

# **PURSUING PEACE**

*Philippians 4v4-9*

## **Group Study Guide**

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### **WELCOME...**

Welcome to our *Pursuing Peace: Philippians 4v4-9* study guide. Our vision and prayer for you and your group as you watch these films is that they would inspire and help you to pursue and experience more of God's peace in your lives as a result.

We'd love to pray for you specifically as you work through these sessions, and it would also really help us to know who's running the series – so if you can, please do let us know by registering your group at [burningheart.org/register](http://burningheart.org/register).

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### **SESSION OUTLINES...**

The notes for each session give a suggested outline and timings for a one-hour session – but feel free to adapt that to your circumstances and preferences.

The outline and questions are designed to be discussion starters, rather than too proscriptive – don't worry if you only get through one or two in the time available, or even if your conversation takes you in different directions completely. What matters is that you are all engaging with God, and growing in peace.

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## **A LITTLE EXTRA...**

Did you know you can download each film in advance of your session, so you can avoid technical glitches? Go to the 'extras' section on <http://burningheart.org/peace> for instructions.

If anyone in the group misses a week, why not send them the link so they can catch up? There are also podcast and e-book versions of each film in the "extras" section of the website.

Don't forget that we'd also love to pray for you – just let us know who you are by registering on the link above.

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## **DIGGING DEEPER...**

If any of your group want to dig a little deeper we've got lots of resources to help – just go to the "extras" section on the website.

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## **SKIP TO...**

Episode 1 – Peace from God

Episode 2 – Peace through Joy

Episode 3 – Peace with People

Episode 4 – Peace in Prayer

Episode 5 – Peace of Mind

# **PURSUING PEACE**

## **Session 1: Peace from God**

*Philippians 4v4*

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### **WELCOME...**

In this first session we'll begin to explore how we can pursue "the peace of God that passes all understanding" in our lives. David will introduce the theme and begin to explore the promises of Philippians 4v4-9 in more depth.

Start the session by opening in prayer and worship.

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### **WATCH...** (20 mins)

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### **DISCUSS...** (25 mins)

- Would you say that you find it easy or difficult to be at peace?
  - What have you found helps, or hinders, you from experiencing peace?
  - Do you agree that 'the peace of God' is different from the world's peace? What does it look like?
  - What does it mean for the peace of God to transcend our mental health?
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## **PRAY...** (15 mins)

- Ask the people who find it easy to experience God's peace to pray for those who don't. Get them to pray that the others would experience God's peace. You could either do this all together, or in smaller groups or pairs.
- If there is anyone in the group who is struggling particularly at the moment, either with a mental health problem or a serious life difficulty, take some time to pray for them as a group.
- Divide the group into pairs, and ask each pair to share with each other what they are hoping for from this series – then pray for that.
- If you have time, carry on praying for each other in the pairs.

# **PURSUING PEACE**

## **Session 2: Peace through Joy**

*Philippians 4v4*

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### **WELCOME...**

In this second session we will explore the link between joy and peace, looking at Philippians 4v4: *Rejoice in the Lord always! I will say it again: rejoice!*

Start the session by opening in prayer and worship.

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### **WATCH...** (20 mins)

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### **DISCUSS...** (25 mins)

- What is your experience of "rejoicing in the Lord"?
- Have you ever had an experience of "rejoicing in the Lord" in a difficult or painful season? What difference did it make?

*Break the group down into pairs and ask each person in turn to spend 1-2 minutes telling the other:*

- 1) *what Biblical truths and promises they can think of that they can 'rejoice in the Lord' about.*
- 2) *what specific things in their life they can 'rejoice in the Lord' in.*

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## **PRAY...** (15 mins)

*Stay in your pairs and spend some time praying, as follows:*

- Spend some time giving thanks to God for all the things that you have just shared in 1) and 2) above.
- Share what you find challenging about this, and then get the other person to pray that God would help you
- Share any specific things that each of you would like to pray about in your own life, and then pray for each other.

*If you have any time left at the end, finish off with a song of worship.*

# PURSUING PEACE

## Session 3: Peace with People

*Philippians 4v5*

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### WELCOME...

In this third session we will explore how forgiveness and forbearance can be transformational to both our relationships and our own experience of peace. We will be looking at Philippians 4v5: "*Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.*"

Start the session by opening in prayer and worship.

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### WATCH... (20 mins)

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*Optional guided prayer...*

David has recorded a guided meditation and prayer on the cross and forgiveness, which you may want to use at this point (it is 6 minutes). You can find it at [burningheart.org/meditation](http://burningheart.org/meditation)

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### DISCUSS... (25 mins)

- How do you feel about God's forgiveness? Does that change when it is something big?
- Have you ever experienced forgiveness and *epieikes* from someone else? What difference did it make?

- What difference has your experience of God's love and forgiveness made to your relationships with others?
  - How could you grow in this area?
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## **PRAY...**

- Start with a minute or two of silent prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to show you all afresh how much God has forgiven and blessed you. (you may want to skip this, and the next bit, if you used the meditation above)
- Continuing in silent prayer, ask the Holy Spirit to show each of you if there is anyone they need to forgive or ask forgiveness from, and what it will mean to do so. Encourage the group to silently ask for God's help if anyone has come to mind.
- Ask one person in the group to pray out loud for everyone, asking God to help you all grow in forgiveness and *epieikes*.
- Pray for each other as you would normally at the end of a session



# **PURSUING PEACE**

## **Session 4: Peace in Prayer**

*Philippians 4v6*

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### **WELCOME...**

In this fourth session we will explore how prayer and thanksgiving are a vital ingredient in our pursuit of peace. We will be looking at Philippians 4v6: *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."*

Start the session by opening in prayer, and maybe worship.

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### **WATCH...** (20 mins)

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### **DISCUSS...** (25 mins)

- What experience have you had of prayer and peace?
  - How has the video changed your understanding of the link between prayer and anxiety?
  - How do you feel about the idea of surrendering control of the things you are anxious about to God?
  - Do you find it easy to share your worries with God? In the small things? In the big things?
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## **PRAY...** (15 mins)

- Start with a couple of minutes of silence. Ask each person to think about something that is worrying them at the moment, and then to spend some time praying about it.
- Some people may have found that hard – and found their prayers drowned out by worries instead. Highlight that that can happen – and then pray out loud for those people to know God's peace in that situation.
- Break into groups of 2 or 3, and ask each other what they have just prayed for – or if they'd rather not say, what else they would like prayer for. Spend some time praying in the groups for each person.
- If there is anything else anyone wants prayer for, ask them to share that, and then pray for it.

# **PURSUING PEACE**

## **Session 5: Peace of Mind**

*Philippians 4v8-9*

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### **WELCOME...**

In this final session we will explore how what we focus our minds and hearts on impacts our experience of peace. We will be looking at Philippians 4v8-9: *"Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.."*

Start the session by opening in prayer, and maybe worship.

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### **WATCH...** (20 mins)

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### **DISCUSS...** (25 mins)

- What do you fill your mind and heart with? (be honest!)
- What things in your life bring you joy and delight?
- Do you find it easy to focus your attention on "whatever is excellent and praiseworthy"? What could you do to make that easier?
- Who is a good example to you in your walk with Jesus?

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## **PRAY...** (15 mins)

- Start with a time of silence, and encourage the group to repent (in silence) of anything un-godly that they think or dwell on. You may want to end the silent prayer with a set prayer of repentance, such as prayer 60 [here](#).
- Now spend some time praying all out loud, giving thanks for the things you talked about that bring you joy and delight.
- Ask one person to pray for the whole group, that God would help them focus on "whatever is excellent and praiseworthy."
- Pray for each other more generally, as you would do normally at the end of a session.

## TWO FINAL QUESTIONS...

We hope and pray that this series has been a blessing to you, and that it has drawn you closer to God and deepened your relationship with him. If it has, we want to ask you and your group two final questions:

- would you consider giving towards the costs of future series?
- can you please pray for us?

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## GIVE...

[BurningHeart.org/give](https://BurningHeart.org/give)

All our materials are available free of charge, so that money is not a barrier to anyone engaging with God through them – but that also means that we are reliant on donations for our funding.

If you would like to give towards our ministry, we would be grateful for any amount – whether 5 pence or £5million! The Bible is very clear that what matters in our giving is how generous we are with what we have, and not how much we give in absolute terms (see Mark 12v41-44). We will not know how generous you are actually being – but God will!

We would also encourage you to prioritise your own church when planning your giving. Please don't stop your giving to them to give to us!

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## **PRAY...**

We believe in prayer! As James tells us, "the prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective." (James 5v16). Please can you pray for us and for our ministry? Pray that God would use our resources to speak to people and meet with them. Pray that God would inspire us as we look to make more resources. And pray that God would provide all that we need to resource what he has called us to do.