Fighting for Peace | Get Rich #4

In his song "Imagine" John Lennon asks us to:

> *Imagine all the people*
>
> *Living life in peace*

Peace has been the hope of poets, songwriters, politicians, and everyday people since the beginning of time. Whether you are talking about peace between nations, tribes, ethnicities, or within families, people want peace. But when we look at the world, we don't find peace. We find fractured societies and people at war with each other. Is this quest for peace merely a poet's dream? Thankfully, the book of Ephesians shows us God's peace plan for everyone of us.

We tend to fight with people different than us

Before we can experience peace, however, we need to understand our problem as humans. We don't tend to get along with people who aren't like us. The Bible offers numerous examples of this: warring brothers like Jacob and Esau, racial prejudice like Egypt's hatred toward Israel or Jonah's unwillingness to help Nineveh, and the Jewish dislike for Gentiles, which was demonstrated in Peter's refusal to eat with Gentile Christians (Galatians 2:11-16).

Of course this wasn't just a problem 2000 years ago. In America, our nation is divided racially and politically. The progress of society has only brought a greater fracturing of society. Even among Christians, there has been racial prejudice. We have probably also experienced this personally. What kinds of people do we mistrust? Who rubs you the wrong way? How do you treat those people?

Peace starts with your vertical relationship

In the Bible, God offers his plan for peace. But it doesn't begin with a call for a peace conference. God doesn't just want to get both sides to the negotiating table. Instead, God wants us to look at ourselves.

> *Ephesians 2:11-12 Don't forget that you Gentiles used to be outsiders…In those days you were living apart from Christ. You were excluded from citizenship among the people of Israel, and you did not know the covenant promises God had made to them. You lived in this world without God and without hope.*

God asks Christians who want to find peace to remember what God has done in their lives. Ephesians explains how every person was lost in their sin. And Gentiles (non-Jews) were in an even worse predicament because they didn't know God, they didn't have God's law, and they didn't even know the real God. Yet, through Jesus Christ we can find peace (Ephesians 2:13-14). And Jesus offers us a true peace. The Bible depicts peace as a sense of wholeness and wellness of the soul. It's peace that transcends your circumstances and outlasts your power.

Peace extends to your horizontal relationships

Once you have experienced the peace that Christ can bring, you can extend that peace to others.

> ***Ephesians 2:14*** *For he himself is our peace who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.*

This verse is referring to the centuries old division that existed between the Jewish people and Gentiles. These two separate groups were made into one new body through Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:15-16). This power of the Gospel makes it possible for us to be reconciled to anyone. It also makes it possible for us to embrace people or types of people that we would naturally be at war with. With God's help, you can be a person who brings peace and extends forgiveness because Jesus has forgiven you.

Discussion Questions:

1. *Watch the video together or invite someone to summarize the topic.*

2. *What is your initial reaction to this video? Do you disagree with any of it? What jumped out at you?*

3. *What are some of the joys and difficulties of making friends with people who come from a different culture or background than you do? Share some specific examples from your own life.*

4. *Why is it hard to get along with people who are different than us, or come from a different background than we do?*

5. *Read Ephesians 2:11-12. What is a Gentile in this verse? Why was circumcision important for the Jewish people? Make a list of all the disadvantages that the Gentiles had according to these verses.*

6. *Read Ephesians 2:13. What do you think it means that Christians are "united with Christ"? How does this reverse the situation that Gentiles were in from verses 11-12?*

7. *Read Ephesians 2:14. How does the message of this verse undo the racial hostility between Jews and Gentiles that was current in Ephesians.*

8. *What does verse 14 say to people groups who don't like each other in 2016?*

9. *After hearing this message, how much do you think peace between different peoples and groups matters to God?*

10. *Write a personal action step based on this conversation.*