

Peace is...the result of an Open Heart

Psalm 145: 14 *“The Lord lifts up all who are falling...”*

Matthew 11: 25-30 *“...learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart...”*

Reflection: *What is an open heart?*

An open heart listens to others, even when they have a difference of opinion.

An open heart sees God in all His creatures, a president as well as a beggar.

An open heart seeks reconciliation, not revenge.

An open heart focuses on what is lasting, not on material things.

An open heart seeks the truth about himself/herself and others; he/she is not proud or puffed up.

The ladder of prejudice below demonstrates one way a closed heart causes division. Negative thoughts and feelings, if left unchecked, can grow into hatred, which can go beyond destroying relationships to the death of human beings, God’s children.

The ladder of prejudice:

5 th rung	Extermination	It is important to realize that the ladder begins with speech . When we talk about a group of people in a critical way, gossip, use labels or derogatory “names,” we break down relationships, rather than build them up. This kind of talk leads to avoidance of a group of people. Then we begin to treat people from that group differently, even before we know them as individuals, which is discrimination . Discrimination can escalate to physical attack , which, in turn, leads to extermination . This can occur on an individual or national level. As individuals, we can effect change at or before the 1 st rung, in our thoughts and in our hearts.
4 th rung	Physical Attack	
3 rd rung	Discrimination	
2 nd rung	Avoidance	
1 st rung	Speech	

Action:

- **Practice opening your heart to others. (see above)**
- **Avoid racial slurs and generalizing about a culture or group in a negative way. Speak up for those who are not present, or who are powerless.**
- **Do not be afraid or intimidated by differences of ideas or culture. We can listen and try to really understand the other’s views.**
- **Commit time this month to pray for peace, as individuals and as families.**

Open my eyes, Lord, that I may see your face in all your creatures.

Open my ears, Lord, that I may hear with compassion the stories of others’ hardship.

Open my heart, Lord, that I may reach out with love to your people.