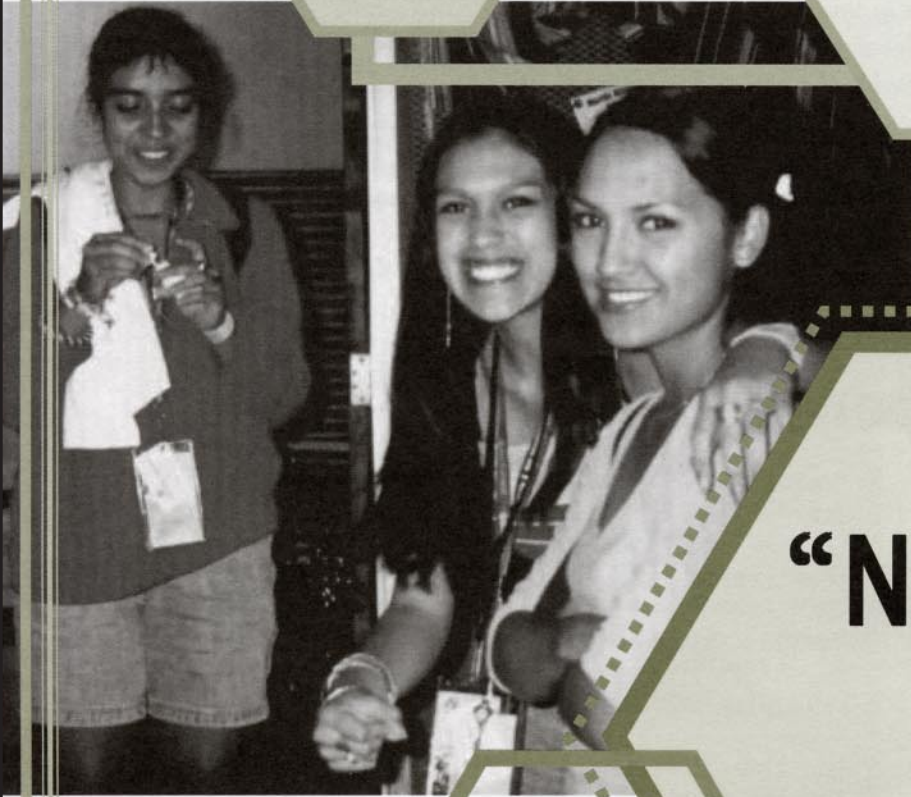


PEACE

24/7

Empowering Youth to Be Ministers of Peace and Justice



“Namaste”



Become Aware

Spiritual inspiration—In India, when we meet and part, we often say “Namaste,” which means: I honor the place in you where the entire universe resides, I honor the place in you of love, of light, of truth, of peace. I honor the place within you where if you are in that place in you and I am in that place in me, there is only one of us... “Namaste.” Ram Dass, *GRIST FOR THE MILL*, quoted in *PEACEMAKING: DAY BY DAY*, Vol. 1, p. 16

Ram Dass’s description of the Hindu greeting “Namaste” points out the essential beauty of every person. Many teens and adults have had the experience of being in love. That person often sees the best in us, and we want to be and do our best for him or her. We can have a similar effect on those around us, especially others in our family, and even some of the students we teach. Being loved ourselves, we can engage people with a little more love than ever before. Something’s different about us. Our friends and parents rightly conclude, “They must be in love.” It’s amazing how feeling loved changes our attitude and behavior. Accepting and loving others for who they are can make it possible for them to be loving and accepting in return. Patient love

elicits patient love, and violence decreases.

Popular children’s singer Red Grammer has a beautiful song title “See me beautiful.”

“See the best in me. It’s what I really am, all I want to be. It may take some time, it may be hard to find, but see me beautiful.”

Such an ability to see the best in others doesn’t happen automatically. It’s cultivated day by day in many tiny ways. We can identify times when others didn’t give up on us, especially when we were being difficult or hurtful. We can look at the positive traits and contributions of others and refuse to think the worst of them. Making a daily decision to see the best and affirm the best in them is critical.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Acknowledge Responsibility

- When has someone affirmed you, believed in you, and not given up on you, even when you were being difficult or hurtful?
- How do you see yourself? How do your peers see you? How does God see you?
- How do you want God and others to see you?
- How do you judge the beauty of those around you?
- What steps can you take to see those closest to you in a more positive way?
- What can you do to let others know how beautiful they really are?

Genesis 1:26—27 NRSV

Then God said, Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness....So God created humankind in [God s] image...[God] created them male and female.

Psalms 51:10 NRSV

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.

Luke 12:6—7 NRSV

Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten in God s sight. But even the hairs of your head are all counted. Do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

1 Peter 2:4—5 NRSV

Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God s sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Acquire More Understanding

For one week observe everyone, everywhere you go: school, work, shopping, movies, library, sporting events, church, homes of friends and family, the chat rooms on the Internet. How do the people around you treat each other? Keep a journal of your observations. Don't forget to observe yourself as well. How do *you* treat others? Does value and respect for one another change depending on where you are and who is there?

Also observe the external influences. What are the popular books to read, movies to watch, and games to play? How do magazines and television tell you to judge beauty? What are the requirements for beauty in your social environment?

Discuss your observations with others. Are your observations similar or different? Make a list of words, phrases, gestures, and body language that when used make an individual feel bad about themselves. Then make a list of words, phrases, gestures, and body language that when used make an individual feel the beauty God has placed within them.

Who Am I?

Create a collage that expresses yourself the way you would like others to see you. On a piece of poster board, paste pictures from magazines as well as small objects that represent you. Use markers to add your own words and pictures as description. Let others in the group study and review the posters to learn new things about each other.

Who Do You See?

As a group, sit in a circle with one empty chair in the middle. Take turns sitting in the middle of the circle. Those around the circle will take turns saying one thing nice about the person in the middle. No negative statements are allowed. Before switching center chair places, have everyone pray silently for that person. Repeat the cycle until everyone has had the opportunity to sit in the center chair.

What's in a Name?

Have you ever been called "Hey you?" Have you returned to a place where you have been many times and the people there still don't remember you? After a year in algebra class does your teacher still call you by the wrong name? Discuss how these situations make you feel. Why is our name important to us? Use a name reference book from the library or a website such as www.behindthename.com to look up the meaning of names. How closely do personalities reflect the names?

Using one of the suggestions below, make a personal nameplate.

- Cut blocks of wood into 2" x 2" x 8" (5cm x 5cm x 20.3cm) pieces. On the wood carve, woodburn, or paint your name. Stain and finish if desired.
- Use thin pieces of copper or tin found at craft stores. Using a blunt object, such as a pencil, write your name on the metal. Create edging designs using the same process.
- Use 3"x 5" (7.5cm x 12.5cm) cards and markers to create quick and colorful nameplates. To make them more permanent, cover with contact paper or laminate.





Take Action

- Pledge to look for beauty first in all the people you meet.
- Take time to acknowledge the beauty you see in others.
- Create a simple card that can be given to someone who seems to need a boost of self-worth.
- Greet each other with the Hindu phrase “Namaste” as a reminder that we are all created in the image of God.
- Invite the “social outcasts” to join you for lunch.
- Make a point to sit next to someone who usually sits alone.
- Begin your positive actions at home with those you love most.
- Learn the names of three new people each week. Then make a point to use the name in positive greetings and comments.

A “Don’t Miss” Movie

For a fun approach to what it means to honor the love, peace, light, and truth within a person’s soul, watch the 2001 Dream Works video

Shrek.

Become an Advocate

- Talk to your younger siblings and parents about this issue. Set an example of how to treat others by the way you treat them.
- Spread the spirit of “Namaste.” Arrange to talk to church school classes, children’s clubs, and other children’s organizations about “Namaste.”
- Start a name campaign in your congregation. Help make others aware of the need to recognize God in each individual.