



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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### NOTE TO LEADERS

Books like this one are best processed in community. To help encourage such reflection, this section contains several discussion questions for each chapter. If your group wants to study this book during Lent, the next section offers a schedule that divides the chapters into weekly readings. Treat the questions in this section as conversation starters. Your group doesn't need to discuss them all, nor must they go through the questions in the order listed.

Begin each gathering with prayer. Then if time permits, before discussing the book, ask people to share how their week has been. Such a question is partly strategic. Members of your group may have strong opinions about the content of this book. After all, peace and violence can be sensitive topics. But if you start each gathering with a question like the one I've suggested, it can help your group see the humanity in each other. As a result, they'll be more inclined to listen with empathy to those with whom they may disagree. Finally, if you discuss all the questions and still have time remaining, read aloud the heading for one of the peacemaking lessons from the chapter and then ask people to share how they might apply that lesson in their everyday lives.

## CHAPTER ONE

### *THE KEY TO HOLY WEEK*

1. At the start of Holy Week, Jesus cried out, "If only you knew the things that make for peace." When was a time you saw a group or nation pursue peace in a way that made you weep?
2. How do you define peace? What does it mean to be a peacemaker?
3. This chapter claims that Jesus contended for peace on each day of Holy Week. Given what you already know of the week, what are some ways you see Jesus waging peace? Did Jesus say or do anything during the week that seems to run contrary to the way of peace?
4. What is one conflict or injustice that personally affects you or that you care deeply about seeing resolved? Keep this particular conflict or injustice in mind as you read the rest of the book.
5. What is your main takeaway from this chapter?

## CHAPTER TWO

### *PALM SUNDAY: OF HAMMERS AND LAMBS*

1. How does your church commemorate Palm Sunday? How has this influenced your understanding of the day?
2. What is something new you learned about Palm Sunday from this chapter?
3. Rome used the threat of force to maintain peace in Jerusalem during Passover. What role does force and the threat of force play in your own country's efforts—be they foreign or domestic—to make and maintain peace?
4. Considering the crowd's actions, what kind of messiah did the people expect Jesus to be?
5. How does Jesus' not-so-triumphal entry serve as a corrective to the crowd's expectations of him?
6. On Palm Sunday, Jesus moved toward conflict instead of dabbling in peacemaking from a safe distance. Is there a conflict you've been avoiding? What might it look like for you to move toward that conflict with the goal of cultivating peace?

## CHAPTER THREE

### *MONDAY: THE WHIP OF CHRIST*

1. Have you seen others use Jesus' cleansing of the temple to justify violence? If so, how?
2. Share about a time when you saw a person or group try to help someone in need without first assessing the situation. What was the outcome? Were their efforts helpful?
3. Is there a difference between pacifism and passivism? If so, what is it?
4. A quote (often attributed to Blaise Pascal) reads, "Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction." Do you agree? How have you seen others justify evil by claiming their actions were motivated by "zeal for God" or "righteous anger"?
5. Jesus' actions on Monday only temporarily suspended the temple's exploitative practices. The money changers and animal sellers inevitably returned. Given that observation, what role do you think symbolic actions play in our efforts to make peace?
6. What is something from the chapter you'd like to hear the group's thoughts on?

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *TUESDAY: TRAPS, TRUTH-TELLING AND TRAITORS*

1. “In our passion to lift up the cross,” the author writes, “we’ve accidentally uprooted it from its context and severed it from the life of the One who gives it meaning” (p. 64). When we separate the death of Jesus from the life of Jesus, what are the ramifications?
2. How has a dualistic worldview infected the church in your country? What would it look like for you to live as if everything belongs to God?
3. What are the implications of Jesus’ choosing the kingdom of God as his motto?
4. What does the sailing analogy in this chapter teach you about God’s love and our experience of it?
5. What woes are the powerless speaking over you? What would it look like to heed their warnings?
6. What is something you want to remember from this chapter?

## CHAPTER FIVE

### *WEDNESDAY: TWO ROADS DIVERGED, AND I TOOK...*

1. Caiaphas justified killing Jesus by claiming that his death would prevent an even worse outcome from happening. Have you seen others concoct a fictional future to justify their violent intentions? If so, give an example. Were you convinced by their claims?
2. “If you want to be a practitioner of Jesus’ approach to peacemaking,” the author writes, “then you must learn to see the means you use as nothing less than the end coming into existence” (p. 104). Do you agree? If so, what are the implications for how you’ll go about contending for peace from here on out?
3. Where you stand determines what you see. How should this observation influence the way we assess conflicts and work for peace?
4. If you live in a powerful nation with a massive military, what are two or three practical ways you can seek out the perspective of those on the margins?
5. Christian ethicist Glen Stassen has observed that crushed expectations are a leading reason why people turn to violence. How can this observation inform our strategies for assessing and ending violent conflicts?
6. What is something new you learned from this chapter?

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### *THURSDAY: A COMMUNITY CONCEIVED*

1. Tell of a time you experienced the love of Christ in community.
2. The author writes, “Christian peacemakers should strive to form communities that model on a small scale the peace they seek to cultivate on a grand scale” (p. 130). Do you agree? If so, how will this insight change the way you work for peace?
3. The first half of this chapter focuses on the new love command that Jesus gave during the Last Supper. What else can we learn from the Last Supper about Jesus’ approach to peacemaking?
4. When it comes to peacemaking, we often focus on individual exemplars of nonviolence like Rosa Parks, Dr. King, and Gandhi. Have you seen any communities model peacemaking well? If so, tell about one such community.
5. On Maundy Thursday, Jesus commanded Peter, “Put your sword back in its place, for all who draw the sword will die by the sword” (Matthew 26:52). What are the implications of this command for Christians today?
6. What stands out to you from this chapter?

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### *FRIDAY: WHO HOLDS THE HAMMER?*

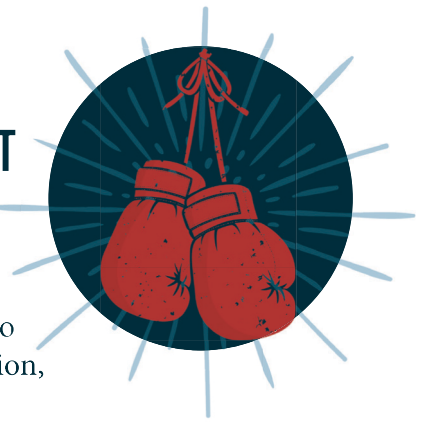
1. Jesus had a chance to die like a scapegoat on the Day of Atonement, but he chose instead to lay down his life on Passover. What are the implications of this observation? What role does forgiveness play in God’s liberating work?
2. Why is it wrong to say that Jesus saves us from God?
3. Share about someone you know who lives by a spirit of mercy. What effect has this person had on others?
4. One of the boldest statements in the book is, “If we choose the Barabbas way of making peace, we have rejected Jesus. And conversely, to embrace the Jesus way of making peace, we must reject the Barabbas alternative” (p. 155). Do you agree? Share your thoughts with the group.
5. In the aftermath of apartheid in South Africa, Archbishop Desmond Tutu often remarked, “There is no future without forgiveness.” What do you think he meant by this? How have you seen forgiveness break the cycle of violence? How have you seen forgiveness used as a cop-out to let injustice continue?
6. What was most memorable for you from this chapter?

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### *SATURDAY AND SUNDAY: PEACE BE WITH YOU*

1. What thoughts or feelings did the early Christian teaching on Christ's descent into hell conjure up in you?
2. Peacemaking can be hard, discouraging work. Yet Holy Saturday reminds us to press on even when it feels as if God is absent and hate has won. If you're willing, share about a season in your life that felt like Holy Saturday. Did Sunday ever come? If not yet, how can the group pray and support you during this trying time?
3. Eberhard Arnold, cofounder of the Bruderhof, once wrote, "The church's present character must proclaim its future goal." What do you think he meant by this? How should this shape the way we work for peace?
4. How has your understanding of Holy Week deepened through the reading of this book? How, if at all, has it changed?
5. Now that you've seen how Jesus made peace during Holy Week, what will you do with this knowledge? How will it change the way you contend for peace from here on out?

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK DURING LENT



This book is intended to be read any time of year. After all, the events of Holy Week shape the entire Christian life. Each day, we are called to take up our cross and follow after Jesus. And because of the resurrection, every day is now a mini Easter.

That said, this book is also designed for individuals and groups to use as a Lenten Bible study. In the previous section, discussion questions are included for each chapter. Here is a suggested schedule for use during Lent, with listed chapters to be read beforehand.

<b>FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT</b>	Discuss “The Key to Holy Week” and Palm Sunday chapters. These have a combined length equal to subsequent chapters.
<b>SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT</b>	Discuss Monday’s chapter.
<b>THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT</b>	Discuss Tuesday’s chapter.
<b>FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT</b>	Discuss Wednesday’s chapter.
<b>FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT</b>	Discuss Thursday’s chapter.
<b>SIXTH SUNDAY OF LENT</b>	Discuss Friday’s chapter.
<b>EASTER SUNDAY</b>	Discuss the combined Saturday/Sunday chapter.