

PLANTING PRAYERS OF PEACE

CONNECT

**SANCTUARY FIRST
CONNECT BIBLE STUDY**

SEPTEMBER 2025

WELCOME TO CONNECT!

A Connect Bible Study is a small group who meet regularly to explore faith and life, growing in the things of God together as we go. Anyone can host one using these materials and contact us for support and guidance. Online or in-person, our heart is that they offer a relaxed space for faith, friendship and fun.

We hope the resources and discussion points encourage, inspire, and invigorate you on your walk with God.

It might be the conversation follows the discussion as laid out or heads in a different direction, both are wonderful and we hope the outline we offer here is flexible and supportive to engage with the Bible and our faith in fresh and vibrant ways as we make our way in the world as 21st century disciples exploring the wonders of life with Jesus!

WHAT IS INVOLVED?

Each week begins with an introduction and a 'seed to sow' conversation starter. These are open-ended prompts to inspire creative responses to the themes. Perhaps they will inspire you to write a song or a poem, or to paint, draw, move or explore! (We would love to hear how you get on with this!) We imagine the material for each week would work for 90 minute sessions but feel free to adapt to your group!

There are more songs, videos, podcasts and blogs linked to this theme on our **website** and **App**, have fun exploring it all!

PLANTING TREES OF PEACE

This month we open our eyes, ears and hearts to creation. We want to rediscover the seeds

of peace, the pathways of peace, the streams of peace that guide, nourish and sustain us.

We ask God to help us relearn how to live 'with' the earth and not simply 'on' it. In times of overlapping ecological, military and economic crises we want to rediscover resilience, restoration and revival: in our relationships with God, one another, and our world.

Our planet is beautiful, tenacious and vibrant and so are we. With God's help we can plant prayers of peace and let them grow.

This month we are inviting our Daily Worship writers to simply write a prayer each day without any reflection or preamble as we focus on planting 28 prayers of peace for a world that desperately longs for peace.

Does it change our lives when we begin with the principle that there is already a place where we belong, where we are understood, where we are loved, where we matter? How can this help us to shape authentic communities of love and respect where others can discover that they belong, that we are understood, that they are loved?

WEEKLY OVERVIEW

- **Prayer trees**
- **Seeds of peace**
- **Planting in tears, longing for justice**
- **True peace**

Thanks to James Cathcart and Albert Bogle for developing this material.

MEDITATION

In the crisp quiet
of morning
before the birds have stirred
be in stillness
be in God.

In the familiar quiet
of companionship
when no words are necessary
be in stillness
be in God.

In the thick quiet
that rolls across
the waiting room
be in stillness
be in God.

In the quiet of suspense
that comes after intake of breath
when multiple futures are possible
be in stillness
be in God.

In the eery silence
of empty rooms
and abandoned spaces
be in stillness
be in God.

In the rough quiet
of suffering
when hope and pain meet
be in stillness
be in God.

In the soft quiet
of memory
where heavy curtains fall
be in stillness
be in God.

In the broken quiet
of aftermath
before the ringing noise returns
be in stillness
be in God.

In the momentary quiet
before the key turns in the lock
before what happens next
be in stillness
be in God.

James Cathcart

PRAYER

LET US PRAY

Lord God, source of all real joy, Your word
teaches me the way of true life.

Your blessings await me when I awake and
gently lull me to sleep at night.

Your love surrounds me and encourages me
each day, whatever outward circumstances I
may face.

I thank You for the joy which wells up from
within me whenever I pause to draw on Your
strength.

I thank You for the freedom to rejoice, to be at
peace, to enjoy life, and for my joy to
overflow every day.

Amen.

John Povey

WEEK 1: PRAYER TREES

INTRODUCTION:

Peace is vibrant. Real peace is not humdrum and boring, it's colourful and radiant. A peaceful garden is one that is alive with life, full of oxygen and hope, teeming with plants and species. A peaceful meadow is a riot of diversity and activity. This week we pray for biodiversity instead of monoculture, vibrancy instead of idolatry — let's ask God for a biodiversity of blessings!

SEEDS TO SOW:

What's your favourite tree? It could be a species of tree or maybe it's a particular tree in your garden, or near you home, or that you pass on the way to work, or that you remember from childhood? Thank God for the trees of our lives and the peace that they bring.

READ PSALM 139: 1-18

A prayer of self-discovery.

As we read in this psalm we are — each of us — wonderful creations. We are intricately packed like seeds full of potential! And each one of us, like trees in a forest, are entirely unique. But, also like trees in a forest, we are part of a network that is bigger than any individual.

Do you have a favourite word or phrase in this psalm?

READ PSALM 1

A prayer of humility.

This psalm tells us that following and trusting God is like being a tree planted by streams of water.

What is such a tree like? What qualities and attributes would it have? And what can we learn from these trees?

READ PHILEMON 1

A prayer responding to the hearts God sends us.

"I am sending him, that is, my own heart, back to you."! How often do we want to snub someone, hurt someone, punish someone — and God, like Paul, says to us "I am sending my heart back to you, put the cost on me, I'll pay it, just take them back." Onesimus is to be welcomed back as an equal. This compassion is essential in the complex web of living on a planet with shared resources and a shared climate.

How can this reading inspire followers of Christ to be more forgiving and welcoming to the people God sends our way?

WEEK 2: SEEDS OF PEACE

INTRODUCTION:

This week we reflect on losing peace and finding peace. Sadly the consequence of conflict and evil is wilderness and desertification. But we are not beyond peace, we do not find ourselves somehow outside its reach. God's peace is at hand, he urges us to find the lost coins, the lost sheep, and go on planting seeds of peace.

SEEDS TO SOW:

What seeds is God inviting you to plant this year?

READ JEREMIAH 4: 11-28

A prayer of lament.

This powerful text explores how the consequence of evil is conflict and the destruction and desertification of the land. We have seen this in our own times as wanton cruelty towards people and the planet have caused devastation, war and erosion of natural habitats.

Part of planting trees of peace is being able to lament the peace that has been lost in order that we can move forward.

This is a challenging reading, what words or phrases stand out to you, or make you ask questions?

READ 1 TIMOTHY 1: 12-17

A prayer of gratitude.

Paul's dramatic conversion — from violent persecutor of the church to one of its most vocal advocates — must have been quite a

head trip for himself and for the rest of the early church.

What are some of the different ways his backstory would have affected people at the time? What mix of reactions would he have encountered?

READ LUKE 15: 1-10

A prayer of gathering.

Rather than planting peace, we are sometimes like the Pharisees; we judge from the sidelines and are more concerned with appearances and status. We don't want to risk contamination by mixing with the 'wrong people'. We would much rather hold them at arm's length and make the distinction between 'us' and 'them' clear.

But there is nothing arm's length or restrained about a shepherd tearing over the hillside looking for a sheep, or a woman turning over all the furniture for a lost coin, or Jesus having a noisy impromptu meal in the street.

And there's nothing restrained in how God loves us.

How can this reading shape how we think about mission, evangelism and sharing the life changing story of Christ in the 21st century?

WEEK 3: PLANTING IN TEARS, LONGING FOR JUSTICE

INTRODUCTION:

Our world is a beautiful place and it is our duty to care for it. We must work together to build bonds of peace. In our world we must lament what has been lost and work with the Holy Spirit imaginatively towards restoration. We plant in tears, longing for justice and to reap with joy. When we plant we expect something to grow. We don't plant with no expectation of growth. Even when we are planting in tears and sorrow there is hope.

SEEDS TO SOW:

As a global community what do we need to take time to lament and what do we need to take time to plant for?

READ JEREMIAH 8: 18-9:1

A prayer of mourning

Lamentation is part of building peace. Acknowledging what has happened as part of reconciliation.

The language in this text is highly emotive. What words or phrases leap out at you? Is there anything you find especially moving?

READ AMOS 8: 4-7

A prayer of urgent prophecy.

This reading is a warning to the unscrupulous that would use a crisis to take advantage of the needy and destitute. The Lord will not forget those who leverage war and turmoil to make a profit.

How do we balance the need for justice with the need for peace?

READ PSALM 113

A prayer of restoration.

Building peace, working on restoration, deep justice.

What do we learn about God from reading this psalm?

WEEK 4: TRUE PEACE

INTRODUCTION:

Our world offers false refuge and true peace. We pray Lord for the wisdom to know the difference and to rediscover the beauty of creation.

SEEDS TO SOW:

Whats acts of hope could we take this week?

READ JEREMIAH 32: 1-15

A prayer of hope.

Jeremiah buys a field. A prophetic, symbolic act to invest in a future he believes in despite the present turmoil. He is putting his money where his mouth is.

What's the difference between a symbolic gesture and an empty one?

READ PSALM 146

A prayer of trust.

What do you think it means when it says in verse 9 that the Lord frustrates the ways of the wicked? That's how the NIV translates it, how does your Bible translate that verse?

Who are the 'princes' in modern society who people put their trust in? It could be individuals but also technologies and systems.

READ 1 TIMOTHY 6: 6-19

A prayer of expectation.

"Building up treasure on earth does not ensure peace but building up treasure in heaven (through generosity and compassion,

see verses 18-19) does far more to ensure peace." — Discuss! And if you agree — why do we often seem to spend more time focusing on earthly treasure than heavenly treasure?