

Group Bible Study

Setting the Table for Peace:

Discovering abundant life which leads to peace

John 10: 1-10



untilallarefed.ca



Objective:

to learn about abundant life for all, which leads to peace

Recommended Time:

20-30 minutes

Structure:

Pray, read, reflect, respond, and rest in God's Word



Opening Prayer

Good and gracious God,
You have gathered us together;
You have given us a passion for working
to end hunger and proclaiming
abundant life and peace for all;
Give us eyes to see need and suffering around us;
Give us ears to hear your calls for repair,
empowerment and reconciliation;
Give us hands and feet to put
your words into action;
Give us courage and humility to love others
and to seek your will;
Guide us, we pray, as we take
in your Word together.
Amen

Prayer Points

- Gratitude to God for gathering the group together
- Prayer that God would guide and be present with the group as they read the Scripture together, and that God would speak through the passage
- Prayer that God would give the group passion for ending hunger and caring for others in need
- Prayer that God would open our eyes to receive the offering of Abundant life
- Prayer that God would grant the group courage to act to end hunger, and courage to follow God's call
- Gratitude to God for the time together

Scripture Reading and Context

Select a volunteer to read John 10:1-10 aloud. Following the reading, ask the group to reflect on what they have heard individually in silence for 2 minutes.

John 1: 1-10:

Jesus the Good Shepherd

¹ Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit;

² The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep;

³ The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out;

⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice;

⁵ They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers;

⁶ Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them;

⁷ So again Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep;

⁸ All who came before me[a] are thieves and bandits, but the sheep did not listen to them.;

⁹ I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture;

¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.¹

Review of scriptural context: The bible study leader briefly provides the context of the bible passage before moving into a time of group reflection.

Context:

Jesus is in Jerusalem and is being pursued and questioned by the religious leaders as well as his disciples. Jesus is performing miracles (blind man receives sight, John 9) and restoring lives and forgiving sins (woman caught in adultery, John 8). Jesus is teaching them the contrast between the ways of this world, which is broken and leads to oppression, conflict and chaos; and the ways of Jesus which leads to restoration, healing, abundant life and peace.



¹From the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Study and Reflection

The summary verse of these several chapters is **John 10:10**.

‘The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.’

In the first half of this verse, we see the results of a world lead by ‘the thief.’ Since Genesis 3, the world has been suffering under the fractured and destructive forces of the work of evil and injustice. As a result, the world is broken. It is broken in relationship between God, self, others and God’s creation. It becomes embedded in society through broken systems of government, laws, policies and economics. This brokenness fuels poverty, hunger, injustices and inequalities that ‘steal, kill and destroy’, dignity, hope, community, and peace.

But Jesus...

Jesus has come that they may have *abundant life* – shalom – peace; tables full of nutritious food.

Abundant life through Jesus is for all of us. For those that lack and suffer through injustice and inequality, they can find abundance through mobilizing communities, supporting each other, and recognizing and utilizing their voice that is God given: Empowerment.

For those of wealth and power, they find true *abundant life*, through repentance, which includes reckoning with complicity in how one’s life may be entangled with injustice, standing in solidarity with those most affected and using voice, having influence and access to advocate for change and challenge harmful structures.

Jesus’s proclamation of abundant life includes the healing of humanity’s broken relationships and the transformation of unjust systems. As Jesus said, quoting Isaiah, “The spirit of the Lord is upon me, as God has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, God has sent me to proclaim release of the captives. And recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free.” *Abundant life* names the biblical vision of a world made whole, where relationships are restored, justice takes root, where the poor are uplifted and the hungry fed, and creation flourishes under the care of the Creator God and Jesus the Good Shepherd.

Abundant life is communal, relational, and grounded in faithful care. The vision of *abundant life* spoken by Jesus stands within a much older biblical hope that runs through the Hebrew scriptures, often expressed through the rich language of shalom: a vision of wholeness, justice, and flourishing that extends to every part of life – a vision of peace, but also a vision where communities are empowered to set their own tables, full of nutritious food. *Abundant life* therefore names not merely personal wellbeing, but the restoration of relationships, communities, and creation under God’s good rule. And it invites us to live, act, and hope in ways that reflect the goodness of God’s purposes for the whole world. To work for deep peace.



Reflection and Application

This vision can be described through three interwoven dimensions of transformation.

- 1. Wholeness and harmony** emphasize that life is meant to be held together in right relationship, with God, with one another, with ourselves, and with the created world. Humans are not made for isolation or domination but for communion, mutual care, and interdependence. This is where trust can grow and everyone has all they need, including tables full of nutritious food, and communities can live in peace.
- 2. Justice and repair** recognize that such harmony cannot exist without addressing harm and putting right what has been broken. Scripture consistently links peace with justice, calling for honesty, restitution, reconciliation, and the transformation of systems that perpetuate exclusion or suffering, and support empowering others.
- 3. Joy and flourishing** points beyond mere survival to the fullness of life God intends, where people have enough to live with dignity, creation is nurtured, and communities are able to celebrate, create, and hope – a full table, where people can sit down and eat together.

Reflection Questions to encourage discussion on abundant life and peace for all:

1. Where do you see broken relationships and systems in your community? In this country? In the Global South?
2. In what ways is the culture of Global North complicit in injustices and inequality?
3. What part can you play in bringing abundant life and shalom, or deep peace, into the world that you live in? How can you help empower others?
4. What can the church in Canada do to live an abundant life purpose, to work for a true peace, where all are fed?



Closing Prayer

Gracious God,
You long to give us all life and life to the fullest;
Open our eyes that we would see this vision
you have for all people;
Open our ears that we would hear your calls to
repentance and to work alongside you as you
heal the brokenness around us;
Equip us, humble us and give us courage to
follow you and to work with you towards
God's good reign;

Giver of all good gifts;
Fill our hearts with your love and passion
for your mission;
Bring wholeness and harmony;
Justice and repair;
And joy and flourishing for all.
Amen

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