



LIVE IN PEACE WITH ONE ANOTHER: WEEK 12

Welcome to week 12 of the **One Anothers!** We get to talk about peace. Not world peace or even the peace of God, but the kind of peace that promotes unity between believers, specifically. In 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, verses 12-14, Paul is exhorting his readers about living righteously. In verses 12-13, he urges them to do three things regarding their spiritual leaders. He wanted them to recognize them, recognize their spiritual authority over them, and admonish them, which means to caution or reprove gently. Then Paul says to esteem them in love because of their labor on behalf of God's people. And then he wraps it up with the exhortation to "live at peace" with one another. In the context of this verse, Paul seems to be specifically saying for the body of Christ to be at peace among themselves, putting away trivial squabbles and fights, and by doing that, you are esteeming and loving your leader. I don't know if I've ever read it that way, but it makes so much sense. When we fight within the body, it causes more work for the leader and brings dishonor to the Church.

Although this is the context of this particular verse, there are many other verses that talk about living in peace with each other for the sake of unity in the body of Christ. Most of our study will focus on that aspect. Use any of the verses we use about peace for your own memory verse.

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22. I already mentioned that Paul is talking about peace and how it honors the spiritual leader. How do all the other exhortations in these verses do the same? What would we see if all these things were practiced within the body of Christ?

2. Read Psalm 133:1. What is God's heart for His Church?
3. Read John 17:11 and 23. What did Jesus say about unity?
4. What's the definition of unity?

Unity between believers is sometimes called "observable" unity, the kind that is seen by others, rather than "positional" unity which refers to our position and oneness in Christ as we accept Him in faith (Romans 5:1-2). The Church should demonstrate a oneness of heart, spirit, and mind.

5. Read the following verses on this kind of peace and summarize the passage.

A. Hebrews 12:14-15

B. Ephesians 4:1-3

C. Mark 9:50

D. Matthew 5:9

E. 2 Corinthians 13:11

F. 2 Timothy 2:20-23

6. What are some causes of disunity within the Church?

7. Have you ever been involved in a disagreement or dispute within the Church? How did you handle it? What did you learn from it? Could you or should you have handled your part in it differently?

8. In Paul's writings, he often dealt with the issue of pride and selfishness right before he exhorted the readers to live in unity. Why do you think he does that? (See Ephesians 4:1-2 and Romans 12:1-5 for example.) How do pride and selfishness destroy unity?

9. Why does the enemy seek to destroy unity? What does he accomplish when he does?

“Scripture tells us that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. But that doesn’t keep them from trying ...” (Levi Lusko)

- 10.** Hebrews 12:14 tells us to make every effort to live in peace. What does that practically look like? Does that mean never expressing your opinion or having a disagreement?
- 11.** I believe Paul is saying to be pro-active in seeking and keeping peace. Would you consider yourself to be pro-active in this? Do you struggle with holding grudges or avoiding people, or failing to seek restoration?
- 12.** Read Romans 12:9-21. If you are following all of Paul's exhortations, would that lead to peace? Would you say you are living in peace with all men as much as depends on you? What does that practically mean?
- 13.** Read 1 Corinthians 12. Explain the analogy that Paul uses to describe the body of Christ being "one." Write your thoughts.

14. How can unity in the church draw those outside the church to faith? How can “peace and unity” attract people to church as well?

15. How can disunity in the church push unbelievers away? How can fighting between churches also destroy the witness of Christ?

16. What about in your family? Is there disunity among family members? Are you doing your best to be a peacemaker and live at peace?

17. Okay, how about at your job, if you work outside the home? Do you promote peace or are you the one who always causes the issues?

Keeping peace within relationships should be our priority and we should be the ones to take the initiative to restore them. Not only if we are hurt, but also if we know someone is upset with us as well. Loving one another encompasses living in peace, respecting others, and putting them and their needs above our own. This is how we look out for the welfare of one another. This isn't always easy, right? Sometimes it's easier to just avoid the problem or the person. But that isn't the essence of loving our neighbors.

18. What can happen if we don't settle an issue quickly?

God made peace with us (Romans 5:2), gives us peace in our soul (John 14:27), and peace is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). Christ took the initiative to make peace with us. Because of that, we, then, can choose to extend that peace to others in observable ways. Again, we can't do this on our own, we need the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish this.

19. Are you in a situation right now that maybe you should be pursuing a peaceful solution? Can you pray and ask the Holy Spirit to show you how to do it?

20. This may sound very simplistic, but are you willing to say you are sorry to someone to start the process? Maybe a spouse, a child, or a co-worker? When Tom Holland was asked by a reporter what he thought his superpower was, he said, "Forgiving others. I try to be very quick to take responsibility for my part of the misunderstanding and say I'm sorry." Is that your superpower or is asking forgiveness difficult for you? Be honest.

21. In Ephesians 4:15, Paul says to “speak the truth in love.” How does this relate to living in peace and unity? Why is it important to:

A. Speak:

B. Speak the truth:

C. Speak the truth in love:

22. Paul says our motivation to speak must be love. Sometimes it’s to get even, vindicate ourselves, seek revenge, or simply because we are angry. If those are EVER our motives, what should we do before we speak? What can happen if our motives are wrong?

23. How is choosing your timing to speak important?

24. I recently read some “rules” on speaking the truth in love. Here are a few:
Get to the point quickly rather than drawing out the conversation or making the problem larger than it was, stick to the issue at hand, speak only to those involved in the situation, give the offender the opportunity to respond, be sensitive when you share as well as how you share. Can you think of any other “pointers”?

25. Okay, last question. Why is unity among the body of Christ so important to God? Why and how is He glorified through it?

Let's go make some peace, ladies! Ask the Holy Spirit to show you how to be a peacemaker this week.