



Christian Reflection
A Series in Faith and Ethics

Christian Reflection

Center for Christian Ethics
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Study Guides for **Peace and War**

These guides integrate Bible study, prayer, and worship to help us engage the Bible's alarming images of war, the teachings of Christ, and the long debates on peace and war in Christian history. Use them individually or in a series. You may reproduce them for personal or group use.

- War in the Old Testament** 2
- Can God be both a God of peace and a God of war? The ancient Israelites reached no consensus about holy war, just war, and pacifism. Yet Scripture faithfully records their long and difficult debates, for they arose out of a deep faith in God who had brought the people out of the land of Egypt.
- The War of the Lamb** 4
- The book of Revelation cross-examines the claims of divine blessing upon the civil order, especially when it is violent and economically exploitative. The War of the Lamb is a call to arms, to wage war with what at first glance seems to be no weapons at all—the words of faithful testimony.
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Focus Article:

📖 War in the Old Testament
(*Peace and War*, pp. 11-17)

Suggested Article:

📖 Kingdom Come
(*Peace and War*, pp. 46-47)

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War in the Old Testament

Can God be both a God of peace and a God of war? The ancient Israelites reached no consensus about holy war, just war, and pacifism. Yet Scripture faithfully records their long and difficult debates, for they arose out of a deep faith in God who had brought the people out of the land of Egypt.

Prayer

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 30:27-28; 31:1-5

Responsive Reading[†]

There shall come forth a shoot from the branch of Jesse,

and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him,

the spirit of wisdom and understanding.

The wolf shall live with the lamb,

the leopard shall lie down with the kid,

the calf and the lion and the fatling together,

and a little child shall lead them.

They shall not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain;

**for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.**

Reflection

“War was almost a daily part of ancient Israelite life,” John Wood notes, because their land was a corridor between powerful Egypt to the south and the successive Mesopotamian empires to the north-northeast. These violent neighbors coveted the Jewish kingdoms of Israel and Judah “as a buffer zone to protect themselves from encroaching armies bent on conquest and pillage.” Not surprisingly, a deep tension between the holy war tradition and pacifism pervades the Old Testament. (Less frequent are examples of the just war view, which says warfare is sometimes justified by nations’ shared moral standards.)

This tension is evident in Isaiah’s prophecies during the eighth century B.C. In one terrifying vision, God is a holy warrior descending on the people’s enemies – in this instance, the brutal Assyrian Empire – like a consuming fire, a raging river, a sieve of righteous judgment, and a divine rider reaching to bridle and lead them away to destruction (30:27-28). Yet this does not mean God’s people should prepare to make war, the prophet urges; rather they should trust entirely in God’s deliverance. Don’t count on horses and chariots, and don’t make a military alliance with the Egyptians, he warns, for God alone “will rise against the house of the evildoers” as a lion or like hovering birds of prey (31:1-5). Juxtaposed to these images of a warrior God is Isaiah’s amazing visualization of a peaceful kingdom (11:1-9). A messianic king from David’s family will rule with righteousness and judge the wicked. Everything will be mended by the king’s powerful testimony, not with a destructive blow (v. 4); and the whole earth will be flooded with the knowledge of God (v. 9).

The diverse biblical texts about war stirred debate in Christian history. A holy-war mentality, just-war tradition, and pacifism



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persisted because each is rooted in Scripture. “The pacifist and just-war positions are more biblically and theologically responsible... [since] they share a presumption against violence,” Wood says. “Pacifists urge that there is *always* a non-violent way to respond to conflict. Just-war theorists...insist that violence, when it is truly justified at all, must be the last resort, carried out in a restrained manner, and used with humility and grief.”

Study Questions

1. What was ancient Israel’s experience with war, according to Wood? How did its approach to war compare with the neighboring empires’ practices (*Peace and War*, pp. 12-14)?
2. Isaiah critiqued the “mystique of violence” that permeated Israelite society in the eighth century B.C., Wood notes. How does the prophet do this in each text in this study?
3. Edward Hicks’ popular series, *Peaceable Kingdom*, was a “painted sermon” from Isaiah 11:1-9. Who needs to obey this startling vision, according to Hicks (*Peace and War*, p. 47)?

Departing Hymn: “God, Whose Love is Always Stronger”

God, whose love is always stronger
than our weakness, pride and fear,
in your world, we pray and wonder
how to be more faithful here.
Hate too often grows inside us;
fear rules what the nations do.
So we pray, when wars divide us:
give us love, Lord! Make us new!

Love is patient, kind and caring,
never arrogant or rude,
never boastful, all things bearing;
love rejoices in the truth.
When we’re caught up in believing
war will make the terror cease,
show us Jesus’ way of living;
may our strength be in your peace.

May our faith in you be nourished;
may your churches hear your call.
May our lives be filled with courage
as we speak your love for all.
Now emboldened by your Spirit
who has given us new birth,
give us love, that we may share it
till your love renews the earth!

Carolyn Winfrey Gillette (© 2003 All rights reserved.)

Suggested Tune: BEECH SPRING

Rev. Gillette, co-pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Pitman, NJ, is author of *Gifts of Love: New Hymns for Today’s Worship* (Geneva Press, 2000). Contact her at (856) 589-8444 or Bruce.Gillette@ecunet.org. A list of her hymns and links to many of her texts are at www.firstpresby.org/hymnlist.htm.

[†]Isaiah 11:1-2a, 6, and 9



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Focus Article:

📖 The War of the Lamb
(*Peace and War*, pp. 18-26)

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The War of the Lamb

The Book of Revelation cross-examines the claims of divine blessing upon the civil order, especially when it is violent and economically exploitative. The War of the Lamb is a call to arms, to wage war with what at first glance seems to be no weapons at all – the words of faithful testimony.

Prayer

Scripture Reading: Revelation 3:14-22

Responsive Reading[†]

Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels surrounding God's throne and the four living creatures and the elders; they numbered myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, singing with full voice,

"Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"

Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, singing,

"To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!"

And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the elders fell down and worshiped.

Reflection

From its startling vision of Jesus personally leading the armies of heaven into battle (19:11-16) to its threat of divine war against members of the *church* (2:16), the Book of Revelation is a book of war. No wonder it gets mixed reviews from Christians! Some employ its violent imagery to promote their personal or national crusades to subjugate evil, while others are so embarrassed by its easily misinterpreted images that they ignore the book entirely.

Can we tune our ears to "listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches" through Revelation's amazing visions? "Far from renouncing Jesus' call to a peculiar life of non-violent witness as the counter-cultural sign of God's presence in the world and passionate love for it," Maier suggests, Revelation urges us to:

- ▶ *follow the slain Lamb.* It joins Old Testament holy war visions of a warring God with the unlikely image of the conquering Lord as a "Lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered" (5:5-6; 6:15-17; 12:11; 14:4-5; 19:6-8). The Lamb and his followers wield one weapon: their faithful witness to the true story of God's purposes (19:15; see 2:16 and 12:11). "Holy war waged by word of testimony takes up the violent imagery belonging to the tradition of apocalyptic warfare and transforms it in a way that finally renounces violence as the means by which God's purposes are achieved," Maier writes. This "brings us face to face with the Apocalypse's ethical demand on Christians to follow on the way of Jesus in loud and faithful witness before all that opposes God's purposes in the world."
- ▶ *resist civil religion.* Five of the seven churches that receive letters – including Laodicea – are criticized for faithlessness (2:1-3:22).



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Neither persecuted nor suffering, the self-assured Laodiceans are profiting from the 'peace' won by the empire's brutality. To be wealthy, they've looked away from the state's oppression of subject peoples and accepted its official story on peace. Revelation's "frontal assault on Roman impiety and tyranny," Maier says, can "wake Christians from a comfortable culturally-accommodating sleep to embrace lives of bold witness and vigilant discipleship. As the most subversive political writing in the New Testament it has inspired generations of Christians to cross-examine the glowing progress reports of civil government and to be suspicious when Caesar invokes divine blessing upon his order."

► *embrace a counter-cultural identity.* The War of the Lamb is waged through worship of Jesus Christ, the Empire's victim. This is no private or merely religious affair, for "heavenly-minded praise of God in Revelation always has earthly goods in view." In a final vision, "the kings of the earth," the worst economic and military exploiters, bring "their wealth as offering to the holy city Jerusalem (21:24, 26) ... [and] are caught up in God's project of healing the nations (22:2)," notes Maier. "John takes worship to the streets and demands an audience, tempted to be too accommodating and uncritical of the socio-political order around it, that it give public testimony to the Lamb who calls the unjust to account and renounces the violent with his more costly way of love."

Study Questions

1. Who is writing to the church at Laodicea (Revelation 3:15-22)? What is the church's failing? What healing is offered?
2. How are churches "tempted to be too accommodating and uncritical of the socio-political order" today?
3. How does the vision of Jesus in battle (Revelation 19:11-16) transform the view of God as a holy warrior (Isaiah 63:1-6)?
4. Revelation brims with songs of heavenly worship (4:8-11; 5:8-14; 7:15-17; 11:15-18; 12:10-12; 14:2-3; 15:2-4; 19:1-8; 22:3). What hymns do you sing that borrow from its rich imagery?

Departing Hymn: "O Hear Them Marching, Marching" (verses 1, 3, and 4)

O hear them marching, marching, the legions of good will,
the men of peace who seek not to bomb and maim and kill;
they march not to their conquest with battle flags unfurled;
but with their gentle spirit they shall subdue the world.

The men of war oppose them, and seek to bar the way,
the powers of darkness striving to thwart the coming day;
but, led by unseen forces, their hosts are marching still,
to build for future ages the kingdom of good will.

A mighty Captain leads them, the valiant Prince of Peace;
they shall possess the future, and ancient wrongs shall
cease;

O men of good will, marching to bloodless victory,
we join your hosts in building the kingdom that shall be.

Marion F. Ham (1867-1956)

Suggested Tunes: ST. THEODULPH or LANCASHIRE

†adapted from Revelation 5:11-14



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Focus Articles:

- 📖 Terrorist Enemies and Just War
(*Peace and War*, pp. 27-35)
- 📖 Moral Equality among Soldiers
(*Peace and War*, pp. 69-73)

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Terrorist Enemies and Just War

How do we respond to terrorists who don't even pretend to play by the rules? The just war tradition, if we take it seriously, calls for a response to terrorism that is radically at odds with approaches being pursued in the "war on terrorism."

Prayer†

Shield us, O God, from the darkness of soul that does not see you, and from the loneliness of heart that does not hear your voice.

Throughout life and in the valley of the shadow of death, do not forsake us; for your Name's sake. Amen.

Scripture Reading: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

Reflection

On the just war view, developed by Christians since the fourth century, violence sometimes is justified by appeal to shared human morality. On this view, war should be waged only (1) for a just cause, (2) after being declared by a legitimate authority, (3) as the last resort, (4) with good intentions, and (5) with promise of a high probability for success. Moreover, warriors should (6) target only combatants, and (7) ensure the damage done is no greater than the offense to which the war is a response.

Of course, "terrorists don't fight fair," observes Cavanaugh. If we approach "matters of organized violence through the just war tradition, terrorist tactics are a source of frustration." No wonder that some Christians suggest the rules of just war should be changed in several ways to fit this difficult and bloody "war on terrorism." Cavanaugh and Sterling, however, challenge us to apply traditional just war thinking more carefully by asking:

- ▶ *Is terrorism a war, or a crime?* Calling their actions "criminal," Cavanaugh suggests, denies terrorists a certain dignity. "To call an attack 'war' is to recognize its potential legitimacy as an act of violence (for after all, there can be acts of just *war*, but there are no just *crimes*)." Unlike war, terrorism has no explicit government support, aims at disruption rather than defeat of an enemy, does not distinguish between combatants and noncombatants, and is carried out by fighters who do not identify themselves by uniforms. Acts of terrorism are more like "hate crimes," the U. N. Security Council says.

What difference does a label make? Our response to crime is policing, not war. "War is us-versus-them, whereas policing is about promoting the common good," says Cavanaugh. We might limit our "response to the apprehension and punishment of those directly responsible...[and] require cooperation with foreign governments and transnational bodies such as the United Nations, listening to their vision of the common good for the international community."

- ▶ *Who has legitimate authority to declare war?* "Nation-states may currently have the military power to wage war, unlike [the United Nations or other transnational bodies], but we should not conflate this power with the moral authority to decide whether a particular use of force is just," Cavanaugh writes.



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On the just war view, furthermore, leaders who decide on war should be concerned for justice and the common good, “formed in the virtues of a disciple, and given authority by the Holy Spirit within the community of disciples.” Cavanaugh fears that in a modern nation state, decisions “about the justice of a particular use of force will inevitably be based on interest and power, and not primarily on the kind of justice proper to the community of Christian disciples. For this reason, the just war tradition, if taken seriously, would mandate at least that the church not abdicate to the nation-state its ability to decide when a particular use of force is just.”

► *May we demonize terrorists?* It’s easy to do, for they have committed grave evils against innocent people. Yet we must not sentimentally think we are as blameless as their victims, nor dismiss the possibility of dialogue with them. The just war criterion of last resort reminds us that “our enemies – even in the grip of evil – remain children of God, and that our own actions and intentions are never above examination.”

The just war view of the “moral equality among soldiers” is applicable here. This requires soldiers to carry out their duties with the intention of restoring enemies to peace, rather than treating them with hatred, revenge, or cruelty. Their dignity should be respected. “Even in waging war,” Augustine counseled Christian soldiers, “cherish the spirit of a peacemaker, that by conquering those whom you attack, you may lead them back to the advantages of peace; for our Lord says: ‘Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God.’” Augustine warned the greatest evil in warfare “is not the death of some who would soon die in any case,” but rather the “love of violence, revengeful cruelty, fierce and implacable enmity, wild resistance, and the lust of power, and such like.”

Study Questions

1. Should terrorists’ actions be called “war” or “crime”? What practical difference would each label make?
2. George Weigel recommends “stretching” the idea of “just cause” beyond responding to aggression, to include preemptive military action against terrorists (p. 28)? Do you agree?
3. Traditionally the criterion of last resort requires one to negotiate with an enemy before declaring war. Do you agree with Weigel that this doesn’t apply to terrorists (p. 28)?
4. Comment on Cavanaugh’s view that “the church [should] be ready and willing to step out of line with national policy when Christian discipleship demands it” (p. 32). Has the church done this effectively?
5. Are military codes of conduct enough to make just warriors?
6. How does your congregation help shape young people’s character in regard to warfare?

Departing Hymn: “Let Us Sing a Song of Peace”

†Adapted from *A Prayer Book for Soldiers and Sailors* (1941), accessed online at justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/1928/S&S_index.htm.



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Focus Article:

📖 Just Peacemaking in an Age of Terrorism
(*Peace and War*, pp. 36-43)

Suggested Article:

📖 A Gentle Embrace
(*Peace and War*, pp. 44-45)

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Just Peacemaking

We need a positive theology of peace that spells out the proactive practices for individuals and nations that work to prevent war. The ten practices of the new ethic of just peacemaking tell us what actions will dry up the sources for terrorist anger and recruitment.

Prayer†

Almighty God, from whom all thoughts of truth and peace proceed, kindle in the hearts of all people the true love of peace.

Guide with your strong and peaceful wisdom those who take counsel for the nations of the earth, so that in tranquility your kingdom may go forward until the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Scripture Reading: Matthew 5:9, 38-48

Reflection

The wisdom which God brings about in our lives is very different from the world's standard operating procedures. "But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy," says James, echoing Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. "And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace" (James 3:17-18). Righteous lives and just relationships are the result of peacemaking.

"Jesus teaches us not to get stuck in vicious cycles of revenge and hatred toward enemies," Glen Stassen notes. "But much more he instructs us to do the things that make for peace. He teaches the peacemaking practices of going to make peace with the brother where there is anger, going the second mile to make peace with the Roman soldier, loving our enemy and praying for our persecutors, practicing the justice of investing our money in God's justice and righteousness rather than hoarding it all for ourselves, and acknowledging the log in our own eye rather than putting all the blame on the other."

Stassen advocates ten peacemaking practices to reduce the threat of war and foster just relationships among people and nations: (1) support nonviolent direct action; (2) take independent initiatives to reduce threat; (3) use cooperative conflict resolution; (4) acknowledge responsibility for conflict and injustice and seek repentance and forgiveness; (5) advance democracy, human rights, and religious liberty; (6) foster just and sustainable economic development; (7) work with emerging cooperative forces in the international system; (8) strengthen the United Nations and international efforts for cooperation and human rights; (9) reduce offensive weapons and weapons trade; and (10) encourage grassroots peacemaking groups and voluntary associations.

These are realistic practices today, he urges, for they "tell us what actions will dry up the sources for terrorist anger and recruitment." They guide us to reduce the threat of biological weapons and to seek reconciliation between Israel and Palestine.

William Blake, in the cover art for *Peace and War*, celebrates the gentle embrace of peace and justice that is the goal of these just



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peacemaking practices. “True reconciliation always involves a delicate balance of peace with justice, and mercy with truth,” Hornik observes. This truth came home to peacemaker John Paul Lederach in the Nicaraguan civil war. His International Conciliation team of the Mennonite Central Committee reflected daily on Psalm 85:10, “Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other” (KJV), and imagined four voices – of mercy, truth, righteousness, and peace – coming before God with their varying perspectives on the tragic discord in Nicaragua. “The verse, when understood this way, communicated to diplomats, rebel generals, and peasants alike. As an exercise in reconciliation, the team invited individuals or small groups to identify with one of the voices and to ask, ‘What would this voice say in our situation of conflict?’ Truth, he reports, wanted to establish what really happened; mercy desired to forgive and move forward. Justice called for a full accounting of wrongdoing; peace was ready for healing to begin.”

Study Questions

1. “Failed states in which something like anarchy reigns...create havens for terrorist training, drug trading, and money-gathering,” writes Stassen (p. 38). Which peacemaking practices might end these havens? Which could dry up the ongoing sources of terrorist recruitment and anger in the world?
2. Many people fear that terrorists will use biological weapons. Do you agree with Stassen’s view on peacemaking practices that would help alleviate this threat (pp. 39-40)?
3. Imagine four voices – of mercy, truth, righteousness, and peace – coming before God with their varying perspectives on the discord in Israel and Palestine. What might they say?
4. How is your congregation involved in peacemaking? Examine the resources available from organizations like Every Church a Peace Church (www.ecapc.org), Peace & Justice Support Network of Mennonite Church USA (www.peace.mennolink.org), Bruderhof Communities (www.bruderhof.com), and Catholic Peace Fellowship (www.catholicpeacefellowship.org).

Departing Hymn: “Your Kingdom Come, O Lord” (verses 1 & 2)

Your Kingdom come, O Lord,
wide circling as the sun;
fulfill of old Your Word
and make the nations one.

One in the bond of peace,
the service glad and free
of truth and righteousness,
of love and equity.

Frederick L. Hosmer (1905), altered
Tune: ST. CECILIA (Hayne)

[†]Adapted from *A Prayer Book for Soldiers and Sailors* (1941), accessed online at justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/1928/S&S_index.htm.



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Focus Articles:

- 📖 The Armor of God
(*Peace and War*, pp. 60-63)
- 📖 Making Peace with Our Enemies
(*Peace and War*, pp. 64-68)

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Peace with Our Enemies

Peace is thrown into doubt every time we are confronted with the choice of dealing with our enemies as righteous warriors or pitiful peacemakers. In our fantasies we imagine our struggle against evil is about running to the front lines and charging into the fray. It's not. We are called to wear God's defensive armor and wield just one weapon—"the Word of God."

Prayer

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 6:10-20

Responsive Reading†

Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all.

If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."

No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads."

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Reflection

We live in such a dangerous world, Ephesians urges us to "be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power" and "put on the whole armor of God" (6:10-11). Yet we're squeamish about this vision of the Divine Warrior and the call for us to suit up.

We worry it may be misread to become "God's little action heroes ridding the world of all the bad people," Bob Fox observes. "A four-year-old elbowed his father one Sunday during the morning worship service in our church. 'You know what you get when you turn the cross upside down?' the boy asked, his active mind fixed upon the large cross suspended over the baptistery. Quickly he supplied the answer, 'You get a sword!' When you turn the cross upside down, you get a sword—that uncomfortable truth has plagued the church throughout its history in our ungodly holy wars and military crusading."

Or we may be concerned that this invitation, when properly understood, makes such radical demands. It calls us to:

- ▶ *face the real enemy*, "the devil's schemes" (6:11). We'd prefer a simpler adversary—someone we could change or eliminate to make everyone happier and the world safer. Yet evil "is a cosmic reality that exists not only in people's hearts, but in systems and cultures that sit on top of human beings and lead them to behave in malicious ways," writes Fox. It pushes us toward "a culture of death" in which "life is devalued; most people are cast as members of interest groups to be manipulated, rather than individuals to be loved; and the non-productive ones are shuffled out of sight entirely so that their needs can be ignored. Evil fosters an atmosphere where attractiveness, rather than our common creation by



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God, determines one's value. No one cares much about community anymore; each individual's reality is bounded by self-interest that brackets out the rest of the world."

- ▶ *draw the proper weapon.* Told to put on defensive armor and "stand firm," we're to wield only one offensive weapon, "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (6:17). Here's a final twist: "when we are fully armed, this is not the time to fight...it is time to pray!" Fox writes, "If we go on the offensive—setting things right by projecting our own power, judging people, and killing the bad guys—the message of the Gospel is distorted and its power is dulled by our own evil."

Not only should we resist, we should be generous toward enemies and thus "overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:21). We should be "pitiful peacemakers" rather than "righteous warriors," George Mason suggests. "I mean the word *pitiful* in its noblest sense. To have pity is not to look down on someone, but rather to look up at what that person might be if it weren't for the evil that has taken hold in the soul. It is to have mercy upon another[,]...to identify with our enemy and imagine what it might be like to live in that person's skin. Only then do we act." Indeed, this imitates the stance God takes toward the world—"the kind of pity God has for you and me in Christ Jesus."

Study Questions

1. Describe the individual pieces of God's armor that we are urged to put on in Ephesians 6:14-17. These pieces are derived from descriptions of the LORD's "garments of vengeance" in Isaiah 59:15b-19 and defensive armor in Wisdom 5:17-20. Note the similarities and differences among these three passages. Does the Book of Ephesians simply repeat or significantly transform the image of God as a Holy Warrior?
2. Comment on George Mason's statement: "We cannot be certain that our pity will bring about the transformation of our enemies, but we know that it brings about ours and makes possible theirs" (p. 67).
3. Bob Fox thinks that "[Arnold Schwarzenegger's movie character] 'The Terminator' as leader fits well with our underlying cultural programming" in America (p. 60). Do you agree?
4. Describe how some other characters in popular culture typically resort to violence in dealing with their enemies. How, according to Fox, can this popular culture lead us to misinterpret the call to put on God's armor?
5. Terry York's new hymn, "Let Us Sing a Song of Peace," reminds us that we may be fighting with others over resources, waging a "type of war/that takes from those who have the least/and gives to those with most, much more." What examples of this "type of war" can you give? Are these conflicts an inevitable aspect of our economic system, or do they depend on our choices? How can we work for peace?

Departing Hymn: "Let Us Sing a Song of Peace"

†Romans 12:17-21



Christian Reflection

A Series in Faith and Ethics

Focus Article:

📖 Restorative Justice
(*Peace and War*, pp. 74-82)

Suggested Article:

📖 A Gentle Embrace
(*Peace and War*, pp. 44-45)

What do you think?

Was this study guide useful for your personal or group study? Please send your suggestions to:

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Restorative Justice

Restorative justice, by dealing with crime and harm in a holistic way, promises to sew together the pieces of torn lives into a fabric of justice that is meaningful for victims, offenders, and the community. How can we implement restorative practices to transform our criminal justice system?

Prayer†

Merciful God, in your dear Son we have redemption, even the forgiveness of sins.

Give us such strong belief in this the only power that can abolish evil that we shall be enabled to forgive our enemies. And grant us grace not only to forgive but to accept forgiveness through Christ, the crucified. *Amen.*

Scripture Reading: Psalm 85

Reflection

During a time of national failure and sin, the people of Israel were strengthened by the surety and rich complexity of God's justice. "Let me hear what God the LORD will speak," the psalmist pleads, "for he will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts" (85:8). God's righteousness (or justice) "will go before him, and will make a path for his steps," and befitting God, this righteousness will be a fruitful blend of steadfast love, faithfulness, justice, and peace that pervades the earth from the ground to the sky (85:10-13). William Blake, in the cover art for *Peace and War*, sees this gentle embrace of justice and peace in the blood-stained cross of Jesus Christ.

Concerning the criminal justice system in America, Lorraine Stutzman Amstutz asks hard questions: "Why has prison experience become 'normal,' with over two million citizens incarcerated?" "How can we care for one-and-a-half million children who have a parent in prison?" "How do we correct the system's persistent racism (e.g., African Americans, who are only 12.3% of the population, comprise half the prisoners)?" and "How can we help crime victims find justice outside of the legal system?"

Like the psalmist, Amstutz is asking us to "hear what God the LORD will speak" concerning our national failure and sin. She offers no quick solutions, but sees promise in a restorative justice model—"the use of inclusive, collaborative processes that involve the victim, the offender, and communities in identifying harms and needs that result from offenses." In contrast to the criminal justice system, restorative justice stresses:

- ▶ *crime* is a violation or harm to people and relationships (rather than a violation of law and harm against the state). "These violations create moral obligations for the offender toward both the victims and the community," notes Amstutz, yet the criminal justice system fails to address these obligations well. "Offenders are often discouraged from even acknowledging their responsibility; instead they must look out for themselves in the adversarial legal game."
- ▶ the *aim of justice* is to identify obligations, meet needs, and promote healing (rather than establish blame and administer



Christian Reflection

A Series in Faith and Ethics

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punishment). Offenders are not well served by a system designed to “warehouse” rather than rehabilitate them. Likewise victims’ needs for healing are largely ignored.

- ▶ the *process of justice* involves victims, offenders, and community members in order to identify obligations and solutions (rather than being a conflict of adversaries, in which “the offender is pitted against the state rules, intentions outweigh outcomes, and one side wins while the other loses”). “Community collaboration is essential in order for the processes of justice to strengthen communities rather than weaken them.”

Restorative justice – emphasizing relationships, needs, and collaboration – helps us think about harm in a holistic way, and point toward long-term changes in the criminal justice system.

Study Questions

1. Comment on the view that “offenders are not well served by a criminal justice system.” According to Barb Toews, how can communities better meet the needs of offenders (p. 79)?
2. “The criminal justice system does not meet the needs of victims either,” writes Amstutz. “Victims must live with their dangerous memories” (pp. 79-80). When she and others interviewed victims in the Listening Project, what were the needs commonly expressed by victims of crime?
3. Imagine four voices – of mercy, truth, justice, and peace – coming before God with their varying perspectives on the American criminal justice system. What might they say?
4. Consider the most pressing needs in your community that might be addressed by the restorative justice model. How could your group or congregation minister to offenders, victims, or the community relationships disrupted by crime?
5. How has your group or congregation responded when one of its members was a crime victim? Or an offender?

Departing Hymn: “O Day of God, Draw Nigh” (verses 1, 2, & 3)

O Day of God, draw nigh
in beauty and in power;
come with thy timeless judgment now
to match our present hour.

Bring to our troubled minds,
uncertain and afraid,
the quiet of a steadfast faith,
calm of a call obeyed.

Bring justice to our land,
that all may dwell secure,
and finely build for days to come
foundations that endure.

Robert B. Y. Scott, (1937)

Suggested Tune: ST. MICHAEL

[†]Adapted from *A Prayer Book for Soldiers and Sailors* (1941), accessed online at justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/1928/S&S_index.htm.

Appendix: Optional Lesson Plans for Teachers

For each study guide we offer two or three optional lesson plans followed by detailed suggestions on using the material in the study guide:

- ▶ An *abridged lesson plan* outlines a lesson suitable for a beginning Bible study class or a brief group session.
- ▶ A *standard lesson plan* outlines a more thorough study.
- ▶ For some guides a *dual session lesson plan* divides the study guide material so that the group can explore the topic in two meetings.

Each lesson plan is for a 30- to 45-minute meeting, with about one-third of the time being set aside for worship.

War in the Old Testament

Lesson Plans

<i>Abridged Plan</i>	<i>Standard Plan</i>	<i>Dual Session (#1)</i>	<i>Dual Session (#2)</i>
Prayer	Prayer	Prayer	Prayer
Scripture Reading	Scripture Reading	Scripture Reading	2 Kings 6:8-23
Responsive Reading	Responsive Reading	Responsive Reading	Responsive Reading
Reflection (skim all)	Reflection (all sections)	Reflection (skim all)	Discuss members' questions on passages
Questions 1 and 2	Questions (selected)	Questions 1 and 2	Question 3
Departing Hymn	Departing Hymn	Departing Hymn	Departing Hymn

Teaching Goals

1. To introduce the diversity of biblical texts concerning war and the role of God in warfare.
2. To explore the pacifist tradition that emerges in the Old Testament.
3. To consider how the peaceable kingdom envisioned by the prophet Isaiah becomes, for Edward Hicks, a "painted sermon" for American churches.

Before the Group Meeting

Distribute copies of the study guide on pp. 2-3 and ask members to read the Bible passage in the guide. Distribute copies of *Peace and War (Christian Reflection)* and ask members to read the focus article and suggested article before the group meeting. For the departing hymn, "God, Whose Love is Always Stronger," locate the familiar tune BEECH SPRING in your church hymnal.

Begin with an Observation

"It is difficult for Americans to fathom what it must have been like for citizens of [ancient Israel and Judah] to live with the prospect of large, invading armies camped out on their doorstep on a regular, unrelenting basis. Consider that Bethel, an important city to ancient Israel, was destroyed four times in the two-hundred-year period from the time of the Judges to the establishment of the Davidic monarchy. For comparison, consider the city of Philadelphia being destroyed four times since the Declaration of Independence" (*Peace and War*, p. 12).

Prayer

Invite members to share their personal celebrations and concerns with the group. Provide time for each person to pray silently. Conclude by praying that the Spirit of God will guide members as they reflect honestly and faithfully on the roles of God in war.

Scripture Reading

Ask two group members to read Isaiah 30:27-28 and 31:1-5 from a modern translation.

Responsive Reading

The leader begins and the group reads the lines in bold print.

Reflection

This is an opportunity to introduce the diversity of Old Testament texts concerning war. The lesson simplifies this large subject by (1) focusing on the work of one prophet, Isaiah of Jerusalem in the eighth-century B.C., and (2) stressing the emergence of the pacifist tradition in the Old Testament, since it is often overlooked.

The suggested plan for a second session is to explore the pacifist tradition more carefully, beginning with 2 Kings 6:8-23, an account of Elisha's dealing with an invading army of Aramaeans. Members might study the other pacifist texts listed in Wood's article (p. 15). Members may have many other questions about war in the Old Testament. Additional study sessions might be developed to explore the holy war tradition in texts like Joshua 1-8 and the just war perspective in the passages mentioned by Wood (pp. 15-16).

Good resources for further study include John Wood, *Perspectives on War in the Bible* (Mercer University Press, 1998), Tremper Longman III and Daniel Reid, *God is a Warrior* (Zondervan, 1995), and Walter Brueggemann, *Peace* (Chalice Press, 2001). Members are familiar with Wood's good work through his article, "War in the Old Testament"; the latter two books are reviewed in "Peace and the Divine Warrior," *Peace and War*, pp. 83-87.

Study Questions

1. Living in the Syrian-Palestinian corridor between Egypt to the south and the successive empires along the Euphrates River to the north-northeast, the ancient Israelites were along a military highway running through "no man's land." Warfare, consequently, was mostly defensive and "a constant and brutal fact of daily life." Without the resources, war technologies, or large armies to protect their people and property, over the years the Israelites entered unstable and shifting defensive alliances with small nations in the corridor, and sometimes sold themselves as vassals to the larger empires.

Israel, like its neighbors, developed the idea that their God fought *with* them, in a synergism that included wise human strategy and courageous fighting. Yet, in a remarkable development, Israel went further and concluded that God fought *for* them, and that the people's role was to wait patiently for God to decide the issue.

Wood points to three other important contrasts: (1) Israel "did not glorify warfare as did their neighbors, refusing to engage in hero worship or erecting great monuments commemorating battles"; (2) "Israel's war methods...were relatively mild in comparison to other ancient cultures" (see 1 Kings 20:31); and (3) "Israel's God, Yahweh, is never viewed as merely a tribal, victory God of Israel. Yahweh is the God of *all* nations, demanding righteousness and justice for all, and punishing Israel as well as other nations for any evil and injustice." This injects humility into Israel's understanding of war. Even the securing of the Promised Land is seen as a gift, not a result of the nation's military prowess (Deuteronomy 8:11-18).

2. Members may point out how the messianic King in Isaiah 11:1-9 wields a word of testimony rather than a military weapon, and wears righteousness and faithfulness as a belt rather than a military sash. [The passages in Isaiah are complex, but as Christians we focus on certain aspects through the lens of Jesus' life as the ultimate fulfillment of these messianic promises. If members read ahead, they may notice that the King reunites Israel with Judah and leads them in a united campaign against the smaller nations in the region (11:13-14). Yet, the people will wait for God to deal with Egypt and the Assyrian Empire (11:15-16).]

Isaiah 30:27-28 and 31:1-5 surprise us with the violent image of a warrior God. Yet it is important to understand the function of these passages: the people of Israel are to wait for God to deal with the Assyrian Empire, rather than them seeking a vassal alliance with Egypt and building a military machine (31:1).

3. The artist relates Isaiah's startling vision to peace between warring nations. In many versions of *Peaceable Kingdom*, like this one from Philadelphia, Hicks depicts in the background Englishman William Penn signing a treaty with the Leni-Lenape Indians in 1682. Encourage members to list warring people groups and nations the artist might include in this "painted sermon" today as needing to obey the prophet's vision.

Hicks addressed discordant groups in the church. "He traveled widely and saw the division between orthodox Quakers in England and more liberal-minded American Quakers," Hornik notes. "The innocence of the child, hugging the neck of the lion, is Hicks' powerful statement of peace. In later versions, the animals represent different factions in the Quaker unrest." What church groups today need to heed the call to be united in peace?

Departing Hymn

If you choose not to sing the hymn, you may read the hymn text in unison, or silently and meditatively as a prayer.

The War of the Lamb

Lesson Plans

<i>Abridged Plan</i>	<i>Standard Plan</i>	<i>Dual Session (#1)</i>	<i>Dual Session (#2)</i>
Prayer	Prayer	Prayer	Prayer
Scripture Reading	Scripture Reading	Scripture Reading	Revelation 7:9-17
Responsive Reading	Responsive Reading	Responsive Reading	Responsive Reading
Reflection (skim all)	Reflection (all sections)	Reflection (skim all)	Discuss pacifism in Revelation
Questions 1 and 2	Questions (selected)	Questions 1 and 2	Questions 3 and 4
Departing Hymn	Departing Hymn	Departing Hymn	Departing Hymn

Teaching goals

1. To explore how Revelation transforms holy war imagery in order to renounce violence.
2. To read Revelation from the perspective of a Laodicean Christian – who rather than being persecuted by an empire, is too comfortable with its understanding of “peace.”
3. To consider how Christians today are tempted to be too accommodating and uncritical of the social and political order.

Before the Group Meeting

Distribute copies of the study guide on pp. 4-5 and ask members to read the Bible passages in the guide. Distribute copies of *Peace and War (Christian Reflection)* and ask members to read the focus article before the group meeting. For the departing hymn, “O Hear Them Marching, Marching,” locate either of the familiar tunes ST. THEODULPH or LANCASHIRE in your hymnal.

Begin with a Story

Harry Maier describes a group of Christians who’ve heard the call to counter-cultural identity in the Book of Revelation: “On Good Friday they gather, near the Anglican Cathedral in downtown Vancouver, a monument from another age, nestled between high-rise apartment buildings, exclusive shops, and corporate centers of commerce. Just a few of them, never very many, but enough for passersby to notice the youngsters and seniors, the moms and dads, the singles and couples dressed for the march – some in suits and dresses as though for church, others casually. From all corners of the city they come, usually the same ones, but each year there are a few new faces. Lately TV cameras and newspaper reporters have been showing up. One or two curious ones stop to see what is going on; others, embarrassed, hurry by. One of the organizers calls the gathering to attention, welcomes them and explains the route. She and a couple others pick up the heavy wooden cross constructed for the ‘crosswalk’ and lead the group across the street to their first stop, the headquarters of a national bank. They pray for wisdom in the uses of the world’s resources, for forgiveness for greed, for courage to speak up for those who pay for the beauty and majesty of the shining buildings in whose shadows they stand. Their route takes them to the Vancouver Stock Exchange, the city’s courts, the jail, to trendy shopping streets – wherever decision and image makers gather. Along the way a few are singing, ‘Worthy, worthy, worthy is the Lamb.’ The notes rise, blending with the sounds of traffic and streets coming alive below. The sun reflects gold off the glass towering above. Steel shakes off the cold from the night and sparkles. As though these girders and glass reflected a Jerusalem. As though city walls were warming themselves with song.” [Harry O. Maier, *Apocalypse Recalled: The Book of Revelation After Christendom* (Augsburg Fortress Press, 2002), p. 207.]

Prayer

Invite members to share their personal celebrations and concerns with the group. Provide time for each person to pray silently. Conclude by praying that God will grant us ears to “listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches” in the amazing visions in the Book of Revelation.

Scripture Reading

Ask two members to read Revelation 3:14 and 3:15-22 from a modern translation.

Responsive Reading

The leader begins and the group reads the lines in bold print.

Reflection

Explore members' reactions to the holy war imagery in Revelation. Many Christians don't know what to do with this eccentric, culminating book of Scripture, which has been interpreted in so many strange ways. They ignore the book and allow "end of the world" prophets to twist its texts. This is an opportunity to recover the powerful message of Revelation for those of us who live too comfortably in an emerging economic and military empire in North America.

Study Questions

1. The risen Jesus Christ is the author, here identified as the one who is obedient in responding to God's promises (the "Amen" and "true and faithful witness") and the origin of God's creation and new creation (see Colossians 1:18 for the same word "origin" describes Christ). The Laodiceans are self-deceived and slothful (in the original sense of being unconcerned and neglectful about their true good). Their healing would be to welcome Christ into their church, where he invites them to "eat with me and me with you." (They'll eat and share the Lord's life, of course – the slaughtered lamb of Passover, the bread and wine of his supper.)
2. Encourage members to list issues that congregations fail to address, both locally and nationally, such as poverty, government priorities, racial stratification, regressive taxation, state lotteries, marriage and family issues, abortion, pornography, international aid, environmental issues, the response to terrorism, etc. Avoid drawing up a politically "left" or "right" list, for these are blinders to critically examining society from a Christian perspective.
3. On Yahweh's garments is the blood of enemies trampled in the winepress (Isaiah 63:1-6). Yet, reading the vision in 19:11-16 "in the context of Revelation as a whole reveals that the robe dipped in blood (19:13) is not that of enemies, but Jesus' own (5:9; 12:11) shed on account of his life of faithful witness (1:5; 3:14)," Maier writes. "Likewise, those who ride after him and similarly conquer are those who have given up their lives in faithful witness (7:14-17; 12:11; 14:4-5). When we look to see the weapon that he and his army wields, it is nothing other than a two-edged sword issuing forth from his mouth (19:15; see 2:16) – the bold and vocal witness before enemies in faithfulness to God's purposes (see also 12:11)."
4. To "prime the pump" of memory, assign members to gather the images of heavenly worship from each passage in Revelation (casting crowns before the throne, receiving white garments, being washed in the Lamb's blood, singing "Worthy is the Lamb," and so on).

Many hymns employ this imagery. "Come, Thou Almighty King" attributed to Charles Wesley (based on Revelation 19:6), Matthew Bridges' "Crown Him with Many Crowns" (19:12), and Robert Lowry's "Shall We Gather at the River?" (22:1) are my favorites. Revival songs include Elisha Hoffman's "Are You Washed in the Blood?" and Lewis Ford's "There is Power in the Blood" (7:14). Members might mention Isaac Watts' "Come Let Us Join Our Cheerful Songs" (5:11), Charles Wesley's "O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing" (5:11), William W. How's "For All the Saints" (14:13), or James Black's "When the Roll is Called up Yonder" (20:12). Do not forget Christmas hymns – e.g., Benjamin Hanby's "Who is He in Yonder Stall?" (17:14) and Philip Nicolai's "O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright" (22:16) – or African-American spirituals such as "Down by the Riverside" (22:1), "Going to Shout All over God's Heaven," "In that Great Gittin' Up Morning," "John Saw (the Holy Number) (7:4)," "Ride On, King Jesus" (19:11), and "When the Saints Go Marching In" (7:4, 9).

Departing Hymn

If you choose not to sing the hymn, you may read the hymn text in unison, or silently and meditatively as a prayer.

Terrorist Enemies and Just War

Lesson Plans

<i>Abridged Plan</i>	<i>Standard Plan</i>	<i>Dual Session (#1)</i>	<i>Dual Session (#2)</i>
Prayer	Prayer	Prayer	Prayer
Scripture Reading	Scripture Reading	Scripture Reading	2 Samuel 3:1, 17-39
Reflection (skim all)	Reflection (all sections)	Reflection (skim all)	Discuss moral equality of soldiers
Questions 4 and 6	Questions (selected)	Questions 1, 2, and 3	Questions 4, 5, and 6
Departing Hymn	Departing Hymn	Departing Hymn	Departing Hymn

Teaching Goals

1. To understand when violence is justified according to the just war tradition.
2. To explore the application of just war criteria to the “war on terrorism.”
3. To consider what prophetic role the church should play in the decision to go to war.
4. To consider what role the church should play in forming the character of a just warrior.

Before the Group Meeting

Distribute copies of the study guide on pp. 6-7 and ask members to read the Bible passage in the guide. Distribute copies of *Peace and War (Christian Reflection)* and ask members to read the focus articles before the group meeting.

Begin with a Comment

Bill Cavanaugh concludes by reminding us: “The just war tradition developed in a penitential context. Christian just-war advocates would do well to approach terrorism in the same spirit. At its best, the just war tradition does not simply justify violence but questions it, both ‘ours’ and ‘theirs.’ In doing so, the hope is to build bridges – not just burn them – between us and our enemies, so that the common good of all of God’s creation is actively pursued. If this does not sound like statecraft, it is because it is not. The church must take a prophetic role in resisting the violence of both state and non-state actors, and witnessing to the peace of Jesus Christ in a violent world” (*Peace and War*, p. 34). How should the church speak prophetically to a nation absorbed in a “war on terrorism”?

Prayer

Invite members to share their personal celebrations and concerns with the group. Provide time for each person to pray silently and then ask members to read aloud together the prayer in the study guide.

Scripture Reading

Ask a group member to read Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 from a modern translation.

Reflection

This lesson offers a framework for Christians to discuss prayerfully the morality of war and the response to terrorism. The just war perspective insists that “violence, when it is truly justified at all, must be the last resort, carried out in a restrained manner, and used with humility and grief” (*Peace and War*, p. 17). The first five criteria cited in the lesson—just cause, declaration by a legitimate authority, last resort, good intention, and high probability for success—offer guidance about a nation’s decision to wage war. They delineate *jus ad bellum* (justice in going toward war). The other criteria—targeting only combatants and limiting damage—along with good intention of individual soldiers, describe *jus in bello* (justice in fighting a war). The moral equality among soldiers, as Sterling shows, is an implication of these criteria for individual warriors.

The just war tradition cannot be reduced to a list of rules about when war is justified. It presumes the character of decision makers and warriors will be formed in justice and other virtues of Christian discipleship.

Sterling talks about the formation of a just warrior's character. Cavanaugh suspects that leaders in a liberal democracy make decisions for political reasons, rather than from a concern for justice and the common good. He is suspicious of attempts to "stretch" the just war criteria to justify the "war on terror."

If the discussion is extended to a second session, reflect on King David's treatment of Abner (2 Samuel 3), for this event shaped Ambrose's view on the formation of a warrior's character.

Study Questions

1. "War," for Weigel, highlights the seriousness of terrorist acts. Cavanaugh prefers "crime" in order to draw proper guidelines for responding to terrorism. He contrasts the methods of war and policing: "Policing seeks to secure the common good within a community, and is therefore limited by the law and customs of that community. War pits one community against another, and is therefore less restrained by the rule of law. War is expeditionary, taking the capacity to kill and destroy into someone else's territory. In other words, war is us-versus-them, whereas policing is about promoting the common good amongst us. Because of this, policing has an inherent mandate to minimize violence; in policing, lethal force is the last resort, whereas in war it is the first. In war, soldiers are less restrained by law, for they serve simultaneously as judges and executioners for those they kill" (p. 30).
2. A preemptive military strike would target a terrorist group (or country harboring terrorists) before it commits any aggression against us. Is this ever in the interest of peace? If so, who should make this decision—a nation-state or some international body like the United Nations or N.A.T.O.? Are there dangers in extending the "just cause" criterion in this way?
3. Weigel says diplomacy is a waste of time. "Terrorists, by definition, do not play by the rules, diplomatic or otherwise," he writes. "I can't see how it makes moral sense to argue that one must first attempt to negotiate with people who regard negotiation as weakness, who think of the 'other' as vermin to be exterminated, and for whom acts of mass murder are deemed religiously praiseworthy." Encourage members to discuss whether Weigel's characterization applies equally to Osama bin Laden, Saddam Hussein, and the leaders of nations such as North Korea and Iran. Is this an accurate portrayal, or a demonizing of the enemy?
4. Encourage members to reflect on how their congregations and church bodies have responded to the war on terrorism and the invasion of Iraq. More generally, how should churches exercise their prophetic role in a modern liberal democracy? Should only individual Christians speak out, or should informed groups of Christians, ministers, leaders of church organizations, etc. make statements? How can these statements avoid being politically partisan (i.e., by reflecting on the issue from a theological perspective rather than the point of view of a political party)? Is there any difference between a congregation exercising its prophetic voice and becoming a political action committee?
5. "Codes of conduct—in international laws and conventions, or merely informal—help many service members to act appropriately in times of war," says Sterling. "Most soldiers, like most people in general, want to 'do the right thing,' and this desire helps deter unlawful behavior. Yet when soldiers are consumed with fear or anger in battle, it is unrealistic to expect them to conduct themselves appropriately merely because they have studied abstract codes or manuals" (p. 71). If so, codes of conduct are not enough; we must know and love justice—i.e., know by second nature what is right and desire to do it even when it is difficult). How do we develop this desire and knowledge—through military training, school work, role modeling at home or in church, community service, or church education, etc.?
6. Reflect on how worship, Bible study, and ministry opportunities form young people's character in justice, courage, and wisdom. Are they exposed to the rich Christian debates on pacifism and just war thinking? In what contexts do they confront and examine warfare?

Departing Hymn

"Let Us Sing a Song of Peace" is on pp. 58-59 of *Peace and War*. If you choose not to sing the hymn, you may read the hymn text in unison, or silently and meditatively as a prayer.

Just Peacemaking

Lesson Plans

<i>Abridged Plan</i>	<i>Standard Plan</i>
Prayer	Prayer
Scripture Reading	Scripture Reading
Reflection (skim all)	Reflection (all sections)
Questions 1 and 2, or 4	Questions (selected)
Departing Hymn	Departing Hymn

Teaching Goals

1. To understand the ten practices of just peacemaking, and to explore how these practices can be a framework for responding to terrorism.
2. To introduce the complex relationships among mercy, truth, righteousness (justice), and peace in conflict resolution.
3. To explore resources for individuals and congregations to become more involved in peacemaking, both locally and internationally.

Before the Group Meeting

Distribute copies of the study guide on pp. 8-9 and ask members to read the Bible passage in the guide. Distribute copies of *Peace and War (Christian Reflection)* and ask members to read the focus article and suggested article before the group meeting. For the departing hymn, "Your Kingdom Come, O Lord," locate the tune ST. CECILIA (Hayne) in your church hymnal or at www.cyberhymnal.org. If you plan to discuss the fourth study question, ask several group members to review the resources available online from Every Church a Peace Church, Bruderhof Communities, Peace & Justice Support Network of Mennonite Church USA, and Catholic Peace Fellowship.

Begin with a Comment

"Isn't this the way of the world?" observes George Mason. "Violence begets violence, revenge breeds revenge, and retaliation produces retaliation ad nauseam and ad infinitum. The eye-for-an-eye, tooth-for-a-tooth principle, which is often mistakenly cited as the pinnacle of biblical justice, originally was given to limit vengeance and prevent violence from getting out of hand. But taking justice into our own hands by chopping off the hand of an enemy for stealing does nothing but hand us a lifetime of animosity and worry.... If we hate our enemy, we may be doing what comes naturally, and we may even be justified for doing it, but we only end up caught in a cycle of hatred that will always, always, always end badly for everyone, including us" (*Peace and War*, pp. 64-65). The gospel of Jesus Christ breaks the cycle of vengeance. But how do we practice his peacemaking in an age of terrorism?

Prayer

Invite members to share their personal celebrations and concerns with the group. Provide time for each person to pray silently and then ask members to read aloud together the prayer in the study guide.

Scripture Reading

Ask a group member to read Matthew 5:9, 38-48 from a modern translation.

Reflection

This study introduces a realistic framework for Christian peacemaking. Stassen and others use the phrase "just peacemaking" to emphasize that a rich and lasting peace includes righteous lives and just relationships among people. James 3:17-18 also highlights this link of peace to personal righteousness and interpersonal justice. The Greek word *dikaiousune*, which is translated "righteousness" in 3:18, also means "justice" (as in Acts 24:25, Romans 3:5, and Hebrews 11:33).

The study questions encourage group members to review Stassen's application of the practices of just peacemaking to deliverance from terrorism, deliverance from biological weapons, and deliverance for Israel and Palestine. It also would be valuable for members to consider how the practices might apply to other local or international conflict situations that concern them.

Study Questions

1. The just peacemaking practices of (5) *advancing democracy and human rights* and (6) *fostering just and sustainable economic development* might eliminate the havens for terrorism, Stassen suggests. "The problem is that present policy emphasizes military action too much and community development and civil-society development too little" (p. 39).

Many terrorists are recruited from Muslim communities in the Middle East. "The history of American dealings with the Muslim world is long and complex," Cavanaugh observes. "We must actively explore that history in dialogue with Muslim friends and enemies, and not allow terrorism to impose a fog of amnesia on our dealings with others. Where foreign policy is driven by narrowly-defined national and corporate interest, Christians must realize our vocation to confess the Christian story truthfully and speak truth to power" (p. 34). Members might discuss the value of peacemaking practices such as (3) *use cooperative conflict resolution*, (4) *acknowledge responsibility for conflict and injustice and seek repentance and forgiveness*, and (10) *encourage grassroots peacemaking groups and voluntary associations* to open dialogue with these Muslim communities and mutually address their concerns about the United States and western democracies.

2. Small, transportable, and difficult to detect, a biological weapon could cause an epidemic of disease. "Were terrorists to introduce a fatal virus into an airplane flying from London or Paris to New York (it would not be detected by the x-ray machines), passengers could transmit the infection to their different cities for a week before their symptoms appeared, and the disease might spread further as doctors take another week to diagnose it" (p. 39).

Members may discuss Stassen's view that several peacemaking practices—(7) *work with emerging cooperative forces in the international system*, (8) *strengthen the United Nations and international efforts for cooperation and human rights*, and (9) *reduce offensive weapons and weapons trade*—would urge the United States to endorse verification procedures for the Biological Weapons Treaty, such as "annual declarations by nations describing their programs and factories that could be used to produce biological weapons, random visits to declared facilities, and short-notice inspections of suspected facilities" (p. 40).

3. Subdivide into four groups—for mercy, truth, righteousness, and peace—and brainstorm on what each perspective, when narrowly understood to the exclusion of the others, might say about the discord in Israel and Palestine. Should we combine the insights of the four viewpoints? Or should one perspective be privileged over the others?

Members may wish to substitute in this question another local or international conflict situation of concern to them. For more about John Paul Lederach, see "The Heart of Reconciliation," *Forgiveness*, issue 1 of *Christian Reflection: A Series in Faith and Ethics*, pp. 78-84. This article is available free online in the ethics library at www.ChristianEthics.ws.

4. Encourage members to discuss how worship, mission projects, and church education programs shape their attitudes toward peace. Do their congregations openly discuss issues of peace? Ask members to describe the resources available online from Every Church a Peace Church, Peace & Justice Support Network of Mennonite Church USA, and Catholic Peace Fellowship—including sermons, bulletin inserts, worship materials, lesson plans, children's activities, short articles about peace issues, and stories about other congregations' experiences. Bruderhof Communities offers excellent free e-books for group study.

Departing Hymn

If you choose not to sing the hymn, you may read the hymn text in unison, or silently and meditatively as a prayer.

Peace with Our Enemies

Lesson Plans

<i>Abridged Plan</i>	<i>Standard Plan</i>	<i>Dual Session (#1)</i>	<i>Dual Session (#2)</i>
Prayer	Prayer	Prayer	Prayer
Scripture Reading	Scripture Reading	Scripture Reading	1 Peter 1:13-25
Responsive Reading	Responsive Reading	Responsive Reading	Responsive Reading
Reflection (skim all)	Reflection (all sections)	Reflection (skim all)	Discuss cultural views of violence
Questions 1 and 2	Questions (selected)	Questions 1 and 2	Questions 3, 4, and 5

Teaching Goals

1. To understand the nature of the real enemy that we are called to resist, which Fox describes as “systems and cultures that sit on top of human beings.”
2. To appreciate the paradoxical call in Ephesians to put on God’s armor in order to proclaim the gospel of peace.

Before the Group Meeting

Distribute copies of the study guide on pp. 10-11 and ask members to read the Bible passage in the guide. Distribute copies of *Peace and War* (Christian Reflection) and ask members to read the focus articles before the group meeting.

Begin with a Story

“Orelander Love had never met a Christian, at least not one whom he knew really followed Christ, until he met Ms. Jeanette D. Aldred. She was eighty-eight when they met while Orelander Love was robbing her house. He thought the house was empty, but when he found Ms. Aldred in her bed, he panicked and started hitting her over the head. [She] did what Jesus did under the worst circumstance, under the threat of her life and limb. She said to me, “Jesus loves you. I forgive you. God bless you.” She said these things even as I beat her, kicked, robbed and cursed her. She did not deserve it, but she did as Christ did.’

“In days following, Mr. Love continued to rob houses, but he was haunted by the words of the woman who forgave him even as he hurt her. He was finally arrested and when the police questioned him about other burglaries, they mentioned Jeanette Aldred’s name. He began to cry. He confessed to the crime and wanted more than anything else to speak to her family. He never was able to see her again personally, but his life has not been the same since their encounter. Orelander Love has been a Christian now for six years. In a letter composed after Jeanette’s death at age 95, he wrote: ‘I do not now care about the years I will spend in prison or the media or the church screaming for vengeance. It was God with the rod that I feared. Ms. Aldred wanted no vengeance. She wanted me saved. Well, I have been saved...I praise God to every inmate who will hear. I thank God for Ms. Aldred.’

“This is what the Apostle Paul means by overcoming evil with good” (*Peace and War*, p. 67).

Prayer

Invite members to share their personal celebrations and concerns with the group. Provide time for each person to pray silently. Conclude by praying that God will prepare members with faithfulness and discernment of the word of God, “to proclaim the gospel of peace.”

Scripture Reading

Ask a group member to read Ephesians 6:10-20 from a modern translation.

Responsive Reading

The leader begins and the group reads the lines in bold print.

Reflection

Ephesians 6:10-20, even though it employs holy warrior imagery, does not teach the struggle against evil is about running to the front lines, charging into the fray, and setting things right by our own power. This ‘up-

side-down' interpretation of the passage would, like the imagination of the four-year-old boy whom Bob Fox describes, turn the cross into a sword. Fox suggests a more adequate interpretation of the Ephesians passage by examining (1) the nature of the real enemy and (2) the description of God's armor.

George Mason gives an insightful reading of the Apostle Paul's directive to "overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:21). This requires more than resisting evil (as in the Ephesians passage); it means that we deal with our enemies with forgiveness.

If members want to extend this study of making peace with enemies over two sessions, they might discuss the ideas sketched above in the first session, and then discuss the way popular culture influences our attitudes toward enemies in the second session.

Study Questions

1. Form three groups to study the context and "armor" in each passage. An important similarity is the "breastplate of righteousness" and "helmet of salvation" (or, "impartial justice" in Wisdom). Ephesians makes important changes: a shield of faith replaces the wisdom shield (Wisdom); and a belt of truth and the shoes that guide one toward peace (Ephesians) replace the "garments of vengeance" and "mantle of fury" (Isaiah), or a sword of "stern wrath" (Wisdom). The overall context also changes, from God attacking the nations in order to restore justice (Isaiah) or leading the creation to defeat the opponents of righteousness (Wisdom), to Christ's disciples defending against "the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians).

Wisdom 5:17-20 is in the Apocrypha: "The Lord will take his zeal as his whole armor, and will arm all creation to repel his enemies; he will put on righteousness as a breastplate, and wear impartial justice as a helmet; he will take holiness as an invincible shield, and sharpen stern wrath for a sword, and creation will join with him to fight against his frenzied foes."

2. Pity doesn't manipulate our enemies, but changes how we look at them: "I mean the word *pitiful* in its noblest sense. To have pity is not to look down on someone, but rather to look up at what that person might be if it weren't for the evil that has taken hold in the soul. It is to have mercy upon another and to see, as we say, there but for the grace of God go I. We try to identify with our enemy and imagine what it might be like to live in that person's skin" (p. 67). We have pity on enemies because this is how God views us. By changing our hearts and breaking the cycle of vengeance, pity offers our enemies a chance for repentance.
3. The Terminator is a cyborg designed by a computer system to eliminate its human enemies. He's "always on the offensive" and prefers "a first-strike policy to get rid of the bad guys." How do we see the role of military and political power in the world?
4. Think about popular movies, TV shows, music, and novels. Summarize the typical ways of dealing with enemies in genres (police and detective dramas, science fiction, "comic book" hero stories, westerns, war stories, or "reality" TV shows), or by stock characters portrayed by Clint Eastwood, Harrison Ford, Mel Gibson, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Bruce Willis, Jean-Claude Van Damme, The Rock, or Stephen Seagal. These can tempt us to think God wants "evil to be fully defeated and utterly destroyed" by "God's little action heroes ridding the world of all the bad people and things," Fox says. "In our fantasies as we imagine the struggle against evil, it's about running to the front lines and charging into the fray" (p. 60).
5. Agriculture in poor countries may be distorted toward exporting coffee, tea, fruits, beef, or fish. Oil and minerals may be extracted at low cost. Refineries, power plants, or heavy industries may be built in poor neighborhoods. Companies may move jobs to cheaper labor markets. Select one or two issues and discuss how we might work for peace.

Departing Hymn

"Let Us Sing a Song of Peace" is on pp. 58-59 of *Peace and War*. If you choose not to sing the hymn, you may read the hymn text in unison, or silently and meditatively as a prayer.

Restorative Justice

Lesson Plans

<i>Abridged Plan</i>	<i>Standard Plan</i>
Prayer	Prayer
Scripture Reading	Scripture Reading
Reflection (skim all)	Reflection (all sections)
Questions 1 and 2	Questions (selected)
Departing Hymn	Departing Hymn

Teaching Goals

1. To introduce the principles of restorative justice.
2. To explore how the criminal justice system fails to address the needs of offenders, victims, and the community relationships torn by crime.
3. To consider how a congregation might discover and minister through restorative justice to the pressing needs of offenders, crime victims, and the community.

Before the Group Meeting

Distribute copies of the study guide on pp. 12-13 and ask members to read the Bible passage in the guide. Distribute copies of *Peace and War (Christian Reflection)* and ask members to read the focus article and suggested article before the group meeting. For the departing hymn, “O Day of God, Draw Nigh,” locate the familiar tune ST. MICHAEL in your church hymnal.

Begin with a Story

Lorraine Stutzman Amstutz begins with this story of restorative justice:

“The sacred meeting occurred in the men’s prison in Frackville, PA, between an inmate and the mother of the man he was convicted of killing a decade before. Another facilitator and I, who met with them for six hours, were standing on holy ground as they began cautiously, but then became immersed in conversation....

“Each knew what they wanted to say to the other. In a moment of silence at the close of the session they simply looked at one another, each one knowing they had received what they needed to hear. Then they hugged.

“A few weeks later I phoned the woman to ask her an important question. The inmate had talked to his own mother after the meeting, and she had written a letter to the victim—mother to mother. I was calling to know if the woman wanted to read this letter from the inmate’s mother. She was astounded. ‘Isn’t this what we were put on this earth to do,’ she told me, ‘to be in community with one another, to find the connections where we can?’” (*Peace and War*, pp. 74-75).

Prayer

Invite members to share their personal celebrations and concerns with the group. Provide time for each person to pray silently and then ask members to read aloud together the prayer in the study guide.

Scripture Reading

Ask a group member to read Psalm 85 from a modern translation.

Reflection

The violence of crime against persons and property can rend the fabric of individual lives, families, and communities. Restorative justice is a model that is being developed by Christians who want a more holistic response to crime. Begin the study by reflecting on the psalmist’s conception of God’s righteousness (or justice) as a rich blend of mercy, truth, justice, and peace. Encourage the group to use this biblical framework to evaluate the American criminal justice system and the alternative model of restorative justice.

If group members are aware of the unmet needs of criminal offenders and victims, move ahead to discuss questions 4 and 5. Otherwise, explore these needs by discussing questions 1, 2, and 3. Be sensitive to the experience of members with crime. Some members or their close relatives may be suffering as victims. Others may have been offenders. As these group members are willing, encourage them to share their personal stories. Yet, keep the discussion focused on the solutions proposed by restorative justice, and your opportunities for healing ministry to offenders, victims, and local community relationships damaged by crime.

Study Questions

1. Based on her interviews with prisoners in Pennsylvania, Toews urges caring communities “to invite incarcerated men and women into dialogue to learn about their experiences and to elicit their insight on the resources and programs they need. Communities should provide opportunities for meaningful accountability and making amends that do not depend solely on face-to-face interaction with victims and offenders. And we should respect the life experiences of offenders, including those with victimization, and find restorative ways to address these experiences without absolving offenders of responsibility to their victims” (p. 79). What are the closest jails and prisons, and what sort of offender is incarcerated there? Are they local men and women, or do their families live at a great distance? What opportunities do they have for worship, education, and interaction with the community?
2. Being victimized by crime “creates crises of self-identity, meaning, and personal relationships that impact all aspects of life,” Amstutz writes. “We need an appropriate sense of control over our lives and a certain amount of personal power; yet for victims, someone else has taken control over their lives in a way that leaves them feeling vulnerable and dehumanized. And they may have a crisis of religious faith, if they had a belief that God would keep them safe” (p. 79). Though victims deal with their trauma in individual ways and there is no formula for healing, many need “to incorporate their encounter with crime into their lives” by retelling their story to others. In the Listening Project she discovered that victims feel neglected and betrayed by the criminal justice system. They want to articulate their own needs, and not be represented only by surrogates (e.g., prosecutors). The Listening Project report is online at www.restorativejustice.org/rj3/Full-text/ListeningProject.pdf.
3. Subdivide into four groups—for mercy, truth, righteousness, and peace—and brainstorm on what each perspective, to the exclusion of the others, would emphasize as important in the criminal justice system. Of which features of the system would each perspective approve? Of which aspects would it disapprove? As John Paul Lederach used this exercise, he discovered that “truth...wanted to establish what really happened; mercy desired to forgive and move forward; justice called for a full accounting of wrongdoing; peace was ready for healing to begin” (p. 45). Is there value in combining the insights of the four viewpoints? Or should one perspective be privileged over the others in evaluating a system of justice?
4. After members brainstorm on this question in a general way, they might focus on one type of crime or on a single group—such as youth offenders, victims of physical abuse, relatives of murder victims, etc. Are there opportunities for joining other congregations or groups in an appropriate ministry? Do members know of successful ministries in other cities?
5. Answering this question may be an opportunity to minister to a member who has suffered as a crime victim or as an offender. Encourage members to reflect on how the congregation responded through its worship, education programs, and counseling, as well as ministries of service to victims, offenders, and their families. This is an opportunity to evaluate the response and to make plans for future ministries.

Departing Hymn

If you choose not to sing the hymn, you may read the hymn text in unison, or silently and meditatively as a prayer.