

Fruit of the Spirit: study 4 PEACE

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Galatians 5:22–23

The above is the verse we started with. Re-reading it, we remind ourselves that in fact all these qualities go together to make up the fruit of the Spirit and we shouldn't be producing any one of them without the others.

How it's going to work

- As this is going to be the basis for a virtual discussion, please read the Bible passages beforehand!
- We will not be able to share everything as we do in a face-to-face discussion, so please make some notes of things that were particularly important for you.
- We're also going to be thinking about how we can put what we've learned into practice and we'll pray together.

Introduction

Some questions to help get us thinking about peace:

- What makes you feel peaceful?
- What contributes to peace?
- What takes away from it?
- So, how would you define 'peace'? Is it just the absence of trouble or something more?

You might like to write down your definition!

To start with

Peace, *shalom* in Hebrew (see next page!), is an important concept in the Bible. Here are two examples, one from the Old Testament and one from the New.

Numbers 6:22–26 is the blessing that God commanded the priests to give to the people:

The Lord said to Moses, 'Tell Aaron and his sons, "This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them: "'The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace.'"

John 14:27 Jesus said [to his disciples in the upper room before the crucifixion]: *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."*

To think about:

- Why do you suppose the Israelites needed blessing with 'peace' (rather than, say, prosperity, health, happiness)?
- How would 'the world' define peace? Why do we need it? and with whom?

Going a bit deeper

The Hebrew word *shalom* is in fact a much richer concept than just the absence of strife. In **Psalm 72**, a state of 'shalom' is described (note that the word 'peace' isn't actually used). **Read the psalm.** The following questions are designed to help us understand the concept of 'shalom'.

- What will enable the state of prosperity talked about in the psalm (vv1–4)?
- Why are these so important (see vv 12–14)?
- How will this enable people (and the land) to flourish?
- Can you see modern equivalents? What are they?
- How can we work towards societies where everyone can flourish?

If you recall some of the readings we generally hear at Christmas, 'peace' (*shalom*) is something that is important: the coming Messiah will be "prince of peace" (see **Isaiah 9:6–7**), he will "guide our feet into the path of peace" (**Luke 1:79**) and bring "peace to those on whom his favour rests" on earth (**Luke 2:14**)

If Jesus is the prince of peace, then we need to ask how he brings peace.

Read Ephesians 2:11–22

- What was the problem for non-Jews ('Gentiles', 'the uncircumcised') (vv11–13)?
- How was that problem solved? And what has been the result? Who then do we now have peace with? And what is the implication of that for our church fellowships?
- Reflect on what a church fellowship would be like if it did NOT have peace... It is interesting that both Paul and Peter start all their letters with 'grace and peace', obviously things they thought essential for their readers!

Putting it all together

- If 'peace' is part of the fruit of the Spirit, how can we and should we be showing peace?
- Is it possible to have peace even when everything around you is threatening, chaotic and dangerous?
- How can we show peace to others (in our family, among our friends, church, etc)?