

SESSION THREE

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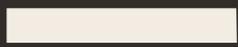
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**A resource by and for
people of color.**

**PAX
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The Dis tution of



Establishment

Disruption

Call

Climax

Consummation

Group - Pax

This week is about how things went wrong.

This week is about how creation was corrupted.

It is about the disruption of Pax.

Last week we learned about how God established peace and justice in the garden of Eden. This perfect combination of peace and justice is what we call Pax. Session Three explores how Pax was disrupted. We all know too well how the world is broken, how our bodies are broken, how creation is hurting, and how we struggle to cope with the brokenness we see around us. We will be pressing into “what went wrong” in order to begin imagining how things can “be set right”.



Pulse Check

Share with each other your dream of shalom.

Go around the group and answer this question:

(If you feel comfortable, pray for each other's shalom dreams.)

- 01** If money were not an issue and you had all the time in the world, what one brokenness would you address and how would you do it?



Preparation

To prepare for Session One, 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, breath, 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

**“All who hate me whisper together about me;
they imagine the worst for me.”
(Psalm 41:7)**

O God,

My soul's been abused by sin—mine and theirs.
Bitterness took root like wormwood, and though I've
confessed it, the shame lingers.

It whispers in my heart,
“You won't recover.”
“You're a fraud.”
“You're hopeless.”

My own heart plays the enemy, imagining the worst
for me. When I would come to you, I shy away. What
if all my “coming” is just fake?

O Lord, bring shalom to my broken soul. Please make
my feeble attempts to come to you mean something.

Manifesto

Humanity disrupts the peace and justice God established.

Read Genesis 3:8-21

Early on in human history, as the book of Genesis outlines, Adam and Eve decide to act outside of their design. They disobey God, feel shame for the first time, and hide themselves from God (Gen 3:8). The perfect Pax that God established was disrupted because of sin. And, as Paul summarizes, sin leads to death (Rom 5:12; 6:23), which is the opposite of Pax.

As the story of human history unfolds, we see a disruption in the relationship between God and humans (Gen 3:17-19), between people (Gen 3:15), and between humans and the rest of creation. We also see a severing of relationships with our own bodies, our very selves (Gen 3:14-19). This is what injustice looks like. It is when there is no harmony, no Pax. The life that God intended for the created order devolves into death and decay (Gen 3:19). These are all the result of sin (i.e., living outside of our original design).

However, from the book of Genesis onward, God initiates a plan of renewal and rescue. This is the process of bringing justice, of making everything right again, of restoring Pax. The plan of rescue is initiated through a man named Abraham, through whom God promises that all nations will be blessed (Gen 12:1-3; 18:18). How will this happen? God says that he has “chosen him [Abraham] that he may charge his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice; so that the LORD may bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.” (Gen 18:19).

God’s people, Abraham’s descendents, the people of Israel, embark on a journey that includes periods of slavery, liberation, wandering in the wilderness, inheritance of the promised land, adopting a system of kings, and eventual exile. All along the way, God provides glimpses of Pax, and God also promises to fully restore the Pax that was lost in the garden.

Video

(This is a 6-8 minute video experience.

For now, please read the video script below).

Video Script

written and spoken by Pastor Drew Jackson

As a kid growing up there were a lot of words that could've been used to describe me: I was tall, athletic, pretty shy, definitely a momma's boy, but the word that I would zero in on is the word curious. I wanted to know things. I wanted to know how and why things in history happened. Who did what? Why did they do that?

How is this event connected to that event? I would think about these things, not just from a world history standpoint, but also from the standpoint of my own family. See, growing up as a young Black American kid I always wanted to know more about where I came from. The farthest I could go back in my own family history was South Carolina. My last name, Jackson, is a name that is connected to some southern plantation somewhere. That's all I knew. But, see, my desire to know more about my own history and about where I came from wasn't driven by a desire to simply accumulate more knowledge, it was a desire that was connected to much bigger, cosmic questions about purpose.

The beautiful relationships that God had set in place at the beginning were severed. We live in a world of broken relationships, and the things that are meant to be in harmony are constantly being ripped apart. This is true on the personal level and all the way out to the systemic and structural level. We see the disruption of pax all around us. We see it when children are neglected in their homes and when they are separated from their families at the border. We see it in the ever-increasing wealth gap between rich and poor. We see it when women have to continually say, "me, too," and when "boys will be boys" is given as an excuse. We see it when encounters with law enforcement result in false arrests and brutality for so many people of color. And the list could go on, but all of these things are a result of the disruption of pax.

You know what it feels like to be in a place where the relationships just aren't right. It's toxic, people are on edge, stressed out, defensive, unable to rest, and it's certainly not an environment in which we can flourish. We even feel it in our bodies. When I was a graduate student living in Los Angeles, there was one evening I was driving home from a friend's house and I started to be followed by a police officer. And as he followed me for 15 minutes I felt the anxiety rising in my body because I wondered where this would go and how it would end. I thought about all the talks my parents had with me growing up about how to survive these encounters: keep your hands where they can be seen, speak in a non-threatening tone, don't make any sudden movements, make sure your wallet is in an easily accessible place so you don't have to reach in your pocket for it.

When I was finally pulled over the first words out of the officer's mouth were, "whose car is this," and I immediately knew what this was about. What is a black man doing driving a nice car around South Pasadena at night? He went on to harass me, accusing me of having the smell of alcohol all over me, and then he just let me go. I was fortunate to walk away that night with nothing but high anxiety and a traumatic experience, but folks like Mike Brown, Tamir Rice, Sandra Bland, Philando Castile, George Floyd, and Breonna Taylor cannot say the same. See, the ultimate result of the disruption of pax is death itself.

But there's an even more sinister side to this story that we've been sold. To believe that things just are the way they are doesn't seem like a big deal, but it has massive implications for how we engage the world, how we engage relationships, and how we engage our own selves. The story that things will always be this way is good news to those who benefit from the current set up of things, but what about for those who are constantly on the bottom and pushed to the edges? What about for those who are always being crushed underfoot? When we begin to believe the story that the status quo is all that there is, whether in our own lives or in the world at large, then there can be no hope, and when there is no hope there is no possibility for change. This is the sentiment that the great Harlem Renaissance poet Langston Hughes was getting at in his poem Dreams when he said, "Hold fast to dreams, for if dreams die life is like a broken-winged bird that cannot fly." When we lose hope, when we lose the possibility to dream, then the hope of change and transformation is lost with it.

Myth

The way things are are the way things are.

One of the stories that we have been told and that we have believed about all of this, though, is that this is just the way things are, and this is how they're supposed to be. This anxiety that I walk around with everyday, that's just how it is. Black men being disproportionately incarcerated, that's just how it is. Children spending their entire childhoods going from house to house in the foster care system, that's just how it is. Immigrants being mistreated and families being separated at the border, that's just how it is. Our Asian American neighbors being treated as perpetual foreigners, that's just how it is. We've all heard variations of this myth, and we've probably all found ourselves at one time or another telling some variation of this story. And I don't know about you, but for me this story has often been the only thing I know how to say when the brokenness of the world seems so overwhelming. I guess this is just how it is.

But there's an even more sinister side to this story that we've been sold. To believe that things just are the way they are doesn't seem like a big deal, but it has massive implications for how we engage the world, how we engage relationships, and how we engage our own selves. The story that things will always be this way is good news to those who benefit from the current set up of things, but what about for those who are constantly on the bottom and pushed to the edges? What about for those who are always being crushed underfoot? When we begin to believe the story that the status quo is all that there is, whether in our own lives or in the world at large, then there can be no hope, and when there is no hope there is no possibility for change. This is the sentiment that the great Harlem Renaissance poet Langston Hughes was getting at in his poem Dreams when he said, "Hold fast to dreams, for if dreams die life is like a broken-winged bird that cannot fly." When we lose hope, when we lose the possibility to dream, then the hope of change and transformation is lost with it.

Material

Jesus came to change our world for the better.

But when Jesus began his public ministry, as someone who knew very well what it was like to be oppressed and trampled on, and who knew what it was like to spend your entire life under the foot of the powerful, he came to tell us that things aren't supposed to be this way. Not only that, but that things don't have to be this way. In Jesus' first sermon in Luke 4 he quoted the prophet Isaiah and said of himself, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." This is Jesus' way of saying, "for those of you who have been told that things will always be this way, I've got good news for you. Change is here and it has arrived in me." All of us, in one way or another, are desperate for change. We're tired of the way things are, but Jesus has something to say about that. Jesus did not come to make us OK with the status quo, and to just have us accept the way that things are. The gospel, the good news, that Jesus brings is meant to shake us out of our complacency. In the coming weeks, we'll talk more about this change that Jesus has come to bring, and the part we play in this story that God is writing.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 01** How have you experienced the disruption of Pax in your own life this week (as well as in your life as a whole)?

- 02** In what ways are you tempted to believe the myth that the way things are just are the way they are?

- 03** As you look out at the world, in what specific areas does your heart long for things to change?

*Spend some time meditating on your answers from the Group Time Questions.
Write a prayer of confession in the space below.*

Benediction

*May God bless you with tears of lament
that mourn over the injustice of our world.*

*May you be blessed with a holy discontent
over the way the world is.*

*May the Spirit of Jesus shake you out of complacency
and fill you with all manner of hope.*

*And may you experience the transforming power
of God in your own life, in all the places
where you are desperate for change.*

Amen.

Go in Peace. Go in Pax.

Motion

Kyrie Eleison / Daily Examen

_ a guide by Spiritual Director,
Osheta Moore

The Kyrie translates into English as follows:

Kyrie eleison; *Lord, have mercy;*

Christe eleison; *Christ, have mercy;*

Kyrie eleison. *Lord, have mercy.*

This ritual song dates from early Greek (Eastern) Christian liturgies and has retained its Greek text in the Latin (Western) rite. In the Eastern tradition the Kyrie is still used in its initial capacity, as a response in litanies. By the end of the eighth century in the Roman (Western) church, the Kyrie was used as a separate song, often in a nine-fold form – a three-time repetition of its three lines, in which the priest utters the first line, the congregation or (more likely) a choir responds with the second, and the priest responds with the third. The Kyrie became part of the Ordinary (the unvarying parts) of the Roman Catholic Mass, chanted at the very beginning of the service.

Some liturgies of the Reformation continued to use the Kyrie in connection with confession of sin or with the reading of the Ten Commandments. Like other ancient biblical and liturgical expressions (such as "amen," "alleluia," "hosanna," "maranatha"), the Kyrie is a prayer that ties us to Christians from all times and places.

Psalter Hymnal Handbook

Find a rendition of the Gregorian chant Kyrie Eleison on your favorite music app or youtube this week and listen to it twice a day: Once in the morning and then again in the evening.

After you listen to it in the evening, consider practicing the Daily Examen. The Daily Examen is an Ancient Ignatian Practice of reflecting on your day and looking for ways you've connected with God's presence and opportunities you missed to create Pax.

FIVE STEPS OF REFLECTION

- 01** Ask God to give you light: "Open my eyes to your presence throughout my day. Let me see this day from your perspective."
- 02** Give Thanks to God for the gift of the day and the gift of the time to reflect.
- 03** Review the day. Invite the Holy Spirit to show you key moments through your day. Pay attention to your body's response. Pay attention to "if only..." or "I wish I..." thoughts. This is the Spirit illuminating to you your heart's desire for Shalom and maybe an opportunity you missed.
- 04** Face these shortcomings in the light of Jesus' love. Imagine the Lord examining your missed opportunity with love and patience on his face, not judgement and anger. Confess your missed opportunity and allow the Lord to offer forgiveness with this one line, "Go and sin no more".
- 05** End the time owning your belovedness. Say, "I am Beloved." How does this reality inspire you to seek Pax tomorrow in a way that allows another person to own their belovedness?

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