

Becoming families of peace

by Elizabeth Soto

Psalm 1. Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked,...but their delight is in the law of the LORD.... They are like trees planted by streams of water.... (NRSV)

I have noticed that being a family of peace does not just happen because we are Christians. It requires being deliberate at building our own families with the right elements—the values of God’s way. I invite you to start reflecting on your family, using Psalm 1. We want to instill in you the need to become an agent of change wherever you may be. Becoming families of peace requires that all family members work toward that goal, which is part of God’s plan of shalom-salvation.

Becoming families of peace is about choices and consequences. The honest questions I need to ask myself are: Is there God’s peace in my family? If not, what happened and how is that affecting me? Yes, these are deep and hard questions, but we must begin by asking those difficult questions in order to move toward a healthier and more peaceful family. I prefer a definition of peace based on the concept of health: peace/shalom is a state of harmony in which the mind and body enjoy physical, mental and social well being, both alone and in the company of other human beings and with God. Living in a contaminated environment and one in which global warming is a reality, we must include living in peace-harmony with God’s creation. Peace is much more than just the absence of war, sickness, or calamity. As Christians, we aim to be peacemakers living out Biblical principles and values best illustrated in Jesus’ life and teachings.

The Psalms are prayers and songs full of the realities of feeling human experience daily. Psalm 1 starts with a beautiful image of a “tree planted beside streams of water” 1:3a. Read the Psalm in a contemplative way, meditating on the image of a tree (if you are familiar with the lectio divina this could be a good community time to practice it with the psalm).

The Psalmist presents two kinds of people: the wicked and righteous, represented by the fruits these trees/persons yield. Choic-

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es and consequences once again follow our actions.

The truth that Psalm 1 offers is simple: in life we will find two ways and it is up to us to determine how we want to live—in peace or in violence. Although there are subtle and seductive ways in which people can take a wrong direction, we are given second and third chances with Christ. We can choose life and live a righteous life and start the construction of becoming a family of peace. These choices will determine if you end up like a luxuriant tree or chaff. If it is your choice, why not “choose life”?

The Word of God is lived by obedience. In order to have the Word in our life, we must learn as a good disciple does to be obedient to God’s laws. To respect life means to love life and to do so for the members of my community and extended family. All of

PONDER

- 1. What kind of family do I want to have? How can my family become a family of peace? How can I share God’s values from Psalm 1 with other families?*
- 2. What kind of tree does your life look like? In which kind of soil have your roots been planted? Are you “uprooted” because of death of a loved one, separation/divorce, emotional and physical distance between you and a family member? How does this affect you?*

Jesus’ teaching was about obeying a higher law, the spirit of the law. Jesus lives out God’s values. We can find a list of these values in Galatians 5:22–23, “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” These values could help us in the important task of building peace.

When we voluntarily choose to be obedient to God’s desires in our life, this has a price. True discipleship means following Christ. Yes, it is an individual choice, but it is a family choice as well. We find the clues for transformation inside us, in the way we are willing to go to the roots of the problems and face our fears. The strength to work at change comes from the disposition of our hearts. In Romans 12:2a we find “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” This is a remarkable call for transformation. ❏

Prayer: *Help me, God, to welcome your transforming grace which enables me to choose obedience to your teaching. Help me to make choices to have a family of peace through obedience to the way of Jesus.*