spiritual formation that most Christian outlets offer. Online articles titled “Seven Ways To Live Like Jesus” or “Why Christians Should Not Vote For Senator Whoever” are more likely to reinforce your preconceptions than they are to actually form you into a new person. Outside of God’s immediate intervention in our lives, it takes much longer to change our hearts, minds, and feelings. If we are going to become different people and change the world, then we must sit with challenging ideas, critically engage with art, and build new habits of our heart that form us over time.

Critical

We believe that spiritual formation should be led and geared toward those who historically inhabit spaces from the margins.

It is the intention and goal of Pax to challenge anything that stands against the flourishing and peace of all people, including dominant cultures, and cultural narratives and expressions. Jesus promotes a spiritual formation that is suspicious of the norm, and we need voices of color to teach us how to be critical of power dynamics, colonial agendas, and spiritual darkness that bend toward an unjust status quo.

Beautiful

We believe that well-curated art and aesthetically pleasing content are key to changing the world.

What are the gateways to the human heart? The Enlightenment and the Modern Era taught us that if we have enough information, maintain crystal clear thinking, and produce enough machines to guard the world from war and hunger, we will be saved from the darkness that lurks under the surface of humanity. This experiment, however, has failed. The kingdom of God brings colors unseen, worlds unreached, and poetry unwritten that declare the peace of Jesus over all. This is resurrection. This is God's love and truth. This is the way of Pax. We seek to both illustrate and unpack this reality through unique digital experiences, using words, sounds, visuals, and creative resources to offer a new way forward.

Active

We believe in a spiritual formation process that connects our feelings and thoughts to a changed world.

Knowledge is useless without action. In our content, we emphasize putting truths, feelings, thoughts, and new forms of knowledge to work. We call our community to an active faith in Jesus that seeks to listen, learn, and live out the truths of Scripture. If faith without works is dead, then we want a faith that is active and growing.

The Story of Pax Overview

The Story of Pax is a very basic overview of God's story.

It provides a framework for following Jesus in the twenty-first century and has five sections: Establishment of Pax, Disruption of Pax, Call of Pax, Climax of Pax, and Consummation of Pax.

In the Story of Pax, we offer a holistic and integrated telling of the gospel that centers the person, work, and ministry of Jesus Christ. In theological language, we are putting forth a biblical theology of shalom that centers King Jesus Christ. That is, we are taking the concepts of peace (cessation of hostility) and justice (right living) and showing (1) how they progress through Scripture; and (2) how they relate to Jesus.

The goal of this course is to invite people into the story of God in order to see just living and peacemaking as central to Christian discipleship.

Those who participate will learn how they can live out the principles of peacemaking in their community, find the intersection of peace and justice in their own lives, and bravely embody the example of Jesus in a divided world.

The Story of Pax Course Design

This section explains our weekly breakdown, the design of the study, how the videos integrate into the lessons, and how our Pax StoryArc serves the flow of each week.

Minimal Leader Preparation

This study requires minimal preparation time from the leader and the participants. While we do want people to prepare, we understand that it can be hard to find time before the gathering.

Meant for Small Groups

The sessions are designed to be engaged in small groups of 3-12. If the group is fewer than three or more than twelve it might be hard to have robust conversations. If you have more than 12 people, we encourage you to break up the larger group into two smaller groups during the discussion questions.

Time Frame

Lastly, each gathering is designed for a duration of 1 to 1.5 hours. The time should be customized to your setting, the needs of your people, and your goals as the leader.

Weekly Breakdown

1. Weekly Topic
2. Preparation
3. Manifesto - Scripture Reading
4. Myth and Material - 7-12min Video (or reading)
5. Small Group Discussion
6. Motion - Embodied Action

Each of our weekly sessions follows a similar structure:

We (1) note the topic for the week; (2) encourage the participant to prepare themselves through prayer and reflection questions; and (3) have a Scripture reading that aligns with the topic. That Scripture reading serves as the Manifesto statement (declaration) for the week. From that point, (4) we have a 7-12 minute video that covers the Myth (lies we believe) and Material (central truths) for the week. The entire script from the video is written out in each booklet in the event you don't have the capacity to play a video or you would rather forgo the video. You always have the option of simply reading or having your small group read the printed transcript. The video is meant to serve as a prompt for (5) small group discussion questions. The discussion is the central part of this journey, where we encourage you to allow the Spirit of God to move you in the direction you should go. Lastly, we have a (6) Motion section where we encourage you to lead your group toward a concrete embodied action for the week.

Here is a bird's-eye view of the our six-week study

<i>Session One</i>	The Story of Pax	We are brought into the story of God to help bring about peace and justice for all.
<i>Week Two</i>	Establishment of Pax	God established a world flowing with peace and justice.
<i>Week Three</i>	Disruption of Pax	Humanity disrupts the peace and justice God established.
<i>Week Four</i>	Call of Pax	The prophets call the people of God to practice peace and justice.
<i>Week Five</i>	Climax of Pax	Shalom is restored through the person and work of Jesus Christ.
<i>Week Six</i>	Consummation of Pax	King Jesus returns to renew all things once and for all.

Common Questions

Do people need to read the materials before they arrive?

It is up to the leader whether your people are expected to read anything beforehand. There are good reasons to read and prepare beforehand, but it can also be special to enter into those components of the study together.

How much preparation do I need to do in order to be ready?

This depends entirely on you. We encourage you to read the leader's guide each week (see below) and also watch the preparation videos we have created for leaders. If you do this, along with the Scripture reading for each week, you should be ready to go.

Do I need to teach during each session?

No, we created videos for this reason. We want to take pressure off of any one leader from feeling the need to teach. In fact, we created the videos so that the discussion questions and Motion section are central to the time. The Story of Pax is meant to help each participant enter into group learning and group discernment so that God the Holy Spirit can reveal the ways we are to live in the world.

SESSION ONE

The Story of Pax

Desired Outcomes

1. Create a hospitable, fun, and safe environment for the group
2. Address possible ground rules of conversation
3. Give overview of the Story of Pax

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Starting Wisdom to Consider

The first gathering is often the most important one. We encourage you to create a warm, friendly, and fun environment where each person can feel comfortable to journey with others. Here are some ways to do that: (1) allow for extra time in the beginning if people are talking; (2) allow for extra time at the end; (3) share a meal; (4) ask people why they have come and what they want to learn from the experience; or (5) look up some icebreaker games that are not too cheesy. You got this!

Starting Wisdom to Consider (cont.)

Honor Confidentiality

We encourage you to foster an environment where the thoughts, feelings, stories, and truths shared in the sacred space of community are kept confidential. Set the tone by bringing up the importance of confidentiality and creating a safe space during the first gathering.

Stories are Sacred

One value at Pax is story. Sharing stories, listening to stories, and being challenged through new narratives are so very important to our development as Christians and as humans. We encourage you as a leader to foster an environment where people feel safe and free to share their stories, big and small, within this study. Remember that stories are messy, filled with emotion, and can pull the conversation in a different direction than you may have anticipated. Where some small groups studies might see the sharing of stories as a sidetracking progress, we believe stories are central to the desired outcomes of each week.

Celebrate Inquiry

We encourage you to embrace and celebrate new thoughts, ideas, and questions expressed by people during your time together. Questions are central to learning, sharing, and growing as a group. Be sure to leave ample time for questions and free yourself of the pressure of always needing to have an answer.

Using the Motion Section (weekly embodied practice)

At the end of each week's session, we've included an embodied practice called Motion. We encourage you to decide how you will use the Motion section for each week. Here are a few suggested options: (1) engage the Motion material as a send-off benediction; (2) enter into the practice as a group; (3) enter into the practice in smaller groups; or (4) encourage participants to enter into the practice individually. However you choose to integrate these practices, we pray these pieces will help you carve out time to cultivate inner peace.

ADDITIONAL PROMPT QUESTIONS

- 01** In the video segment, Pastor Drew said that we should “expect God to show up.” In what ways do you hope that God will show up in this time?
- 02** What does it look like for God to show up with the peace and justice of Jesus?
- 03** What does it look like for the peace of Jesus to show up in your life right now?
- 04** After reading the overview for the Story of Pax, which section are you most excited to learn more about?
- 05** After reading the overview for the Story of Pax, which section are you least familiar with?

SESSION TWO

The Est ment o

Desired Outcomes

1. Discuss and understand the Establishment of Pax
2. Discern the needs of your group
3. Help the group understand the StoryArc

Establish- of Pax

The Big Picture

Teaching of the Week

The primary teaching for this week is based on the creation account found in the book of Genesis. The video and script are meant to help those in your study learn God's intention for creation, humans, and our relationship to God. We hope you can navigate the discussion to focus on how God has created us and how the world should be based on the Scripture reading.

Discern Needs through Discussion

Oftentimes small group studies are an avenue to understanding the needs of your people better. Moving into this week, we encourage you to begin discerning and learning the needs of your small group. These needs could include (but are not limited to) verbal encouragement, additional prayer, extended gathering times, financial support, connection to other followers of Jesus, or further resources in their journey with Jesus. Keep these needs in mind as you journey with your people.

StoryArc Learning

At the beginning of this leader's guide, we explained our PAX StoryArc. If you have not read that section or watched our video explaining the Pax StoryArc, please take that time now. We encourage you to walk your group through the StoryArc structure in this week's session so they understand the flow of each week.

Using the Motion Section (weekly embodied practice)

At the end of each week's session, we've included an embodied practice called Motion. We encourage you to decide how you will use the motion section for each week. Here are a few suggested options: (1) engage the Motion material as a send-off benediction; (2) enter into the practice as a group; (3) enter into the practice in smaller groups; or (4) encourage participants to enter into the practice individually. However you choose to integrate these practices, we pray these pieces will help you carve out time to cultivate inner peace.

ADDITIONAL PROMPT QUESTIONS

- 01** In the video, Pastor Drew says, "Justice is a part of our vocation." What does it look like for justice to be a part of your everyday life and vocation?
- 02** Genesis teaches that all humans are created in the image of God. What does it mean for humans to bear God's image?
- 03** This week's teaching brings up the word *flourishing* a lot. What would it look like for our relationships and community to flourish?

SESSION THREE

The Disruption of

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Desired Outcomes

1. Understand and discuss the Disruption of Pax
2. Attend to the possible heaviness of the content

Srup- Pax

The Big Picture

Teaching of the Week

The primary teaching for this week transitions the study from the ideal condition of creation to the disruption and corruption of creation through the sin of Adam and Eve. This week is a sharp turn from good news to bad news that everyone feels in their bodies, minds, and hearts. We hope that you can engage this week in a healthy way that allows you to cover the content and begin longing for restoration.

Heaviness of this Week's Content

This week is inherently heavy as a result of the content. We encourage you to acknowledge this when you begin your time, as the content and discussion may be hard due to the brokenness and trauma experienced by your group members. Please be attentive to the ways that discussing sin, the fall of humanity, and the disruption of pax can affect your people. While we don't shy away from difficult topics, we must be careful to perceive how it can affect certain people during this session.

Using the Motion Section (weekly embodied practice)

At the end of each week's session, we've included an embodied practice called Motion. We encourage you to decide how you will use the motion section for each week. Here are a few suggested options: (1) engage the Motion material as a send-off benediction; (2) enter into the practice as a group; (3) enter into the practice in smaller groups; or (4) encourage participants to enter into the practice individually. However you choose to integrate these practices, we pray these pieces will help you carve out time to cultivate inner peace.

ADDITIONAL PROMPT QUESTIONS

- 01** How do you see the disruption of peace and justice affecting the lives of your friends and community?
- 02** In what ways has creation been affected by the disruption of pax?
- 03** In what ways can humans take responsibility for the disruption they have caused?

SESSION FOUR

The Call of Pax

Desired Outcomes

1. Understand and discuss the Call of Pax
2. Foster conversations on justice



The Big Picture

Teaching of the Week

The primary teaching for this week focuses on the witness of the Old Testament prophets. We encourage you to explore the implications of a world that needs people to stand up for what is right. We hope you take the time to reflect on the various verses highlighted in this session that were spoken by the prophets. This week also points toward and anticipates Jesus.

Conversations on Justice

This week is a wonderful opportunity to talk about the topic of justice. We encourage you to press into the reason why the prophets needed to declare the justice of God in a difficult time. The questions below are a good starting point for robust discussions on the topic of justice. We encourage you to find ways to connect the work of justice to God and the story of God.

Using the Motion Section (weekly embodied practice)

At the end of each week's session, we've included an embodied practice called Motion. We encourage you to decide how you will use the motion section for each week. Here are a few suggested options: (1) engage the Motion material as a send-off benediction; (2) enter into the practice as a group; (3) enter into the practice in smaller groups; or (4) encourage participants to enter into the practice individually. However you choose to integrate these practices, we pray these pieces will help you carve out time to cultivate inner peace.

ADDITIONAL PROMPT QUESTIONS

- 01** Based on what you've learned thus far about the story of God, what is justice? How does it work? How do we pursue it?
- 02** What does it look like to pursue justice in this generation?
- 03** How does the story of God instruct us to pursue justice and peacemaking?

SESSION FIVE

The Climax of Pax

Desired Outcomes

1. Understand and discuss the Climax of Pax
2. Focus on how Jesus transforms the whole story
3. Prepare your small group for conclusion

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The Big Picture

Teaching of the Week

The primary teaching for this week focuses on the person and work of Jesus. We encourage you to read through the teaching and transcript to pinpoint the areas to cover during the discussion.

Focus on Jesus

This week is the climax of our course. We hope that the teaching makes evident that Jesus is the key to becoming a disciple of peacemaking and justice. We encourage you to press into the Scripture reading and begin to imagine with your small group how you can follow Jesus into the future he created through his death and resurrection.

Prepare Small Group for Conclusion

This is the second to last week of this study. We encourage you to bring this up with your group and begin planning your final gathering together. Small group members can have different expectations regarding how things should end and what the next steps are or are not. Consider having a conversation with your small group to discern how to conclude!

Using the Motion Section (weekly embodied practice)

At the end of each week's session, we've included an embodied practice called Motion. We encourage you to decide how you will use the motion section for each week. Here are a few suggested options: (1) engage the Motion material as a send-off benediction; (2) enter into the practice as a group; (3) enter into the practice in smaller groups; or (4) encourage participants to enter into the practice individually. However you choose to integrate these practices, we pray these pieces will help you carve out time to cultivate inner peace.

ADDITIONAL PROMPT QUESTIONS

- 01** How is peace made possible through Jesus?
- 02** What about the life and ministry of Jesus moves us toward justice and peacemaking?
- 03** What are practical ways that we can begin to follow Jesus in peacemaking and justice?

SESSION SIX

The Co mmatiation

Desired Outcomes

1. Understand and discuss the Consummation of Pax
2. Help develop takeaways for the group
3. Conclude your time together

Consumption of Pax

The Big Picture

Teaching of the Week

The primary teaching for this week focuses on how Jesus makes all things new. We encourage you to begin imagining how your small group can move to become more faithful disciples of peace-making and justice as a result of the future that God is bringing. This week should be full of hope and optimism as a result of what Jesus has done for us.

Develop Takeaways

The Motion section of each week has offered small glimpses of what an embodied pursuit of peace and justice could look like. This week is the perfect opportunity to help develop takeaways from your small group. You could: (1) develop an action plan; (2) plan for your next study; (3) plan a one-time event; or (4) celebrate with a dinner party. It is important for your small group to understand what the next steps are as well as have a tangible plan for how they will commit to pursuing peace and justice in their lives.

Conclude the Study

We encourage you as the leader to develop a concrete conclusion for your small group. We hope you can facilitate meaningful reflection by asking some or all of the questions listed below, helping your people to think through how they can develop a deeper fidelity to the story of God in the world.

ADDITIONAL PROMPT QUESTIONS

- 01** What personal takeaways do you commit to take out of this study?
- 02** What areas of growth have you seen in yourself?
- 03** What does “putting this study to action” look like for you in your relationships, at work, and in your community?

Further Resources

We at PAX have curated a collection of thoughtful, practical resources, including those listed below. For more information, visit us at madeforpax.org.

StoryArc Issue 01
Cosmic Peace

StoryArc Issue 04
Nonviolence

StoryArc Issue 02
Culture Identity

StoryArc Issue 05
Migration

StoryArc Issue 03
Scripture

StoryArc Issue 06
Mental Health

*Visit our Pax Marketplace for more resources:
madeforpax.org/marketplace*

