**Table Talk**

**Sermon Series: Alive—Dawn of a New Day**

**New Peace** **4-18-2021**

**Introduction (5 minutes):**

Table Talk Groups (45-minute study) begin by watching the video and sharing the story below, then open up the discussion with the questions provided.

Southside Home (35-minute study) can skip to “Starting the Discussion” as a follow up to the worship experience.

**Table Talk Video: Alive – New Peace:**

Today, we are continuing our series Alive and discussing the ‘New Peace’ made available to us through Christ. God delivers us from the pressure to perform and gives us peace through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Standing in the wings my palms were sweating and my heart was racing. Had I practiced enough? Would I fail to remember my lines and throw everyone off? The entire 6th grade filled the auditorium. In the seats sat both friend and foe waiting for the next performance –my performance.

During practice I bumbled my lines, forgot where and when I was to sit and stand. I was a wreck. I knew if I messed up, I would never live it down. Tween-agers can be so cruel. I was under the pressure to perform.

Anxiety can be overwhelming when we live with the pressure of thinking our acceptance or rejection is based on our performance. We sometimes fall victim to the scrutiny of our inner critic who accuses us and accuses God. Our failures take center stage and dim the light of God’s grace and mercy. No matter what we do we can never be good enough. No matter how well we perform it is never well enough. God has set perfection’s bar too high for us to attain on our own.

My inner critic was exploiting all my failures and amplifying my hardships as I stood in the wings waiting for the curtain to open. Nothing seemed quite right. All my labor seemed useless. All the practice was for nothing. I would fail. I would be rejected by my peers. Inner peace was gone; turmoil took over.

It’s easy to give up and give in. I mean why try when you can’t be perfect. Or worse, you may keep trying and, in the end, find yourself bound by perfectionism. Nothing you or anyone else does is quite right. Someone once said, “perfectionism is insecurity on steroids.” It screams, “I have no intrinsic value; I must be good, I have to do good if I’m ever going to be loved and accepted.”

Oddly enough, a sense of peace flooded my heart as the curtain was about to open. The words of my drama teacher silenced my inner critic, “Take a deep breath, relax and trust your preparation.” When I walked out on the stage I was composed and confident. I moved through the scenes as if someone else was in control. The audience loved the show and didn’t seem to notice all the flaws in my performance because I didn’t let the flaws stop me. I was free to push past the performance pressure and experience peace on the stage when I stepped out into the light and embraced my role in the story.

God has made a way for us to push past the false belief we have to be good enough or do enough good for us to be accepted and loved by him. When we trust in Jesus and what he did for us on the cross, we can silence the inner critic, experience the peace of God, and walk through the curtain into his glorious light. --Carla Pollard

**Prayer (1 minute)**

Dear Father, help us to learn about the peace you’ve provided for us through Jesus. Give us understanding as we delve into your word to find out how we can experience real peace even in the midst of our greatest failures. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

**Starting the Discussion (2-5 minutes)**

1. What are some attitudes and actions that rob us of God’s peace?

**Unfolding the Biblical Story (28 minutes)**

**Invite someone to read Matthew 11:28-30, John 14:26-27 and 16:33.**

1. Have someone read the definitions of peace and rest from two different sources. In what ways are peace and rest closely related?
2. From these passages, what is Jesus offering to us? How do we find and experience the peace and rest he offers?
3. Through these passages what can we learn about the world we live in and the way we should live in it?

**Read Matthew 27:51, Romans 5:1-2, Hebrews 10:19-20, Ephesians 2:8-9, 14-18; Philippians 4:7.**

1. When Jesus died what symbolism is found in the curtain (veil) and how does it relate to us?
2. What does God expect from us to restore our fellowship with him and give us access to his peace? What expectations do we wrongly place on ourselves?

**Prayer (2 minutes)**

Dear Father, thank you for providing a way for us to come into a transforming relationship with you through the blood of Jesus. He is our savior and in him we can rest from our labor and experience your peace in our souls. Help us to understand all you have given to us and grant us the grace to walk in the liberty of your truth. In Jesus’ name, amen.

**Wrapping Up (2 minutes)**

See if anyone has any other questions or insights. Then summarize the group discussion as a reminder of what you learned together.

**Scripture Challenge (1-2 minutes)**

This week try to memorize **Romans 5:1-2**. Take a few minutes to practice/repeat these together as a group. Find a way to make it matter! Keep the words of Jesus before you this week as you share His message with others.