

Peacemakers: Crossing the Divide



A Study Guide

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Peacemakers: Crossing the Divide - Study Guide

Introductory Session

The Peacemakers Study Guide is designed primarily to be a facilitation tool for group discussions. It can also be used by individuals who want to engage on their own with the issues presented in the documentary.

A facilitator's guide is available so that the person leading the group discussions can become more familiar with the issues.

The Goals of the Study

- By hearing stories from both the Jewish and Arab perspectives, each participant will develop a more balanced view on the issues that face our brothers and sisters in the Holy Land.
- From the biblical truths presented in the film, participants will discover practical ways to apply these to their daily lives, and within their families, churches and communities.
- Participants will embrace God's heart for reconciliation, unity, and peace in ways that further the kingdom of God now.

The study begins with an introductory meeting, followed by eight sessions. An optional final meeting is recommended for fellowship and discussion of the study's impact on the participants. Each meeting should last approximately 90 minutes.

- During the introductory meeting, participants will watch the film in its entirety. Each subsequent meeting begins with a short segment of the film, followed by questions relating to the content, and ideas for discussion and reflection.

- Every session ends with an application suggestion for participants to implement during the week. At the beginning of the next meeting, people will have an opportunity to share their experiences relating to the application, if they choose to do so.

- Each meeting should begin and end with prayer. This is especially important, as reconciliation and unity in the Body of Christ are subjects fraught with controversy and division.

Opening Prayer

Meet One Another

Share briefly with the group about who you are and why you are participating in this study.

Watch *Peacemakers Crossing the Divide* (approx. 60 minutes)

- How would you summarize the message of the film?

- What did you learn that you didn't know before?

- What impact did this message have for you personally?

Closing Prayer



Session 1 - Identity

Opening Prayer

Watch segment from 00:00 to 04:38 (*shot of refugee truck driving away*)

Identity is how individuals define themselves, or how others define them. This is often in terms of race, ethnicity, faith or culture. Identity is a major issue in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, and it influences the way people think and act.

- What are some of the ways you identify yourself?
- How do others identify you?
- Why is identity important?
- When can identity be a source of problems and divisions?

*"I have been crucified with Christ and
I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.
The life I live in the body,
I live by faith in the Son of God,
who loved me and gave himself for me."
Galatians 2:20*

- What does this scripture say about your identity in Christ?

The Church as a Prophetic Witness

Father David Neuhaus states that the Church is called to live as a "prophetic witness." He defines this to mean that *"It's to see what others can't see. To hear what others can't hear."*

- What are some of the the areas in our society/culture where the Church is called to be a prophetic witness?

- What are issues of conflict and division where you live?

- In what ways might God want you to be a prophetic witness?

Historical Narrative—an event communicated through the eyes of someone who has experienced it, or who is telling the story from the perspective of his or her people.

- Describe the two historical narratives presented in this film.

- What are some of the problems these conflicting narratives are causing?

- What conflicting narratives exist in your own family, church, community, or nation?

- What is often the response to a conflicting narrative?

- Think of some *positive* ways to respond to someone whose narrative conflicts with your own.

Application Session 1

Intentionally engage in a conversation with someone who comes from a different community or background. Listen to their story. Find out how they identify themselves.

Be ready to share your experience with the group in the next session.

Closing Prayer

Session 2 - The Land and Its People

Opening Prayer

Briefly discuss the conversations that you had this past week with people from a different community or background? What did you learn about how they identify themselves?

Watch segment from 04:38 - 08:45

(Arie says, "... the key word is to have compassion.")



Background

The majority of people living in the nation of Israel are Jewish, with a significant minority population of Arab Muslims, and a smaller population of Arab Christians and Druze. (The Druze are a distinct, Arabic speaking, religious community.)

One of the biggest questions in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict is "whose land is it?"

"It's my home. It's my heritage. It's everything. I wouldn't like to live anywhere else."
Etti Shoshani - Messianic Jewish Believer

"I love my land and I love the fact that I belong here. I love the fact that I live here, and I would never, ever want to lose my land."
Grace Al Zoughbi Arteen - Arab Palestinian Christian

- What is similar about Grace and Etti's perspectives?

- What is the major difference?

"I see God as weeping as He observes what's going on in this land."

Father David Neuhaus

- Why might God be weeping over the situation in the Holy Land?

- What situations in your own land, church, or family might be causing God to weep?

West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem



The area known as the *West Bank* is a section of land west of the Jordan River. It is where the majority of Palestinian Arabs live. In **1993** a peace agreement, known as the **Oslo Accords**, divided the land into three administrative areas. **Area A** comprises about 17% of the land and contains most of the Palestinian cities and towns. It is controlled by the Palestinian Authority's (PA) civil administration and security, though the Israeli army can access it at will. **Area B** (24% of the land) is under Israeli security control and PA civil administration. Most of the uninhabited land in the West Bank (59%) is designated as **Area C** and is under complete Israeli military and civil authority. The land divisions were intended to last until 1998 (five

years). As of yet, no final agreement has been reached. A growing population of Jewish settlers lives in Areas B and C. Many Israeli Jews refer to the West Bank as "Judea and Samaria." Most Arabs call it the "occupied territories."

Gaza is a narrow strip of land that borders the Mediterranean Sea, Israel, and Egypt. With a population of 2 million and growing, and a total area of 141 square miles (365 square kilometers), Gaza is one of the most densely populated areas in the world. Almost all of the population are Muslims, with a very small percentage of Christians (less than 2%).

The **status of Jerusalem** is one of the most highly contested issues of the conflict. From the Jewish perspective, Jerusalem is the indisputable capital of Israel. Palestinians,

however, hope that largely Arab East Jerusalem will become the capital of a future Palestinian state—a state that will include the West Bank and Gaza.

The Wall

- What is “the wall”?
- Why did Israel build the wall?



- How is the wall impacting the lives of the Palestinian people?

- In what ways does the wall contribute to greater divisions?

“One of the most important things is to know how to live together.

And the key word is to have compassion.”

Arie Bar David - Messianic Jewish Believer

- What does it mean to “have compassion”?

- Why is it important to understand the suffering of “the other”?
- In what ways are people in your own nation/community suffering because of conflict and division?
- What can you do to understand more about the suffering and hardships of “the other” where you live?
- How might your willingness to listen and understand them make a difference?

Application Session 2

Continue to spend time this week with someone from another community. Ask God to help you build a relationship with this person and their family.

Closing Prayer

Session 3 - Love Your Neighbor

Opening Prayer

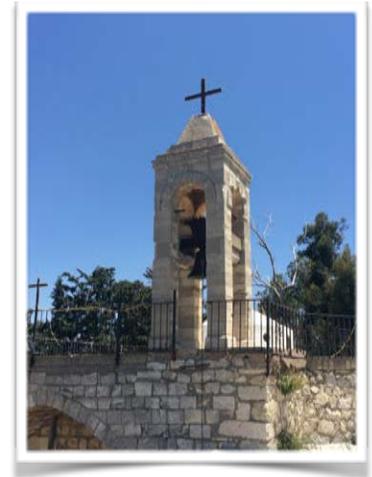
Share if you have been able to build a relationship with someone from another ethnic or racial community. What are you learning that helps you understand their community better?

Watch segment from 08:45 to 13:15 (Etti says, "... it's better starting with me.")

"The Lord is good to those whose hope is in Him."
Lamentations 3:25

The Story of Bir'am

- Was anything surprising to you about this story?
- From whose perspective is the story told? Might there be other perspectives?
- In the midst of great loss, how has the Lord been good to the people of Bir'am?



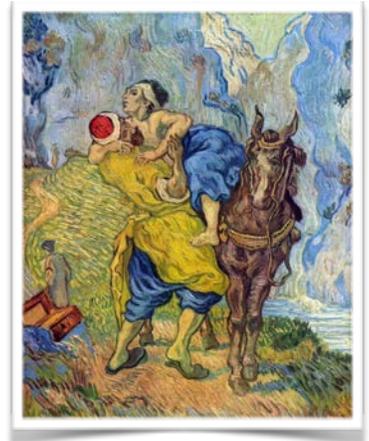
Pause to pray for other displaced peoples you know, or know about—that they would experience "hope in the Lord."

"... love your neighbor as yourself. . ."
Leviticus 19:18

Who is your neighbor?

Read aloud the "parable of the Good Samaritan."

"On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" He answered: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and



- Who are “the neighbors” in the context of the film?

- What application might this story have to the conflict in the land?

Personal Reflection

- With the story of the Good Samaritan in mind, who are your neighbors?

- What are the barriers that keep you from getting to know them?

Application Session 3

Ask God to provide an opportunity for you to be a “Good Samaritan” in someone’s life this week.

Closing Prayer

Session 4 - Stories of Hope

Opening Prayer

Share if you had an opportunity to be a "Good Samaritan" in someone's life this past week.

Watch segment from 13:16 to 21:06 (Rajaa says, "... something really healing for me.")

Background: What is (political) Zionism?

The term "Zionism" has a variety of meanings depending on the context in which it is used. Zionism as a political movement is credited to Theodor Hertzl at the end of the 19th century in Europe. The primary goal of political Zionism was to establish a homeland in Palestine for Jewish people around the world. In 1948 this vision became a reality by a unanimous vote of the United Nations. Since that time millions of Jews have immigrated (made *aliyah*) to Israel.



Laurel's Story

Laurel Sternberg is a Messianic Jewish Believer who made *aliyah* from America to Israel in 1995. Like many Jewish followers of Jesus, she felt called by God to live in the land of her heritage.

- What was Laurel's attitude towards Arabs when she first moved to Israel and why did that change?
- How has Laurel "crossed the divide" to demonstrate "loving her neighbor?"
- Laurel says she sees herself as a "*tendon in the Body of Christ—a connector.*" How can you be a "connector" where you live?

Historical Background to the First and Second Intifadas

Intifada is an Arabic word that means "uprising."

The **first intifada** began in December **1987** when many Palestinians began to demonstrate against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It ended with a set of

agreements between the Israeli government and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), known as the **Oslo Accords**. In 1993 the first accord was signed in Washington DC, and in 1995 the Oslo II Accord was signed in Taba, Egypt. Israel agreed to recognize the PLO as “the representative of the Palestinian people,” and the PLO agreed to recognize the State of Israel.

The **second intifada** began in 2000 with the collapse of the peace process and ended in 2005. It was a much more intense and violent period. It ultimately resulted in Israel’s plan to build a “security wall” to separate Israel from the Palestinian Territories.



Grace’s Story

Grace Al Zoughbi Arteen is a Palestinian Christian who was born and raised in the West Bank city of Bethlehem. She was a teenager during the time of the second intifada, which was particularly violent in Bethlehem.

- What does Grace find most challenging about living in Bethlehem?

- How is she living as a “person of hope” in her community?
- Try to put yourself in Grace’s situation—how would you feel?
- What can you learn from Grace’s story about living in difficult situations?

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven.”

Matthew 5:43-45

- How might things change when, like Grace, we “pray for our enemies?”



Rajaa's Story

Rajaa Grimberg is an Israeli Palestinian Arab Christian. Born and raised in Israel, she has faced unique challenges to her identity as an Arab Christian being educated in a majority Jewish nation.

- Because of what had happened to her mother's family, she struggled with the conflict of injustice to her people and her family. Can you recall what happened?

- As a Christian, the knowledge of this injustice was particularly painful. What did God reveal to her that brought healing to her pain?

Personal Reflection

- Have you, or others in your community, ever felt oppressed or discriminated against by the majority culture? As a Christian, how should you respond?

- Why do you think it's important for Christians living outside of the context of Israel/Palestine to hear these stories?

Application Session 4

Laurel had judged the Arab people without ever knowing an Arab.

Have you ever found yourself judging people without knowing them?

Ask God to help change your heart towards them.

Next week, if you are willing, discuss what God has revealed to you with the group.

Closing Prayer

Session 5 - God's Peace Plan, Jesus

Opening Prayer

From the previous week's application, share how the Lord has changed your heart this week towards someone you were judging, without even knowing them?

Watch segment from 21:08 to 28:41 (Wael says, "... you can touch by your heart.")

*"For he himself is our peace,
who has made the two one
and has destroyed the barrier,
the dividing wall of hostility,
by abolishing in his flesh the law with its
commandments and regulations.
His purpose was to create in himself
one new man out of the two,
thus making peace, and in this one body to
reconcile both of them to God through the cross,
by which he put to death their hostility."*

Ephesians 2:14-16



- Who are the two groups to which this scripture refers?
- Based on this scripture and what you have seen in the film thus far, how would you describe "God's peace plan?"
- Where does God's peace plan begin? How does it spread?
- What implications does this have for the conflict in Israel/Palestine? What implications might this have in your community?

The Church in the Holy Land

The communities of faith in the Holy Land date back to the early church. Most of the Christians today are Arab. The largest group is Greek Orthodox, then Roman Catholic and Armenian. Protestant Christianity is relatively new in the Holy Land and is a small but influential minority. The number of Jewish followers of Jesus, often referred to as Messianic Jews, is growing rapidly.



Jewish Believers

"Jesus was never a Christian. He was a Jew that was living all his life here in this land, and we are his followers."

Arie Bar David - Messianic Jewish Believer



- Arie's family were among some of the first followers of Yeshua (the Hebrew name of Jesus) in Israel. Why did some people see his family as traitors?
- How did Etti's family and friends respond when she became a follower of Yeshua?
- How important has community been to the Jewish believers struggling to practice their faith in an environment often hostile to their beliefs?
- Have you ever been persecuted or ostracized for your faith? How did you handle the experience?

Arab-Palestinian Christians in Israel and the West Bank

Israeli Arab Christians are a small minority group, within the larger minority group of Israeli Arab Muslims, within the majority Jewish population of Israel.

West Bank Arab Palestinian Christians are a minority within the majority population of Arab Muslims. The numbers of Arab Christians in Palestine have declined significantly since the establishment of the State of Israel.

"I like people to know about Arab Christians. Most people don't know that we exist at all."

Azar Ajaj - Israeli Arab Palestinian Christian

- What do many people think of when they hear the term *Palestinian Arab*?
- Has your perspective of *Palestinian Arabs* changed now that you've seen the film? If so, how?
- How might God use Israeli Arab Christians as a bridge in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict?

Arab Palestinian Christians in the West Bank

- What are some of the unique challenges and hardships Christians living in the West Bank (Palestine) must face that Arab Christians living in Israel don't have?
- Why do you think Christians are leaving Palestine?
- What do Arab Christians in Israel and Palestine want the worldwide Church to understand?

For Reflection

- How can Christians outside of Israel/Palestine be a blessing to their brothers and sisters—both Jewish and Arab—in the land?

Application Session 5

Read Ephesians 2:14-16 again. Are there groups of people in the context where you live to whom this scripture could apply. What are the walls that divide them? Ask the Lord to reveal how He might use you to help break down those walls?

Closing Prayer

Session 6 - God's Peace Plan, Reconciling Man to God

Opening Prayer

From the application in Session 5 – how might God use you to help break down dividing walls in your own community?



Watch segment from 28:41 to 40:15

(until the John 17:21 scripture graphic)

"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation."

2 Corinthians 5:18

- How would you describe this "ministry of reconciliation" that God has given to the Church?

"When God one day will heal the broken family of Abraham, when Jews and Muslims together will receive forgiveness, and will be able to see the face of God in each other, they're going to be a living model, a manifestation of what reconciliation through God means.

They're going to have an impact on the whole Body of Christ and the nations."

Marcel Rebiai, House of Reconciliation Ministries

- In what ways might reconciliation between Jews and Muslims have an impact on the whole Body of Christ and the nations? Where do Christians fit into this?

A Jewish Man Reconciled to God - David's Story

David Neuhaus is a Jesuit Priest from a Jewish heritage. He came to faith in the Messiah as a high school student living in Jerusalem.

- What was it about Abbess Barbara that had such a deep impact on his life? Have you ever met anyone like her? How did this person impact your life?



- What does this tell you about your own influence in the lives of others?

"How can you join them after what they did to us?"
Parents of David Neuhaus'

- To what were David's parents referring?
- What does this tell you about the obstacles Jews face in becoming followers of Jesus?
- Have you ever had to make a difficult decision, knowing it was the right thing to do, but that it would hurt the people you love the most? How has God redeemed that decision?

Jerusalem - City of Peace



Pause to Pray

*"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: May those who love you be secure.
May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels."*
Psalm 122:6-7

An Arab Man Reconciled to God - Jack's Story

Jack Sara is a Palestinian Arab Christian who was born in Jerusalem. He grew up in the Old City during the turbulent days of the *first intifada* (Arab uprising).

- What happened to Jack as a teenager that caused him to become angry, hardened, and bitter?



- How did Jack's life finally turn around?

- Have you ever been unjustly accused and punished for something you didn't do? How did this make you feel? What did you do about it?

Application Session 6

Ask God to give you the name of someone you know who needs to be reconciled to God. Commit to praying for this person regularly. Ask God for an open door to share the Gospel with this person.

Closing Prayer

Session 7 - God's Peace Plan, Unity

Opening Prayer

Watch segment from 40:15 to 51:26

(Ends with Etti saying, "peace starts within your own heart.")

On the same night before he was betrayed and arrested, Jesus prayed for his disciples. This is sometimes referred to as Jesus' "high, priestly prayer."

*"... that all of them may be one, Father,
just as you are in me and I am in you.
May they also be in us
that the world may believe that you have sent me."
John 17:21*

- Why is our unity in Christ so important?
- How are repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation related to each other? How does this contribute to our unity in Christ?

Reconciliation Man to Man



*"The power of forgiveness and the power of reconciled hearts in the Messiah is so impactful it changes you, and permanently."
Evan Thomas - Messianic Jewish Pastor*

Evan Thomas and Jack Sara were young men when they first met during a desert encounter run by *Musalaha*, a ministry of reconciliation between Arab and Jews.

- What was significant about their first encounter?

- How did Evan respond when he heard Jack's story?
- What effect did this response have on Jack?



"Living in unity is something that as believers in Yeshua, Messiah, Jesus as Lord, is a mandate."
 Lisa Loden - Messianic Jewish Believer

- True unity must be authentic - what does this look like?
 - What are some of the major issues that divide the Church?
 - What would you say are the essentials of Christian unity?
 - Unity is not uniformity. How can we walk together with our brothers and sisters with whom we disagree, sometimes strongly?
- Believers often have to pay a high price for their involvement in reconciliation and unity within the Body of Christ.
- Is this true in your own community? If so, give an example.
 - Why is perseverance so essential to unity?



Spiritual Warfare

*"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood,
but against the rulers, against the authorities,
against the powers of this dark world
and against the spiritual forces of evil in the
heavenly realms."*

Ephesians 6:12

- What is the main source of division between followers of Jesus?
- Spiritual warfare is especially intense in the Holy Land. Why might this be true?
- Why do Christians often take the side of either the Jews or the Arabs in this conflict? How is this detrimental to the Gospel message?
- What should our approach be?

For Reflection

- What might be the impact of a united body of Christ on the Israeli/Palestinian conflict?
- If the Church were truly united, what might the impact be in your community? ... in your nation? ... in the world?
- Where does unity begin? Why is it important to know this?

"The purpose of reconciliation is for the purpose of mission to a world that's desperate and would be lost without it."

Pastor Evan Thomas

- Do you agree with Evan's perspective? Why, or why not?

Application Session 7

Repentance and forgiveness are keys to reconciliation. Is there anyone with whom you need to be reconciled?

Ask God if there are steps you can take now to help bring reconciliation between you and this person.

Closing Prayer

Session 8 - The Kingdom of God

Opening Prayer

If appropriate, share with the group about steps you are taking to bring reconciliation into a broken relationship.

Watch final segment from 51:26 to the end



"When you can live life together you will experience life and reconciliation without having to put a word on it. It will just be."

Rajaa Grimberg - Israeli Palestinian Arab Christian

- What does this quote from Rajaa mean to you? How can you apply it in your own life?



Peacemakers

- "Peacemaking" needs to involve all generations. Why is it so important for children to have a part?

- How are these Kings Kids living examples of "God's peace plan" in action?

- What are some ways that you could help children in your community to become peacemakers?
- How might you be a living example of God's peace plan?

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."
Matthew 5:9

Pause to Pray

Spend a few minutes praying for Israeli and Palestinian children, as well as children you know, to grow up with the heart of a peacemaker.

Biblical Shalom

"Shalom means complete reconciliation and healing—all creation working in harmonious relationship with each other. This is the Kingdom of God."
Peacemakers: Crossing the Divide

- How are reconciliation and unity in the body of Christ a reflection of the kingdom of God?

"As we walk today in the paths of the kingdom we are bringing into reality the kingdom that is to come."
Lisa Loden - Messianic Jewish Believer

- What does Lisa's statement mean to you?
- How might this truth impact your daily life?

A Communion Prayer of the Early Church
From the *Didache* (80-90 AD)

*"Heavenly Father, as this bread and this wine
have come from many grains and grapes
brought together from the fields and
vineyards to be one,
so will you gather your people
from the ends of the earth
into one body in Your kingdom."*



- How does the metaphor of the bread and the wine relate to unity in the Church?
- What is significant about the fact that this is a prayer from the days of the early Church?
- What can you do in your community to increase unity in the Church and help bring more of God's "kingdom now"?

Conclusion

Discuss some of what you have learned through this documentary and study.

- How might this impact your life?
- How can you bring others along on this "Peacemaking" journey?

Final Application

Prayerfully commit to *living as a peacemaker* to the best of your ability.

Closing Prayer