



# Groups

## Thanks for checking out our sermon-based Study Guides!

If you've never used our Study Guides before, you'll find some basic instructions towards the end of the document.

- These study guides will be written by thoughtful and experienced Life Group Leaders.
- Use these guides as a head-start in your own preparation as the needs and culture is different from each group.

## NEW THIS YEAR:

As we enter this new season at Grace Chapel in search for the next Senior Pastor, we invite you to consider the significance of this moment and to incorporate a time of prayer for the search.

## Outline

- I. Introduction and Main Scripture Readings
- II. Group Discussion Questions
- III. Prayer for Senior Pastor Search
- IV. The Journey Resources
- V. Support for the Leader

## How to Use These Study Guides:

1. **Before the meeting:** Consider sending out the Scripture passage to your group members ahead of time.
2. **Check In:** Begin each meeting with a short time checking in with one another.
3. **Read Scripture:** You may want to begin the discussion by reading the Scripture passage together out loud, or by summarizing the passage if everyone has read it ahead of time.
4. **Ask Questions:** Don't feel like you need to discuss every question included in the Study Guide. Pick one or two to start with and see how the conversation flows.
5. **End with Prayer:** Be sure to set aside time for sharing prayer requests and praying together.

*If your group meets over Zoom:*

- Expect to do more overt facilitating over Zoom than you would in person. Feel free to call on people to invite them to share.
- Be sensitive to attention spans over zoom. Keep meetings shorter than they would be in person.

### Group Leader Support:

- Please reach out to your Campus Pastor if you have any questions about leading your group or concerns about your group dynamic.
- If you have questions about or feedback on the Study Guides, please reach out to Pastor [Tim Ghali](#) or [Grace Lee](#) from the Group Life team.

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## LIFE GROUP STUDY GUIDE

for Sermon given on December 3, 2023

by Pastor Bryan Wilkerson

### AND ON EARTH, PEACE – Isaiah 9:1-7



#### I. Introduction

Last week we concluded our teaching series on “Seeds of Grace’ and also celebrated our 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. We are grateful to all of you who have made a commitment to take a step forward your own generosity journey.

With all of the war and conflict going on in our world today, we decided that our theme for this Advent season would be PEACE. If ever the world needed a message of peace, it’s in December 2023. While we immediately think of peace in a global sense, our image for this series reminds us that peace is a personal matter as well. That every person in every household in every neighborhood and every nation yearns for peace.

Questions: What is peace exactly and when, where, and how can it be found?

Bottom Line: Whenever and wherever Christ rules, there is peace.

Let’s begin in prayer before we begin reading and discussing our text.

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**Main Scripture Readings:**Isaiah 9:1-7

**9** Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan—

**2** The people walking in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
on those living in the land of deep darkness  
a light has dawned.

**3** You have enlarged the nation  
and increased their joy;  
they rejoice before you  
as people rejoice at the harvest,  
as warriors rejoice  
when dividing the plunder.

**4** For as in the day of Midian's defeat,  
you have shattered  
the yoke that burdens them,  
the bar across their shoulders,  
the rod of their oppressor.

**5** Every warrior's boot used in battle  
and every garment rolled in blood  
will be destined for burning,  
will be fuel for the fire.

**6** For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.

**And he will be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**

**7 Of the greatness of his government and peace  
there will be no end.**

**He will reign on David's throne  
and over his kingdom,  
establishing and upholding it  
with justice and righteousness  
from that time on and forever.**

The zeal of the LORD Almighty  
will accomplish this.

## II. **Group Discussion Questions:**

1. Pastor Bryan began the sermon discussing current war and conflict in the world: from Russia vs. Ukraine, Israel vs. Hamas, and 32 active other armed conflicts. He reminds us no matter which category a particular conflict falls into, the consequences are always the same – death, maiming, displacement, trauma, and an overwhelming fear of when and where the next bomb will drop – literally and metaphorically.
  - Read today's passage Isaiah 9 (corporately or individually). What phrases stand out to you? What similarities do you find in what Israel was experiencing back then with what we are experiencing in our world today? What role did Isaiah play during his time? How does this connect with the role we as Christians, as the Church, are to play for present times?
2. Every person in every household in every neighborhood and every nation yearns for peace – peace in our hearts, peace with each other, and peace for the world.
  - Recall a time and place in your life where you experienced supernatural sense of peace in your heart.
  - What has helped you experience God's peace? What has hindered you from experiencing peace?
  - What did you learn about God's character during that time?
  - If you were to take a heart check, how is your peace level in your heart right now?
3. In Isaiah 9, the writer uses the "prophetic perfect" tense, describing future events as if they have already happened.

"You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy." (verse 3)

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given." (verse 7)

These are promises: they are about the future, but change the present by giving us hope. We can make it through just about anything when we know that someone has promised to make things right on the other side.

- Think about a time you endured hardship or suffering because of a promise someone / God made to you. What was the promise? How did the promise provide strength and hope for you?
- Think about a time you have shared God's promise with someone. Who is someone God is putting in your heart to encourage this week?

4. We can be instruments of peace every day. We can work for the common good in our daily jobs by caring for our loved ones, and by serving the communities we live in. We can also spread the good news by inviting people to Christmas services and events by volunteering at those services to create spaces for people to experience peace, and by sharing freely of our resources through the church or directly to those in need.
  - How is God inviting you to be a peacemaker this holiday season?
  - How is God inviting you to speak words of promise and hope, taking a role like what Isaiah did for Israel?
5. As Pastor Bryan was preparing this sermon, the song by Stevie Wonder “Someday at Christmas” has been playing in his head all week.

Before closing in prayer, share with one another what songs remind/speak to you about the peace of Christ. Feel free to conclude time of life group listening to a song in worship.

***Take Home Message:***

The message of Christmas is that SOMEDAY has come, because SOMEONE has come, and WILL come again. Someone called the PRINCE OF PEACE. And the PROMISE of that changes everything, beginning with you and me.

***Let's Pray***

### **III. Prayer for Senior Pastor Search**

During this next ministry year as we navigate transitions, we invite you to secure time during your life group to pray over the search process. Click [here](#) to access the full resource of the prayer guide.

**Prayers for Preparation of the heart**

- Pray for God to reveal to you the condition of your soul or the work of God's Spirit within you, as you consider your feelings about the Senior Pastor search process.
- Prayer is not just an opportunity to make requests from God, but to listen to what God might want for us during this season of transition. Pause and listen for any invitation from God that he is asking you to enter into.

**Prayers for the Purposes of God**

- Pray that God will use the people of Grace Chapel in the fulfilling of his mission to further the Gospel message and for us to be people of peace and healing in a broken world.

### Prayers for the People of Grace

- Pray that Grace Chapel will seek the Lord as we continue our vision to be a vibrant, growing, multicultural community of seekers and believers, discovering life with God for the good of the world. Pray that we will continue with our mission to make and mobilize more disciples for Jesus Christ in Greater Boston and beyond.

### Prayers for the Person God's calling

- Pray that they will have a passion to continue the work the Lord is doing at Grace Chapel and that they will be excited about the opportunities here.
- Pray that the new pastor will have a clear vision for how to minister to the people of Grace Chapel and the surrounding community.

### Prayers for Discernment

- Pray for God's clear direction in how resumes are examined and interviews conducted.
- Ask God to bring the right person to the attention of the committee.
- Pray for the Search Committee to have God's wisdom in all the questions and information they share with the prospective pastor.

## IV. The Journey



*We're all on a journey. Where is yours taking you?*

The beauty of the way of Jesus is that it's not just good for us, it is good for the world around us. But that kind of beautiful life doesn't come from just hearing the words of Jesus. It comes from putting them into practice.

Three kinds of practice, actually:

- The **with-God life** of our personal habits and routines;
- The **with-others life** of our genuine and life-changing relationships; and
- The **for-the-world life** that makes an impact beyond our immediate homes and families, into our communities and beyond.

Growing as disciples of Jesus will make a Kingdom difference in our world and a transformative difference in our lives as believers and as a group. And these resources are helpful in identifying the next steps for our journeys.

### Launching by the end of September: The newly, revised Discipleship Planning Tool

We invite your group to [take the assessment](#) and to spend a session to share about the practice and perspective you chose to focus on for the next three months.

## V. Support for the Leader

These Teaching Points are provided to help the group leader make connections from the message to their group with both insights from the Biblical text and opportunities in the life of our church.

### *Teaching Points:*

- Shalom – flourishing, justice, and harmony for all people everywhere
- The Prince of Peace is sent to wage peace, to resolve conflict, to turn enemies into friends, and to bring flourishing, justice, and harmony
- That’s how promises work: they’re about the future, but they change the present. We can make it through just about anything when we know someone’s promised to make things right on the other side
- You can find peace in your heart today
- There will be peace on earth someday
- We can be instruments of peace every day