

**A Study Guide
For
"IS PEACE NEWSWORTHY?
MONITORING PEACE"**

by Glory E. Dharmaraj*

**"Peace and love are always alive in us but we are not always alive to peace and love"
-Julian of Norwich.**

The purpose of this study guide is to enable interested people to use the recent findings of peace monitoring and the data analysis, from a Christian faith perspective.

**Things needed for this study guide:
A Bible and a newspaper front/lead page**

SHALOM FEATURES

It will be helpful if you could do this guided reflection with one or two other people.

Exercise 1: Please imagine yourself walking through the transformed world pictured in one of the following passages:

Isaiah 2:1-5, Micah 4: 1-5, Isaiah 11:6-10, Isaiah 60: 17-18, & Isaiah 65:17-25

- What do you see in this vision of Shalom?
- What are the specifics of this vision?
- What strikes you as the key elements in this vision?
- What are some of the interdependent relationships which you see here?
- What is your mood as you walk through the world presented in this vision?
- Who is in charge in this vision? Does it surprise you? Why? Why not?
- If you can talk with anyone of the characters in this vision, who would you choose? What would you talk about?
- If you can place yourself in this vision, where would you be in this beautiful picture?

SHALOM:

The vision of Isaiah is God's blue print of shalom, a state of peace, justice, and harmony. It is not mere absence of armed conflict. It is more than that. Shalom is informed by interdependent relationships. It is peace between God and the created world; harmony among the living creatures and the human beings; peace on earth and peace with earth. It is characterized by the reign of God. The world itself is filled with the knowledge of God.

Exercise 2:

Pick up today's newspaper. In your mind, draw a picture of the world presented to you in the front/lead page of the newspaper.

- What kind of world did you read about, listen to, or see in the media?
- What are some of the specifics of this world presented through the media?
- What are some of the key components of the news that still linger in your mind?
- Who or what forces were in control of the action(s) covered in the key news story? Does it surprise you? Why? Why not?

- What are some of the key discrepancies or resemblances between the world presented by the media and the world presented in the Bible passage?

Exercise 3:

Now take a look at the community where you live:

- What do you see around?
- Visualize your community, with all its key institutions. What are they?
- What are the needs of your community?
- What are the hurts of your community?
- What are the positives in your community?
- Where do you place yourself in your community?
- Where do you hurt in this relationship? Where do you rejoice in this relationship with your community?
- What are some of the key discrepancies or resemblances between the community that you live in and the world presented by the biblical visions of shalom?
- What are some of the key changes which are needed to happen, in order to realize the peaceable kingdom of God presented in the shalom-landscape?

CULTURE OF PEACE

The basic characteristics of Peace Journalism or a culture of peace can be noticed by responding to the following ten *specific* questions, after reading the front page of a newspaper: The following questions relating to a culture of peace and culture of violence were designed by Professor Robert Hackett of Simon Fraser University, Canada for the purpose of monitoring peace in media, and holding media accountable for covering peace initiatives and enabling a news-environment for transforming conflict situations. Birgitta Schroeder, a graduate student from Simon Fraser University did the data analysis.

Exercise 4A:

You might want to use the front page of your newspaper to pick up the stories covered there, and ask the following questions:

- *Does the story report on the invisible effects of violence/war?*
- *Is the story people-oriented?*
- *Is the story agreement-oriented?*
- *Does the story discuss the long-term causes and/or consequences of conflict?*
- *Does it report on structural and/or cultural violence?*
- *Does the story avoid good versus bad framing?*
- *Is the story multi-party oriented?*
- *Does the story report win-win or lose-lose options?*
- *Does it discuss peaceful options?*
- *Is the article critical of 'our' role?*

CULTURE OF VIOLENCE

Exercise 4B:

The basic characteristics of War Journalism or a culture of violence can be noticed by responding to the following ten specific questions, after reading the front page of a newspaper. You might want to pick up the stories in the front page of your newspaper to answer the following questions.

- *Does the story discuss the visible effects of violence/war?*

- *Is the story elite-oriented? That is, do reporters use persons belonging to political and civil elite as their first sources for gathering information?*
- *Is the story differences-oriented? Do the reporters cover diversity of views on the issue?*
- *Does the story discuss the here and now?*
- *Does the story dichotomize the good and bad?*
- *Does the story report on direct violence?*
- *Is the story two-party oriented?*
- *Is the story zero-sum oriented?*
- *Does the article discuss military/violent options?*
- *Is the article overall supportive of 'our' role?*

Exercise 4C:

After responding to these questions, please take time to respond to the following *specific* open-ended questions, if the stories deal with conflicts in the newspaper:

- *Retell the event in your own words*
- *Find out whether the papers discuss any efforts towards peaceful resolutions*
- *Find out who if anyone is represented as the victim, the 'hero', and aggressor*
- *Identify whether there are any voices for peace*
- *Identify what the role of women is*

KEY FINDINGS

Birgitta Schroeder's analysis of last year's peace monitoring shows the following findings:

- Out of 90 front pages monitored on September 22, 2008, only four covered The International Day of Peace (September 21)
- On a scale of 0-10, peace coverage is on an average of 4.57, and war coverage is on an average of 4.94.
- 70.8% of participants reported that the stories on violent conflict caused a negative impact. The participants called for different and more contextualized and informative coverage for 43.1% of the articles on violent conflict.

WOMEN AND PEACE

- Out of 337 articles, in 251 articles, journalists used men belonging to the political and civilian elite as their first source.
- In 76.7% of articles covering violent conflict, journalists used men belonging to the political elite as the first source.
- Women are the first quoted source (or their words were paraphrased) in only 15.9% of the articles. Men are the first quoted source in more than half of all 'manifest conflict' articles.

In other words, women perspectives are under represented in news. In order to build a culture of peace, Birgitta Schroeder, the data analyst for the peace monitoring, says that news makers need to pay attention to "deliberations for solutions, resolutions and transformation of conflicts." Her larger data analysis is on a PDF for your use. Please download and adapt it for educational and non-commercial use.

PROVOKED TO PEACE

Take a few minutes during the noon of International Day of Peace, September 21, to pray earnestly for peace. "A Million Minutes of Prayer" is something you might want to join with many across the world.

Review the data analysis of Birgitta Shroeder which is on the Women's Division web. It is linked to my article on "Is Peace Newsworthy?" Continue to monitor peace in news media, using the questions on measuring the coverage of culture of peace and culture of violence. Contact your local newspapers for more coverage of peace-making efforts through peaceful means, and deliberations for solutions toward transformation of conflicts.

- We are the peacemakers we have been waiting for.
- We are the shalom-workers we have been waiting for.
- We are the peace leaders we have been waiting for.
- Everything else can wait. Peace cannot. *Peace must be dared!*
- Be provoked to peace by noticing the unexpected gorillas in our midst!

"Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9).

*Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me;
Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be.*

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