







Rest in God's Peace

You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you. —Isaiah 26:3, NIV

Read: Matthew 1&2

When I was a kid, we lived in a couple of homes that were a story and a half. My favorite part? The cubby holes. That's what we called them, anyway. You could get to them through the closet, and most upstairs bedrooms had at least one. It was my space, away from the craziness of everyday life. It was small, but it was quiet, and I loved it. I'd grab a blanket and a little lamp and spend hours tucked away in there, reading comics or playing with my Lite-Brite. I even dragged my Easy-Bake Oven in there a few times, but let's keep that little fire hazard between you and me.

Even now, I still find comfort in small places where I can shut out the noise and distractions of the world.

But do you know what I've come to realize? The sense of peace I felt in that little space is a lot like the comfort I find in God's presence. His peace surrounds me, bringing calm in the midst of a chaotic world.

Isaiah 26:3 tells us, "You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you." Isaiah is reminding us that those who keep their minds focused on God, trusting in Him, will experience true peace.

So, what exactly is peace? The best way I can describe it is as a deep inner calm and a sense of security that comes from trusting in God. (There's also "relational peace," which we'll talk about in the next chapter.)

In this chapter, we're talking about the kind of peace that anchors our hearts and gives us stability in the face of life's storms—the kind of peace that Mary experienced when the angel Gabriel told her that she would bear a child, the Son of God. She must have been overwhelmed and confused, but instead of reacting in fear, she responded in faith, saying, “I am the Lord’s servant... May your word to me be fulfilled” (Luke 1:38).

Stop for a minute to think about everything she went through, because we can glean so much from her strength. We’ve already talked about the uncertainty Mary faced when she learned she would bear the Christ child, and the challenges she faced the night Jesus was born, but the challenges didn’t stop there—they continued for years. Matthew 2:13 tells us that the angel of the Lord warned Joseph in a dream that Herod was searching for the child to kill Him. They had to flee to Egypt for safety. Even after Herod died, they were warned again that it wasn’t safe to return, so they settled in Nazareth instead.

Can you imagine how chaotic and stressful those first few years must have been? I can’t even begin to imagine having someone so bent on killing my child that we’d have to hide just to protect Him. But this was their reality—fleeing, hiding, and constantly on guard.

So, what was Mary’s secret? How does a mother like her—or even women like you and me—find peace in the midst of overwhelming and heart-wrenching seasons? We take our eyes off the world and anchor ourselves in the Lord with determined and unwavering trust. And, most importantly, we bring our burdens to Him in prayer.

Today’s Challenge:

Write down any fears or anxieties you're carrying and offer them to God in prayer. Throughout the day, remind yourself that Jesus is the Prince of Peace and His peace is available to you. When anxiety creeps in, turn your thoughts back to Him and trust His perfect peace.

⓪ According to Philippians 4:6, what two things should we do when we feel anxious?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

⓪ What are some specific ways that God provides comfort, strength, and rest according to Isaiah 40:29-31?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....





Be a Peacemaker

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

—*Matthew 5:9, NIV*

Read: Romans 12

When my daughter comes over to spend a weekend with us, especially at this time of year, our favorite thing to do is watch a romantic Hallmark movie and eat chips and dip. She has two children, ages 3 and 5, and their favorite thing to do right now is fight. If it's not one thing, it's another—they argue about toys, about food, and even about who's making the most noise when they're trying to sleep.

I took them to visit my sister Betty the other day. If you've read my blog, you might remember that she's my go-to person for advice on anything from stains to Christmas gifts for that hard-to-buy-for person. If you have a problem, she has a solution.

So, we get to Betty's house, she pulls out some toys for the kids, and sure enough, they both want to play with the same remote-control car. The fighting starts. Instead of dealing with it the way I usually do, Betty pulls out a timer, and they both go silent. Now they're more interested in the timer than in the toy. She shows them how to use it and put 5 minutes on the clock. Bam—problem solved. For the rest of our visit, they took turns, switching between the timer and the car.

With a little creativity and patience, Betty turned a moment of conflict into one of peace. Watching her handle that situation so calmly made me realize something: being a peacemaker doesn't always mean stepping into

big, dramatic conflicts. Sometimes, it's as simple as finding a way to bring calm to small, everyday battles.

In this season of Christmas, peace isn't just a word we write on a card—it's a harmony we're called to live by as believers. And if you stop to think about it, we're given countless opportunities. It could be something as simple as calming a tense conversation in a meeting by reminding everyone that we're on the same team, apologizing when we've offended someone, or using kind words to encourage understanding when a friend is frustrated. Instead of taking sides or fueling frustration, we can help mend relationships rather than deepen the divide.

Looking to the Bible, we see that Barnabas played a significant role as a peacemaker. After Paul's conversion, many of the disciples were afraid of him, but Barnabas bridged the gap by vouching for Paul, fostering peace and unity among them (Acts 9:26-27). Likewise, in 1 Samuel 19, Jonathan spoke well of David, hoping to bridge the gap between David and his father, King Saul, who was trying to take David's life.

Sometimes it's easier to stay quiet when there's a divide between people. We don't want to get involved because it feels safer to stay on the sidelines. Stepping in as a peacemaker and saying something kind takes courage, but it might be the first step toward healing and reconciliation. Isn't that what Christmas is truly about? After all, Jesus, the Prince of Peace, prayed for unity even in the Garden of Gethsemane, on the night before He died. Unity was on His heart, and it's the very message of Christmas. As He prayed, "That all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:21, NIV).

Today's Challenge:

As you go through your day, look for one opportunity to bring peace into a conversation or situation. Whether it's offering a kind word, encouraging understanding, or simply listening, make an effort to reflect God's peace in your interactions.

⓪ What reason does Jesus give for the importance of unity in John 17:20-23? And what do you think He means by this?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

⓪ According to Matthew 5:23-24, what should we do before approaching God in worship if we have unresolved conflict with someone?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....





Live With Integrity

A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies. —*Proverbs 31:10, NIV*

Read: Daniel 3 and 6

We haven't been house hunting in a while, but whenever we have, my husband and I always seem to look for different things. I'm all about checking out the bedrooms, eyeing the kitchen layout, and mentally placing the loveseat and sofa in just the right spot. Meanwhile, my husband heads straight for the basement, inspecting the beams and foundation. The same thing happens when we visit friends with new homes—the men go straight for the foundation while the women ooh and ahh over the kitchen. Don't get me wrong, as much as I dislike looking at beams and discussing foundations, I'm thankful he's down there making sure it's well-built. After all, my kitchen depends on it.

Life is funny that way, isn't it? So many things we enjoy depend on the unseen. What would a garden be without roots to sustain it? What would an ocean be like without the currents beneath? If we didn't have the wind shaping mountains, dunes, and trees over time, we'd be missing the force that shapes so much beauty around us. It's the unseen things that hold the most power.

In the same way that a good foundation is of more value than a nice coat of paint, integrity speaks more about us than talent or charm ever could. The Bible says, "A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies" (Proverbs 31:10, NIV). Integrity is about living out that noble character, not just during the holiday season, but every day. It's the

difference between acting like a Christian and truly being one. We might believe the right things and say the right things, but the real question is, will we do the right thing? Even when no one is watching?

Integrity is the choice to do the right thing when it's difficult, when it goes against the flow, and when we're not expecting praise or approval. It walks in the way of our Savior—a perfect harmony of truth and action. Jesus didn't just speak of love, He embodied it; He didn't just teach humility, He displayed it. He didn't just call for obedience; He was obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross, where His sacrifice spoke louder than words ever could.

Christmas is a time of giving and sharing, opening the door to opportunities that reflect the sacrificial love of our Lord. The way we choose to live out our faith speaks volumes about the God we serve.

So, what does integrity look like this holiday season? Perhaps it's choosing a kind word instead of engaging in gossip. Maybe it's resisting the urge to snap at the overwhelmed cashier. It might be showing patience when family gatherings get stressful. It could mean honoring a commitment when something more exciting comes up. And it might be giving to someone in secret without expecting thanks in return.

Today's Challenge:

Today, look for an opportunity to choose integrity over convenience. Whether it's staying true to your word, offering kindness in a tough situation, or doing something good without seeking recognition, let your actions align with your faith. Ask yourself, "What does it look like to honor God through my choices today, even when no one is watching?"

What qualities are demonstrated alongside integrity in the story of Daniel's friends in Daniel chapter 3?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

What qualities are demonstrated alongside integrity in the story of Daniel in Daniel chapter 6?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....





Practice Selflessness

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. —Philippians 2:3-4, NIV

Read: Isaiah 53

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas. Everywhere you go, there's a focus on what you'll get, if you haven't bought it yet, with credit cards and shopping bags in tow. Sounds a little self-centered, doesn't it? But here's the thing: the most wonderful time of the year can easily turn into the most selfish time of the year if we're not careful. If we don't step back and realign our hearts, Christmas can become all about what we can get instead of what we're called to give.

We live in a world that's obsessed with self. Everywhere you turn, people want to be seen, heard, and known. Articles and headlines flood us with words like self-esteem, self-worth, self-confidence, self-help... the list goes on. All of these things push us to put ourselves at the center of our lives, and if we're not intentional, we can lose focus of what's really important.

So where does Christmas fit into all of this? It doesn't. Christmas isn't meant to squeeze alongside a self-centered life. It's meant to replace it. The Bible tells us to put off our old self—our self-centered ways—and to be made new in the attitude of our minds. We're called to put on a new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:22-24).

Christmas is the perfect reminder of that transformation. The gift we celebrate isn't wrapped in paper or tied with a bow—it's the gift of a Savior who left the glory of heaven to walk among us. Jesus didn't come for His

own gain; He came for ours. He humbled Himself to take on human form (Philippians 2:6-7), living with the struggles and pains we face, and ultimately giving His life for our salvation. His birth was just the beginning of His incredible journey to the cross—the ultimate act of selflessness. Isaiah 53:5 tells us, “But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.” His suffering and sacrifice were for our redemption, not His own benefit.

So, let’s ask ourselves: How can we live that out?

Christmas isn’t about what we’ll get; it’s about what we’re called to give. It’s not about who’s going to serve us, but how we can serve others. What does it look like to embrace the spirit of Christmas? It’s focusing on how we can give—without expecting anything in return. It’s sharing Christmas dinner with someone who’s alone. It’s baking shortbread cookies for someone who’s sick. It’s offering a gift to someone in need. It’s serving behind the scenes without recognition. It’s showing grace to a family member who tests your patience.

Christmas isn’t measured by the presents we give or receive, but by the selfless way we love and serve others. Jesus came to serve, not to be served, and He invites us to do the same. And so, this Christmas, let’s take off the old and put on the new. Let’s embrace selfless love by living it out.

Today’s Challenge:

Choose one selfless act today that reflects the true spirit of Christmas. Whether it's calling someone who's lonely, offering a meal to someone in need, or simply showing extra patience and kindness to a family member.

① What are three specific ways Jesus showed selflessness throughout His life and ministry?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

② What are some selfless acts you've seen from others over the years? And how, if at all, has that inspired the way you celebrate Christmas?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....





Create Peace Within

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.

—Philippians 4:8, NIV

Read: Philippians 4

Have you ever found yourself stuck in a cycle of negative thinking? Maybe it happens at Christmas. When you're pulled in a hundred different directions—when the to-do lists are long, the schedule's full, and it feels like there's no time left for a silent night. All kinds of emotions come up when we take on too much. Worry, frustration, and stress can easily rob us of peace, which is why it's important to open our Bibles and take in Paul's words:

“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.” (Philippians 4:8, NIV)

Those are beautiful words, but let's be honest—how often do we take them to heart? If you're anything like me, you have days when your glass is half empty. Negative thoughts sneak in and overshadow your day. You find yourself worried, frustrated, and tense.

So, how do we shift our thoughts? How do we go from stinkin' thinkin' to the kind of mindset Paul is talking about? How do we reclaim the peace we long for at Christmas?

Paul gives us the answer in the very next verse: “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.” (Philippians 4:9, NIV)

Notice the word "practice." Paul emphasizes that this kind of thinking isn't something we accomplish in one day; it's something we practice day after day. Of course, we'll have days when life throws us off track and negative thoughts find their way back. We're not expected to be perfect, but we should be progressing, and that's possible when we take God's Word to heart and put His truth into practice. We do this by being intentional about what we're feeding our minds and where we allow them to dwell.

The best thing about this is that the way we think changes the way we live. Paul is telling us that practicing a right way of thinking brings peace. He's not saying that peace comes after the hustle and bustle of the season is over; he's pointing out the fact that peace comes from aligning our lives with God's truth.

Finally, you can't expect a garden to grow if you just water bare ground. The first step is planting a seed. You have to get in there, dig up the soil, and place that seed with intention. We do that by learning and receiving God's Word. That's where our thoughts are transformed—planting truth in our hearts and allowing His peace to take root.

Today's Challenge:

When you feel negativity creeping in, take a moment to pause and reflect on Philippians 4:8. Write down three things that are true, noble, or praiseworthy that you can focus on instead. If you catch yourself dwelling on frustrations or worries, redirect your thoughts to these positive truths and remind yourself of God's promises.

⓪ What are some examples of 'true, noble, and admirable' thoughts you can focus on in times of stress or frustration? How can these thoughts shift your mindset during difficult seasons?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

⓪ What four actions does Paul encourage us to take in Philippians 4:9? And how can we apply them to our lives today?

.....

.....

.....

.....

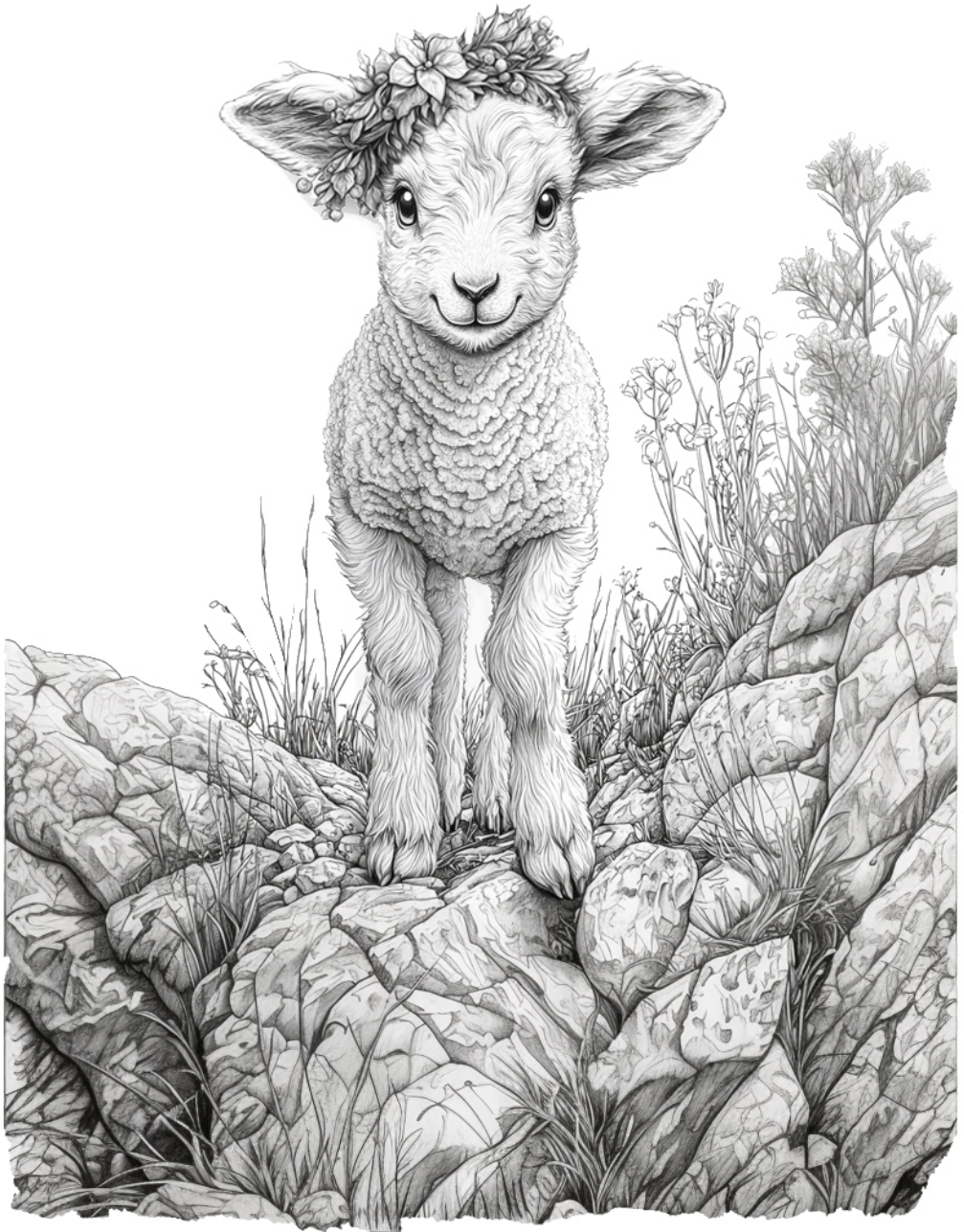
.....

.....

.....

.....

.....





Embrace Humility

And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! —Philippians 2:8, NIV

Read: Luke 7:36-50 and Philippians 2:1-11

Yesterday, I took an afternoon nap, but instead of playing my usual ambient sounds, I decided to listen to traffic. The sound of tires squealing, horns honking, and the whir of motors in the distance brought me back to our home on the corner when life was simple and carefree. Little did my parents know at the time that one of my favorite things to do back then was to climb the billboard, settle into my place on the ledge, and take in the view of the traffic below.

There's something about high places that fascinates me. And while I love the view from a billboard, nothing compares to the top of a mountain. There's a feeling of awe and wonder when you take in the view of the valley below. It's amazing how some of the lowest places on earth hold the greatest beauty, isn't it? So it is with mankind. The Bible tells us, "It is better to be lowly in spirit among the humble than to divide the spoil with the proud." (Proverbs 16:19 NIV)

The word "humble" comes from the Latin word *humilis*, which literally means "low" or "grounded." It emphasizes the idea of being close to the earth or low in status in much the same way that kneeling does.

In Luke chapter 7, we find Jesus at the home of Simon the Pharisee. We also find a "sinful" woman, most likely a prostitute, who was there with an alabaster jar of perfume. Though she was sinful, we see this woman

washing Christ's feet with her tears and wiping them with her hair. Then, sparing no expense, she poured the costly perfume on His feet.

In biblical times, it was common practice for servants to wash the feet of guests. This tradition had both practical and symbolic significance, as foot washing was considered an act of hospitality, humility, and care. Since people typically wore sandals while walking on dusty, dirty roads, their feet would naturally become dirty after traveling, especially over long distances. Washing a guest's feet upon arrival was a way to refresh them and make them comfortable. If there was no servant in the home, the host would furnish a basin of water for the guest to wash their own feet. (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia) During this visit, Simon neglected to serve Him. His lack of humility was a stark contrast to the woman who was ready and willing to wash Jesus' feet with her tears and dry them with the hair on her head.

As we celebrate Christmas this year, let's remember that the Spirit of Christmas is found in the way we humbly love and serve others. It's helping with dishes after a meal, it's cooking a meal for someone in need, it's shoveling a driveway without being asked, and it's offering support without seeking recognition. The Spirit of Christmas is found in the whisper of love that reflects the humble Spirit of God. Embrace the humble Spirit of Christ this year by reflecting the light of His love.



Today's Challenge:

Find a quiet way to practice humility by putting someone else's needs ahead of your own. Whether it's letting someone go ahead of you in line, doing a task at home or work that usually gets overlooked, or offering a sincere apology when it's difficult, choose an action that requires you to step back and allow others to be first.

Who was the humblest man in the Bible, next to Jesus? And, what does the word “humble” mean when used to describe someone?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

After Jesus washed the disciples’ feet, He said, “I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.” How can we live out this commandment?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....





Reflect Christ's Character

He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth —Isaiah 53:7, NIV

Read: Luke 23

One of the first jobs I ever had was working as a cashier at Kmart. Sporting their teal-colored jacket, I made sure to say, “Thank you for shopping our Kmart,” at the end of every transaction.

After three years, I was great at my job. I knew all the codes and most of the customers. I could ring people through quickly, but even then, we had the odd price check that would slow the line down. Most people were okay with a five-minute delay—others, not so much. And Christmas? That was a whole different ball of wax. I worked there during the Cabbage Patch craze. Imagine people bursting through the doors, running, crying, yelling, and shoving each other to get their hands on a doll. Picture the toilet paper shortage of 2020 and you'll get an idea of what it was like. Parents and grandparents would line up for hours if they heard a shipment arrived. And if they went home empty-handed, they weren't too happy with us. I enjoyed working there, but Christmas was off the wall at times. One year I had a customer sit on the floor in protest because the price check was taking too long.

I learned that difficult people will always be a part of our lives. As soon as one leaves, the next one is right there in line. But here's the thing: difficult people don't have the power to determine the tone of our day—unless we let them. They don't dictate our attitude or control our response. What they

do is offer us a divine opportunity to walk in Christ-likeness, to reflect the character of our Savior.

For many, getting together with family during the holiday season is a peaceful and joyful time. But for others, it feels more like a thorn in the flesh. You're expected to go here and there, but deep down, you know it's going to be tough. We all want that Norman Rockwell Christmas—everyone smiling while Dad carves the turkey—but sometimes God gives us a challenge. Sometimes we find ourselves sitting at the table with people who know just how to push our buttons. They question your choices, your faith, maybe even the way you raise your children. Some folks seem to have a knack for making you feel small with just a few words.

But as followers of Christ, we're called to a higher standard. We don't respond like the world does. Instead, we're invited to reflect the patience and longsuffering of Jesus. When He was mocked, He didn't retaliate. When He was challenged, He didn't strike back. He could have fought, could have said more, done more, but He chose silence and surrender. Why? So that even those who stood against Him might be saved.

Sisters, may we be like the lamb—silent, still, and obedient in the hands of our Master. When the pressure builds, when comfort is stripped away, may we bear it well, trusting that God is at work even when things are hard. Jesus faced more pain and hostility than we will ever know, yet He remained steadfast in His love and patience.

Today's Challenge:

If you encounter a difficult person, take a deep breath and remind yourself that you have the power to choose your response. Choose wisely by following Christ's example of humility, patience and grace.

⓪ According to Colossians 3:12-13, how does Paul instruct believers to deal with difficult people? What specific attributes does he mention in that verse?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

⓪ How can praying for those who mistreat us change our perspective and attitude toward them?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....