

# Chapter 1

## Blessed are the Peacemakers

Opening Question: God designed us to live in full peace and to live our identity as peacemakers. Where do you see the need for peace in your relationships? In the world?

### OPENING

Open with prayer for the Spirit to guide the group during the entire meeting.

Take 20 minutes to get acquainted with questions like these (choose the most appropriate for your group)

1. What food do you miss from back home?
2. Tell us a little about your cultural & family background.
3. How would you like to grow as a disciple this year?

### INTRODUCTION TO THE GUIDE AND STUDY:

**SHALOM:**  
*the Hebrew word that refers to the peace and well-being that comes from right relationship with God, self, others and the earth.*

This guide is about peace-making with Jesus. To understand peace-making, we need to understand a word from the Old Testament: *shalom*.

*Shalom* is a Hebrew word that refers to the peace, prosperity and well-being that comes from the right relationship with God, self, others and the earth. The Father sent Jesus to restore the shalom that was shattered when people broke relationships with Him. Through his death, resurrection and sending of the Spirit, Jesus, our Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6), makes available to us peace with God and peace with those different from us (Romans 5:1-10, Ephesians 2:14-16).

One of the two winners of the Nobel Peace Prize for 2018 was Dr. Denis Mukwege. A Congolese gynecologist and follower of Jesus, Dr. Mukwege founded a ministry that helps women rape victims receive physical healing and restoration to society. He and his partners also work to end the use of rape as a weapon of war. Dr. Mukwege was an international student in Burundi and in France, and is a peacemaker with Jesus. We can't all win the Nobel Peace Prize, but we can all share God's shalom wherever we are.

## HEAR THE WORD

Our text begins with Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, where he gave many of his most important teachings. It appears that both Jesus' disciples and the crowds could hear the sermon. These words have commonly been called the "Beatitudes." Have one or two students read the text aloud.

Matthew 5:1-12 (NIV)

<sup>1</sup> Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, <sup>2</sup> and he began to teach them. He said:

<sup>3</sup> "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>4</sup> Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

<sup>5</sup> Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

<sup>6</sup> Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

<sup>7</sup> Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

<sup>8</sup> Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

<sup>9</sup> Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

<sup>10</sup> Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>11</sup> "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

### OBSERVE (What does the passage say?)

1. Are there any words or phrases that you don't understand? Imagine that you are among the disciples, listening and watching Jesus. What words or ideas do you hear repeated?
2. What contrasts do you hear?

### INTERPRET (What does the passage mean?)

3. *Context:* There is no English word that fully translates the Greek word for "blessed." It includes the idea of being congratulated and honored by God.

Verses 3, 6 and 10 mention the kingdom of heaven and righteousness. Understanding these two ideas will also help us understand blessedness.

The kingdom of heaven (or of God, as Mark and Luke say), is the rule or reign of God which has come near to the people in the person of Jesus.

Righteousness includes right and just relationships with God and people. We are not capable of righteousness because of our sinfulness, but we receive it as a gift of faith in Christ. Citizens of the kingdom of heaven will be righteous because of their relationship with Jesus.

Now that you have some idea of blessedness, the kingdom of heaven and righteousness, why do you think Jesus would consider all these groups of people blessed?

4. Look at verse 9. Why would peace-makers be called "children of God," do you think?

### APPLY (What does the passage mean to me and my community?)

5. Look through verses 3-8. Which of these characteristics of a disciple do you think Jesus would like to see more of in your life?

### RESPOND

Spiritual Practice: Doing Justice

We will eventually think about sharing God's shalom in our home countries and all over the world. But while we are going through this guide together, we want to share some shalom right where we are.

Q. What are some ways your group might be a practical blessing to your university, a specific residence hall, apartment complex, university department or even to the needy in your city?

Pray and do some research this week on what you could do. Will someone volunteer to contact officials and ministry leaders to see what possibilities there are? Come next week prepared to discuss and decide on your service project together.

**Memory Verse: Matthew 5:9**

*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.*

Memorize this verse in your heart language and English this week- we will share our verses next week at the beginning of the meeting.

## CLOSING

Close with group prayer for each other to grow to be more like Jesus as shared about in question 5, and for direction in finding a service project(s).

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

This chapter was written by Katie Rawson of InterVarsity-USA. She became involved with international students as an international grad student doing research in Paris, where she was part of the GBU, the French student movement associated with the IFES. Katie has doctorates from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Fuller Theological Seminary. She is the author of *Crossing Cultures with Jesus: Sharing Good News with Sensitivity and Grace* (InterVarsity Press). Katie has served among international students in the USA for over forty years, and she has a passion to see students living in and glorifying Jesus wherever God sends them. YeChan Park from South Korea, an InterVarsity campus minister in Hammond, IN, commented on the study.

## Facilitator's Notes

### Objectives of the Study

- To introduce the group to each other and enable people to bond well and become excited about going through the guide together
- To introduce the major theme of the guide-peacemaking and shalom-and the plan to do some service project together
- To help students understand the key concepts of the kingdom of heaven and righteousness and see the characteristics Jesus wants his disciples to have

### Notes on the Questions

Question 2: Contrasts include: mourn- comforted, hunger and thirst- filled, persecuted-rejoice

Question 3: The definition of righteousness as a gift of faith could be difficult for Muslim background students.

God gives honor to those who hunger and thirst for his righteousness and his kingdom.

Question 4: We talked about shalom at the beginning, and Jesus came *as* shalom. He brought reconciliation between God and humanity by his sacrifice on the cross, Jesus poured out—and pours out—his life out for us. Therefore, we as followers who have this shalom, can live out God's love and peace with others.

Question 5: As group leader, please be the first to answer this question. Your openness should make it easier for others to share.