

The (Un)Common Good Study Guide Week 3

If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other. —Mother Teresa

Summary

Chapter 6: The Beloved Community Welcomes All Tribes

Wallis explores the vision of the beloved community—a diverse, inclusive, and justice-driven society rooted in the gospel. Drawing from Martin Luther King Jr. and John Lewis, he emphasizes that while progress has been made, the world still struggles to fully recognize the dignity and worth of every person. Using Galatians 3:28, Wallis reminds us that God's vision for humanity is unity, not division, and that the church should be a model of radical inclusivity. He critiques nationalism and exclusionary attitudes, arguing that Christians should find their identity first in Christ, not in race, class, or nationality.

Chapter 7: Surprising Our Enemies

This chapter challenges readers to embrace Jesus' radical call to love our enemies. Wallis highlights how conflict and fear divide us and urges Christians to choose peace over retaliation. He reflects on post-9/11 America, the rise of religious extremism, and how cycles of violence perpetuate suffering. Instead of hostility, Wallis lifts up peacemaking, interfaith cooperation, and nonviolence as transformative practices. The chapter includes powerful stories of unexpected reconciliation, reminding us that loving our enemies is not weakness but the heart of the gospel.

Both chapters call us to live out Christ's mission of justice, love, and radical inclusion, shaping a world where all are welcomed and peace is pursued.

Spiritual Practice: Body Scan Meditation

Today, our chapters challenge us to radically include those on the margins and to reconcile with those we may see as enemies. These are difficult actions, requiring us to move beyond comfort, to examine our biases, and to open ourselves fully to God's transforming love.

When we are called to engage in the work of justice and peace, it is essential to stay grounded—in ourselves, in our faith, and in our bodies. If we are anxious, disconnected, or reactive, we may struggle to respond with wisdom, patience, and compassion.

A Body Scan Meditation helps us to become fully present, noticing tension, breath, and sensation in a way that centers us for action. As we go through this practice, I invite you to listen to your body without judgment. Simply notice, breathe, and release.

Guided Body Scan Meditation

Find a comfortable position. Close your eyes if you feel comfortable, or soften your gaze.

Take a deep breath in... and a slow breath out. Feel the air fill your lungs and release any tension as you exhale.

Bring your awareness to the top of your head. Notice any sensations there. Is there tension in your forehead or around your eyes? Release any tightness.

Move to your jaw. Are you holding tension here? Gently unclench your teeth. Let your mouth relax.

Bring your attention to your shoulders. So many of us carry stress here. With your next breath, imagine letting go of burdens that are not yours to carry.

Scan down to your chest and heart. As you breathe, ask yourself:

- Am I open to love and reconciliation?
- What fears or hesitations am I holding here?
- If something comes to mind, acknowledge it without judgment—then, with your next exhale, imagine making space for God's peace.

Move to your stomach and gut. This is where we often feel deep emotions. Notice any sensations—tightness, warmth, or relaxation. Offer yourself compassion for whatever you are holding.

Now, breathe deeply. With each inhale, imagine breathing in courage, love, and openness. With each exhale, release fear, judgment, and hesitation.

Finally, bring your attention back to your whole body. Feel the strength within you. Know that you are held by God's love, and that you are fully capable of being an agent of peace, inclusion, and reconciliation.

When you feel ready, gently open your eyes.

Scriptures

Galatians 3:25-28, The Message

But now you have arrived at your destination: By faith in Christ you are in direct relationship with God. Your baptism in Christ was not just washing you up for a fresh start. It also involved dressing you in an adult faith wardrobe—Christ's life, the fulfillment of God's original promise. In Christ's family there can be no division into Jew and non-Jew, slave and free, male and female. Among us you are all equal. That is, we are all in a common relationship with Jesus Christ.

Doctrine & Covenants 165: 1b-e

b. As a spiritual venture, boldly follow the initiatives into the heart of God's vision for the church and creation. Then, in response to growing insight about God's nature and will, continue to shape communities that live Christ's love and mission.

c. Lovingly invite others to experience the good news of new life in community with Christ. Opportunities abound in your daily lives if you choose to see them.

d. Undertake compassionate and just actions to abolish poverty and end needless suffering. Pursue peace on and for the Earth.

e. Let nothing separate you from this mission. It reveals divine intent for personal, societal, and environmental salvation; a fullness of gospel witness for creation's restoration.

Discussion Questions

1. How did the body scan practice make you feel? What emotions or insights surfaced?
2. Did you practice any of the "Actions for the (un)common good from last week? What was your experience?
3. Wallis lifts up Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision of the Beloved Community, (pg109) where all people are valued and injustice is dismantled. What kind of "qualitative change in our souls and quantitative change in our lives is required? What practical steps can we take to create a community that upholds the worth of all persons?
4. Apostle Janne Grover has said, "We are not just called to minister to those in the margins, we are called to eliminate the margins." What does it mean to "eliminate the margins" rather than simply minister to those on the edges of society? How does this challenge our understanding of justice, inclusion, and community?
5. Jesus calls us to love our enemies—a radical challenge in today's polarized world. Who do we struggle to see as our "neighbor" or treat with love?
6. Wallis describes how fear and division create hostility between groups. What role does fear play in shaping attitudes toward "the other"? How can our faith communities be places of reconciliation rather than division?
7. The Pursuit of Peace calls us to courageously share Christ's peace and work to restore shalom in the world. How does Community of Christ's understanding of shalom fit in with the themes of this week's reading? How does being a peaceful presence differ from being passive in the face of injustice?

Practicing the (Un)Common Good: 5 Actions for the Week

Choose one of the following to do this week

Reflect & Journal – Choose one of the discussion questions from this week and write down your response. How is God challenging you? What personal shifts might be needed to align more fully with Jesus' mission for justice, peace, and the common good?

Practice a Body Scan Meditation - Take 5-10 minutes to sit in stillness and do a body scan meditation. Notice where you hold tension or hesitation around issues of inclusion and justice. Ask yourself: What is God inviting me to release? Where is the Spirit calling me to take action?

- [Meditation: Living Presence with Body Scan](#) by Tara Brach
- [Body Scan Meditation: Benefits and How to Do It](#)

Expand Your Circle - Identify someone in your life or community who may feel marginalized or unseen. Reach out—invite them to coffee, check in with a message, or simply listen.

Interrupt Division & Fear with Peacemaking - When you encounter a divisive conversation, try to redirect it toward curiosity, understanding, and reconciliation. Practice active listening—instead of debating, seek to understand the deeper fears or concerns. Ask: What would it mean to “love my enemies” in this moment?

Find One Systemic Action to Take - Research one organization in your area that works to eliminate systemic barriers to justice. Donate, volunteer, or share their work with others. Consider: How can your congregation move beyond acts of charity into long-term justice work?

Closing Poem

For What World Shall We Pray?

By Danny Belrose, Wave Offerings

For what world shall we kneel and pray -
When many world persist today?
False worlds where gender, age, and face
Determine who shall win life's race.
Soiled worlds where creatures small and great
Fall victim to a wasteful fate.

“For this world shall you work and pray,
Come work with me,” we hear God say -
“This world undone, we'll make anew,
Its broken hearts and hopes renew.
We'll pour love's life on soil and soul
'Till life divided is made whole.”

Project Zion Podcasts

[240 | Coffee Buzz | Are We Moving Toward Jesus, The Peaceful One?](#)

[279 | Peace, Justice, and the Role of Conflict | Matt Frizzell](#)

[734 | Coffee Buzz | First Presidency Non-Violence Draft Statement](#)

Series: [Grounds for Peace – Project Zion Podcast](#)

Explore peace through the lens of a people who follow Jesus the peaceful One and also understand the interconnectedness of all creation. What is the role of spirituality in working for social change? What difference can people of faith make?

Series: [Toward the Peaceful One – Project Zion Podcast](#)

A special spotlight series featuring interviews with all the authors exploring the guiding question: “Are we moving toward Jesus, the peaceful One?” in a Herald magazine article.

Other Resources

- [“Nonviolence: The Only Road to Freedom” Martin Luther King, Jr., May 4, 1966](#)
- [GRITtv: John Lewis: We Haven't Built the Beloved Community](#)
- [American 'Exceptionalism' Can Degenerate Into Superiority | Sojourners](#)
- [A Test of Character | Sojourners](#)
- [Draw the Circle Wide - CCS 273 - The Beyond the Walls Choir](#)
- [Martin Luther King's Vision of the Beloved Community – Religion Online](#)
- [“Pathways to the Beloved Community”](#)
- [“Beloved Community as Spiritual Practice”](#)