

SESSION FIVE

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 twenty-first 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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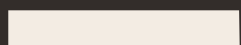
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**A resource by and for
people of color.**

**PAX
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The Clim of Pax



Establishment

Disruption

Call

Climax

Consummation

max

**This week is about the high point of the story.
This week is about God's rescuing work in Jesus.
It is about the Climax of Pax.**

Last week we learned about the prophetic call to pax. We explored the ways in which followers of Jesus enter into the legacy of just living and peacemaking. In Session Five, the story of pax now comes to its climax through King Jesus. When you think of all the suffering in the world, all the brokenness, all the pain, all the injustice--where do we find our solution? Who will walk with humanity and restore creation back to its rightful place? What does rescue look like?



Pulse Check

*Debrief last week's Call of Pax with your group
and the invitation to seek the shalom of your city.
Last week's Motion challenged us to learn about
the unique needs of our city or community.*

Share with each other your findings.



Preparation

To prepare for Session Five, follow the grounding practice and read the accompanying prayer. Be present with those you are with and be attentive to what God might impress upon you during this time.

Start with a grounding practice because the world we live in is always on the go. We're often expected to show up, produce, and execute. This is a time for us to come together and consider shalom—God's dream for us to be whole, flourishing, and at peace. In truth, shalom is God's dream for us to be fully human. This grounding practice reminds you to slow down, breathe, and invite the God of Peace to settle you before you begin with the group study.

GROUNDING PRACTICE

Light a Candle

Take three Deep Breaths

Inhale: God of Peace

Exhale: I am Here

Inhale: God of Peace

Exhale: I am Yours

Inhale: God of Peace

Exhale: I am Ready

Prayer

Jesus, come.

Into my confusion: Am I from here? From there?

Where am I from?

Jesus, come.

Into the guilt: "I can't believe you are forgetting Spanish!"

Jesus, come.

Into the invalidation: I'm the only Latina in this room.

I'm from everywhere and nowhere, forever longing for home.

I've been racing. I trip, fall, and bruise. Ignore it. Keep on racing - the grit of an immigrant.

And then at times, my vision fogs and fear overcomes my soul. I crumble. I despise everything I know.

".. [I] created [your] inmost being, [mi hija hermosa], [I] knitted [you] together in [your] mother's womb," Jesus tells me.¹

Open wounds, oh so real.

My King at the cross.

For me. For all of this.

His scars remain and yet He rose.

He's now sitting in His Heavenly throne!

Gloria a Dios!

1. Psalm 139:13

This prayer was written by Daniela Lancara Espinoza and originally appeared in Pax's digital prayer book, *Tethered: 21 Prayers of Pax for and by Gen Zers of Color*.

Manifesto

Peace and justice are restored through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Read Luke 4:14-30 and Colossians 1:15-20.

When the New Testament is written, Israel is under the weight of the Roman Empire, oppressed and subjugated in their own land. It is a dark moment in the life of Israel. They have not heard a word from God or God's prophets in four hundred years. God's people are longing for justice, peace, and salvation to be restored. The world is longing for the pax of God. Jesus is born into this world to recover what was lost in the garden. He comes to reconcile humanity's relationship with God, restore human relationships, and create a movement of pax in the world.

Jesus shows a broken world how to display the image of God. Jesus shows everyone through his life and teachings how to restore the pax of God. He embodies on the cross, in his self-emptying death, the very things he taught during his life. Jesus proclaims good news for the widow, the orphan, the poor, and those from the margins of society (Luke 4:14-30). Jesus even offers pax to his enemies, to those who oppress, marginalize, and discredit him. Perhaps most scandalously, Jesus calls all his followers to do the same.

Through Jesus' blood shed on the cross (Col. 1:19) and resurrection, God set about reconciling all things back to himself (2 Cor. 5:19). This is the ultimate means of bringing justice, of setting all things right. This is why Isaiah's and Micah's prophecies are said to be fulfilled in Jesus, who "is our peace" (Eph. 2:14; Col. 1:20; Luke 2:14). Jesus' resurrection is the answer to sin and death (1 Cor. 15:17; Rom. 4:25; 1 Pet. 1:3), and we now have the opportunity to be ambassadors of God's pax (2 Cor. 5:19-20).

Through the power of the Spirit, followers of Jesus live in the space between the climax and consummation of pax.



Video

(This is a 6-8 minute video experience.

For now, please read the video script below).

Video Script

by Pastor Drew Jackson

Jesus. This week is all about Jesus. He is where this story has been headed the whole time. The life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus is the climax of the story of pax. As you just read in the Manifesto piece for this week, Jesus came into the world to recover what had been lost in the garden, to restore humanity back to who we were created to be, and to pick up the ball that we have dropped over and over again. We talked about the prophets last week and how they issued the call of pax to God's people. But one of the things the prophets also did was tell the people that there was One who was coming, God's Messiah, who was going to usher in the restoration that they had been longing for. When Jesus comes on the scene, he lets the world know that he is that Messiah, God's anointed one who is going to bring pax back to existence.

But the peace that Jesus brings isn't like that of other kings and rulers. See, the empires of this world promise us peace if we do things for them in return. If we go along with the way of life that they outline for us, they promise us life, liberty, and happiness. If we fit into the mold of their ideal citizen--a citizen who falls in line with their way thinking and doing, a citizen who has the right body, has the right legal documentation--we're good. But if you don't fall in line with the empire or you fall outside of their acceptable category, you will feel the empire's wrath.

That's what it was like for the people of Jesus' day who lived under the Roman Empire. Think about John the Baptist, Jesus' cousin who prepared the way for Jesus' ministry. In Mark 6 we read about the story of how John didn't just let King Herod and the governing authorities do their evil without holding them accountable, which was the expectation. You don't speak out against Rome. You fall in line or at least stay quiet, but John challenged Herod. He shed light on the evil and injustice that was going on and he ended up with his head cut off.

This same thing continues today. We don't have to look much further than Ms. Rosa Parks, who ended up behind bars because she wouldn't stay in the place the empire had set up for her. Or we could consider the Salvadoran Archbishop Óscar Romero", who challenged the Salvadoran government's treatment of the poor and the abuses of human rights that the military was carrying out, and he ended up being assassinated while he was giving mass. The peace that the kingdoms and empires of this world offer is all about falling in line, not making waves, and using their power to force people to be content with the way of life that they've set up.

But the way that Jesus brings peace looks much different. Jesus refuses to coerce his way to pax, and in Jesus we see that shalom can only truly be accomplished by way of self-giving love, not through violence, not by the tip of the sword or the barrel of a gun, but through love that lays itself down for the sake of another. Throughout his life and ministry, we see Jesus constantly giving of himself for the sake of others, not holding onto his own rights, and using his power to

enable others to flourish and live. The ultimate display of this self-giving love is seen on the cross, where Jesus nonviolently resists the powers of death that hold sway in this world, and lays down his life. Instead of calling down fire on the heads of his enemies, he offers them forgiveness. Instead of cursing them, he prays blessing over them. Because, see, Jesus knew that hatred and injustice in this world are like a cycle. When we experience those things, we often give them back out in different forms, but in order for salvation to break in, in order for Pax to be achieved, something has to break the cycle. On the cross, Jesus broke the power of sin by refusing to continue its violent and retributive cycle. And through his resurrection, Jesus displayed that sin and death will not have the last word in this world. Life will win. Justice will reign. Pax will flood God's world once again.

Myth

Jesus only cares about our personal salvation and personal holiness.

See, I grew up in church and I heard about the story of Jesus from the time I was probably three years old. But the story that I heard wasn't at all about justice, peace, and God's action in the world to bring restoration. The story I heard was really all about me, and how I could go to heaven if I believed in Jesus and how my life could be better if I listened to Jesus. Those things are good and they're true, but they are incomplete.

And the problem is that when we are told half the story about something, the consequences can be dire. For example, if you grew up in American schools, you no doubt were told a history about the greatness of our founding fathers, the bravery of those who first established the colonies, Revolutionary and Civil War heroes, and how exceptional America is. But so much of the American story is left out or partially told: stories about cries from the hulls of slave ships, the bloodshed and forced migration of our Indigenous neighbors, Japanese internment, border patrols and detention centers, Chinese labor used to build railroads, slave patrols turned into police forces, and the list could go on. Half stories and half truths change the way you and I engage the narrative.

When we believe the story that Jesus is only about our personal salvation and personal holiness, we don't really have to care about the world around us, or, if we do, it's only for missions projects. We can be excused from combating injustice. We don't have to wrestle with our complicity in the systems of evil that hold our world hostage, and we can just sit back until we meet Jesus one day.

Óscar Romero”, who I mentioned earlier, famously said, “A church that doesn't provoke any crises, a gospel that doesn't unsettle, a word of God that doesn't get under anyone's skin, a word of God that doesn't touch the real sin of the society in which it is being proclaimed—what gospel is that?” I love what Romero is saying here. He’s saying that as long as the gospel remains my personal ticket to heaven and never touches the realities of our world--the injustice, the racism, the exploitation--it will be stripped of its power to transform, and it will never propel me to stand against the disruption of pax in our world. But when Jesus calls us to be his disciples, he calls us to do the work of pax with him.

Material

To be a disciple of Jesus means we must learn his way of making peace in this world.

In Matthew 5:9, Jesus says, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.” Being a peacemaker in this world is central to the call to follow Jesus. All throughout his ministry, Jesus actively chose to do the things that make for peace.

Consider the story in John 8, where Jesus put his physical body in between a woman about to be stoned and a group of men who stood as her accusers with stones in their hands. Or think about the story in Mark 3, when Jesus chose to heal on the Sabbath, in the temple, right in front of the religious leaders. He was accused of being a lawbreaker right then and there. That’s when they started to draft their plot to kill him. But, as Jesus suggested in his response to them, the most lawful thing that we can do is to make it possible for life to flourish instead of withholding life from others.

And we see no greater act of peacemaking work in Jesus than we do in his crucifixion, where he took on death so that we might have access to the fullness of life that God has always intended for all of humanity. To be one of Jesus’ disciples, to be a student in his classroom, it is required of us that we learn his way of making peace in this world. That means, when we follow him, we are going to find ourselves standing in the path of stones. We are going to find ourselves challenging unjust laws.

When we are restored back to right relationship with God through Jesus, our vocation, or purpose, is redefined for us once again. We make peace where there is no peace. We seek justice where people are being treated unjustly. We seek to mend the relationships in this world that have been torn apart by the power of sin.

There is nothing that is broken in this world that Jesus has not set out to restore, and he has called you and I to do that work with him. In 2 Corinthians 5, the apostle Paul says that those of us who have been reconciled, or made right, with God have been entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation.

Listen to the words of Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:17-19: "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us." In other words, we are made right with God so that we can work with God to make the world right once again. Jesus has called us and saved us for a purpose--to be about the work of pax in the world. You were made to be a peacemaker.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

01 Have you ever heard or been told that followers of Jesus shouldn't focus on justice?

02 What are ways that Christians (and by extension the American church) refuse to challenge the status quo today?

03 In what ways did Jesus disrupt cycles of violence, oppression, and injustice?

04 How can you join Jesus in his holistic ministry of reconciliation today?

Benediction

May you be blessed to receive the good news that, through Christ, you have peace with God.

May the Spirit cause this good news to be a balm for your wounds, to lift up your head, and to flood your soul with hope.

May you know that your reconciliation with God is not the end, but the beginning of a new life in which the reconciliation of all things is the end for which you live.

And may you, with the strength and courage of God, take up your cross and embody the self-giving love of Jesus for the sake of our world.

Amen.

Go in Peace. Go in Pax.

Motion

Visio Divina

_ a guide by spiritual director
Osheta Moore

The practice of *Visio Divina* (Latin for *divine seeing*) is a prayer practice that creates space to listen and pay attention to God in our lives. Based on the monastic practice of *Lectio Divina*, where the object of prayer is a passage of Scripture, *Visio Divina* allows the Spirit to speak to us through images.

Center Down: All of our Motion pieces invite us to embody our practices, so find a comfortable position and gaze at the picture on the next page. Breathe slowly and intentionally while gazing at it. Ask the Spirit to illuminate something specific in the picture: a color, an expression, anything.

Is there a place in the image where your eyes linger or that invokes a strong reaction? Pay attention to that. Don't overthink it or explain it away. There's something in that detail for you. Where do you experience resistance in the picture? Pay attention to any uncomfortable emotions you feel while gazing.

Pray: "Lord, help me be a sacrificial peacemaker like you."

Take a second, longer look.

Respond: What is the invitation in this moment of your life? In the day-to-day life you are living, what is God calling you to do or be? What insights have you gained? What invitation is growing in you? What work would you like to do today? Journal your reaction to the picture.

Gratitude: Thank God for the artist and this moment. Then take a few moments of stillness in this space.



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