

# Lesson Plan & Study Guide



## Ethical Issues: War and Peace

**iFOLLOW**

Walking with Jesus

The iFollow Discipleship Series



## About the iFollow Discipleship Series Pastor's Edition

### Categories

The iFollow Discipleship Series is designed to be used in congregations to assist people in their pursuit of God. This assumes that individuals are in unique places in their journey and there is no perfect set of lessons that everyone must complete to become a disciple—in fact discipleship is an eternal journey. Therefore the iFollow curriculum is a menu of milestones that an individual, small group, or even an entire church can choose from. The lessons can be placed in three general categories: **Meeting with Jesus** (does not assume a commitment to Jesus Christ); **Walking with Jesus** (assumes an acceptance of Jesus Christ); and **Working with Jesus** (assumes a desire to serve Jesus Christ).

### Components

Each lesson has a presenter's manuscript which can be read word for word, but will be stronger if the presenter puts it in his/her own words and uses personal illustrations. The graphic slides can be played directly from the Pastor's DVD or customized and played from a computer. There are also several group activities and discussion questions to choose from as well as printable student handouts.

### Usage

The lessons are designed to be used in small groups, pastor's Bible classes, prayer meetings, seminars, retreats, training sessions, discussion groups, and some lessons may be appropriate sermon outlines.

### Credits

**Curriculum Development:** The iFollow Discipleship Series Pastor's Edition curriculum development was lead by the **Center for Creative Ministry**. **General Editor:** Monte Sahlin; **Assistant Editor:** Debbonnaire Kovacs; **Directional Advisory:** Brad Forbes, Carole Kilcher, Ceri Myers, Cesar Gonzalez, Clayton Kinney, Curtis Rittenour, Dave Osborne, Dave VanDenburgh, Gerry Chudleigh, Jane Thayer, Jerry Thomas, John Appel, Jose Rojas, Kim Johnson, Nicole Chao, Paul Richardson, Rich DuBose, Shasta Nelson, William Sutton; **Pastoral Advisory:** Claudio Consuegra, Collette Pekar, Dave Hutman, Don Driver, Fredrick Russell, Jerry Nelson, Jesse Wilson, Leslie Bumgardner, Loren Fenton, Rebecca Brillhart; **Unit Authors:** Alberto Valenzuela, Althea Pineda, Corienne Hay, Debbonnaire Kovacs, Ed Dickerson, Gianluca Bruno, Gil Bahnsen, Greg Nelson, Jack Calkins, James Whibberding, Karen Collum, Monte Sahlin, Norma Sahlin, Pam Splawinski, Patty Ntihuka, Reinder Bruinsma, Ryan Bell; **Additional contribution** by Maria Ovando-Gibson; **Additional editing:** Dave Gemmell, Meredith Carter; **Graphic Design:** Mind Over Media; **Layout:** Paul D. Young; **Web Development:** Narrow Gate Media.

### License

**iFollow Discipleship Pastor's Edition** is produced by the NAD Church Resource Center for use by Seventh-day Adventist Congregations in Bermuda, Candada, and the United States. Churches may freely copy the lessons and PowerPoints for use within their congregations. Any other usage is prohibited without prior written consent from the NAD Church Resource Center. iFollow Discipleship, Copyright 2010, the North American Division Corporation of Seventh-day Adventists. NAD Church Resource Center, 12501 Old Columbia pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904, 301-680-6339.



**iFOLLOW**

[www.ifollowdiscipleship.org](http://www.ifollowdiscipleship.org)

# Ethical Issues: War and Peace

## Learning Objectives

1. Look at the Christian responsibility in times of war
2. Explore the reasons for war
3. Understand God's will in an imperfect world
4. Personally grapple with the issues of war and peace

## Content Outline

- A. The reality of war
- B. The necessity of war
- C. Patriotic duty
- D. Striving for peace
- E. Wars and rumors of wars

## Background Material for the Presenter

War has been glamorized by Hollywood for decades. It shows the bravery, the valor, the dedication and heartwarming relationships between fellow soldiers. It portrays one country as “good” and another country as “bad.” Explosions and gunfire are just a part of hair-raising action scenes, and death is only seen as a loss when it happens to a main character. Hollywood simplifies war down to the elements of clever storytelling. But this is not the reality of war.

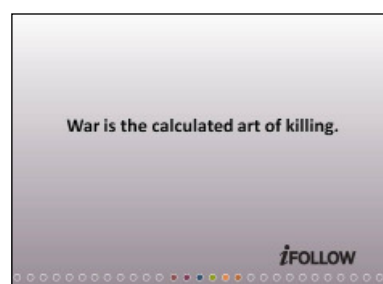
War kills. It takes the lives of countless young men and women, all of whom have parents whose hearts will never heal from the loss ... spouses and sweethearts waiting to see them again, but never will ... families who need them ... friends who pray for them. Every person who dies has a story of their own. They have dreams for the future, goals they long to achieve. They have personalities, senses of humor, memories of childhood and a fear of dying. War kills people, not numbers. And those people are just as human, regardless of which side of the war they happen to be on. No one



had a choice of which country they would be born into, or what ethnicity they would belong to.

War is not so easily cut and dried. There isn't one good nation and one evil one. There are governments that pit themselves against each other and human beings who are caught in the middle, soldiers and civilians alike. We are human, and it is easy for us to acquire an "us and them" mentality. We are the good guys. They are obviously the bad ones to be hated and fought. Even in the Bible, David's psalms show a good example of this very human tendency to wish evil on enemies. It is this very desire to hurt "them" that spurs on the development of war technology.

War is the calculated art of killing. Over the centuries, humanity has gotten more and more skilled in demolishing large numbers of people. From foot soldiers with swords and knives to mounted cavalry who could move in to kill more swiftly and retreat more easily, mankind put its creativity and ingenuity into war. We have advanced beyond cavalry and chariots to a frightening degree. We now have tanks, machine guns, grenades, missiles, flame throwers and electromagnetic weapons that wipe out the electrical devices that society depends on. We have biological and chemical warfare where a relatively small amount of a deadly chemical or a lethal bacteria or virus is released in a highly populated area. We have fighter jets, bombers, submarines, aircraft carriers and sea fighters. The technology is astounding, all of it focused on the annihilation of as many people at one time as possible. (Technology of War)



Terrorism is not a new method of waging war, but it is a newly perceived threat in North America. Terrorism uses secrecy to its advantage. Someone looking completely ordinary will be carrying a bomb, willing to sacrifice their own life to kill as many people as possible in a crowded area. Sometimes, as we experienced in 9/11, airplanes are high-jacked or flown kamikaze style into buildings. Loss of life is the main goal; however, there is more to the plan than simply killing. The ones who practice terrorism are also aiming at the psychological state of the people as well. They want them to live in fear; to always be looking behind them; to not feel safe in their own homes or with their own neighbors. Terrorist attacks are normally planned very carefully in advance, using "undercover" participants. They are funded financially through secret supporters or through organized crime. The attack is planned to be shocking and high profile. A terrorist attack is only successful if people know about it!

Perhaps the most frightening advances we have made in war technology are in nuclear weapons. Humanity now has the ability to completely destroy itself with the push of a button. When a nuclear bomb drops, the amount of destruction depends on

iFollow  
Discipleship  
Series:  
Walking with  
Jesus

Action Plan  
& Presenter  
Notes

**Ethical  
Issues:**  
War and  
Peace

2

the distance a person is from the hypocenter, or ground zero. Several things cause the catastrophic damage of a nuclear explosion. First there is the intense heat from the blast. There is also immense pressure from the shock wave as well as radiation that melts everything in its path. At the hypocenter of the bomb blast, everything is completely vaporized. As you move away from the hypocenter, the destruction consists more of burns from the heat and damage done from the shock wave and flying debris. However, this is not the end. The radiation from the blast has more lasting effects. The radioactive particles spread in the prevailing winds and fall into drinking water, are breathed in and swallowed by people inadvertently. The radiation causes cancer, leukemia, birth defects and infertility. The cells in the body that actively divide are the ones that are affected. If several nuclear bombs were to go off on our planet at once, a nuclear winter could swallow us into a planet-wide ice age from the clouds of dust and debris that would be caught in the atmosphere and block out the sun. It is very unlikely that anything living, save perhaps cockroaches, would survive. (Freudenrich)

War is devastating. It not only kills, but it ruins the lives of the ones left living. We have become too accomplished in the art of killing. War tears apart nations, demolishes families, promotes distrust and hatred, and leaves the survivors psychologically scarred from the hell they have endured. The devil loves to see humanity suffer. He loves to see people inflicting pain and violence on each other. Not only does it plunge us into a hell on earth, but it pulls our focus away from the loving God who longs to heal us. As the official Adventist statement on peace says:

“Since the Fall of man, strife has been a perennial fact of human existence. ‘Satan delights in war. ... It is his object to incite nations to war against one another.’—*The Great Controversy*, p. 589. It is a diversionary tactic to interfere with the gospel task. While global conflict has been prevented during the past forty years, there have been perhaps 150 wars between nations and within nations, with millions perishing in these conflicts.” (See Handout 2)

War is a horrible reality on this planet. It is not glamorous or noble. It is destructive and painful. War eradicates the most beautiful thing that God created—humanity.

## The Necessity of War

Is war ever necessary? We know that it is ugly and destructive, but is there ever a time when war is unavoidable? Is there ever a time where the good outweighs the bad? We cannot avoid the fact that God ordered the Israelites to make war on the people of Canaan, the promised land that was inhabited by other, idol-wor-



shipping nations. There were times that God commanded them not to leave anything living. How can we rationalize this with a loving God?

When we think of idol worshipping today, we think of a little stone statue, perhaps a wreath of flowers and some bowing or muttered prayers. We think, what's the harm? Who are they hurting? For God to command that idol worshipping nations be wiped out seems unduly harsh! However, we fail to understand the reality of idol worship. Moloch, also known as Ba'al or Chemosh, was a very common god to be worshipped in the ancient Israelite time period. In fact, the Israelites seemed to fall into the worship of Moloch over and over again. What was so evil about the worship of Moloch? Moloch demanded the sacrifice of children. The idol of Moloch had hollow metal arms that were heated. The little child was put on the arms and burned to death. So that the parents could not hear the screaming, as was recorded in Greek and Roman accounts, drums were beaten to drown out the little one's cries.

It was a wicked and inhuman religion. It has been suggested that Moloch was a demon, and these people were worshipping Satan himself. It makes us cringe to think of someone allowing their little child to be murdered in front of them, but this was how depraved the people had become. When God commanded that they should be wiped out, it was so this base evil would not spread. Obviously, even God's people were being tainted by their wicked neighbors. Israelites were adopting the custom of sacrificing their own babies on the metal arms of Moloch. War, in this situation, was unavoidable. It was necessary to stop an evil influence so effective that it could completely erase a parent's natural and God-given instinct to protect their children.

Are there more modern examples of necessary war? World War II could be seen in this light. Hitler was practicing such atrocities towards the Jews, Gypsies, and others he saw as undesirable that someone had to step in. He was systematically exterminating every Jew he could find. He tortured them and sent them to death camps. Just killing them was not enough for Hitler and the Nazis. He had to put them through a living hell, watching their own family members tortured and killed before their eyes. They were starved and beaten, raped and used in horrific scientific experiments. The evil that held sway in the form of Hitler was astounding. Would it have been right for the world to stand by and allow him to continue in the name of peace?

World War II was a massive attempt to overthrow one regime bent on exterminating millions of people. However, in the process of stopping Hitler, 20 million soldiers and 40 million civilians died. In the name of justice, many more war crimes were committed by both sides. While we will be forever grateful for the men and women who gave their lives to save the innocent Jewish and other civilians who were being eradicated, we also mourn the massive loss of life. Not all Germans were wicked and not all Allies were good. War is the direct result of sin. We are forced to wonder, with no disrespect to the brave men and women who did their utmost to save the civilians, was there

iFollow  
Discipleship  
Series:  
Walking with  
Jesus

Action Plan  
& Presenter  
Notes

**Ethical  
Issues:**  
War and  
Peace

possibly a better way to stop Hitler and his allies? Or was war the only option in our sinful world? It is a very complicated question that only God will be able to answer for us.

There have been times in the past where war was necessary. Death is never God's will, but there have been times in the past that evil has had to be destroyed. Sodom and Gomorrah were another example of this, as well as society before the flood. We can only imagine the evil that held sway to cause God to take such a step. God will destroy evil once and for all when He comes the second time, purifying the world and destroying all who have chosen Satan. We will no longer have to live with sadness, fear, despair and death. God's purposes will reign supreme, and sin will never return to mar God's perfect creation.

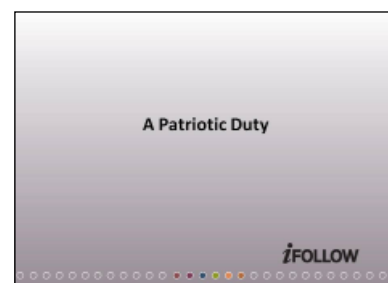
However, not all wars are just wars. Not all wars are necessary. Most wars are over political ideals, the hunger for power, money, oil, resources, racism and hatred. The majority of wars are fought to fulfill sinful lusts and desires. Even just wars, while being fought in the bigger picture for the ultimate good, were filled with evil and selfish ambition. Political leaders give clever speeches to their people, explaining why they must fight and die or give up their children to the war effort. Soldiers are rallied, and both sides believe they are deploying missions for the greater good, if only of their own country. But what are the results? Death, pain, loss, anger and selfish gain. The only true gain is the restoration of peace. And then people's shattered lives must be rebuilt.

## A Patriotic Duty

As Christians, where do our loyalties lie? Is it right for us to enjoy the peace that a strong military brings without contributing to the cause? Is it right for Christians to refuse to protect their countries? How can a Christian be loyal to both God and country?

This has been an explosive topic for a very long time. Some Christian groups are completely pacifist, refusing to contribute to the military in any way. They are willing to go to jail rather than obey their draft summons. There may be virtue in this decision, and I would certainly never suggest that someone go against their conscience. But is there a way to fulfill our obligations to both God and country?

Desmond Doss was a brave young Christian who tried to do just that. As a Seventh-day Adventist, he refused to train or work on Sabbath, learn to use weapons or carry a gun. However, he still wanted to serve his country. At one point, his commanding



officer tried to have Doss discharged from the Army on the grounds that he was “unsuitable for military service.” Doss refuses to go along. He said: “I’d be a very poor Christian if I accepted a discharge implying that I was mentally off because of my religion. I’m sorry, gentlemen, but I can’t accept that kind of a discharge.” (*Ibid.*) So Doss stayed in the Army, facing ridicule and distain for his religious position, and he trained as a medic. (Sterner)

The first time Doss faced combat with his fellow soldiers was Guam. There he proved his bravery by going to any lengths to treat the wounded. In his second combat experience, Doss amazed the very men who had so resented him for being unwilling to fight. At the battle at Leyte, time after time, Doss dashed out into active enemy fire to save the wounded men, treat them, and then carry them back to safety on his back. When he was badly injured, he waited five hours to be rescued and then rolled off the stretcher when he saw a more critically injured soldier. He was shot again, after this, and he bound his own fractured arm while waiting to be saved. He and another wounded man leaned on each other and hobbled to safety. Doss was awarded the Bronze Metal Star for his bravery that day.

In April 1945, Doss and the 77th Division were facing what seemed like an impossible battle in Okinawa. There was a 400 foot cliff, honeycombed with caves and tunnels that held camouflaged enemy soldiers. It was a dangerous mission. Doss told Lieutenant Goronto: “I believe prayer is the best life saver there is. The men should really pray before going up.” Doss had in mind that the men should take a personal moment in prayer, but his commander called the men together for Doss to pray for them. The results of that battle were nothing short of miraculous. Not one man in Company B died that day. The only injury was one soldier whose hand was hurt by a falling rock. Their amazing victory could not be explained, and the official answer was filed: “Doss prayed.” (*Ibid.*)

At that bloody battle where Doss was injured by a grenade, he lost his treasured Bible. Doss was known for reading his Bible and spending time in prayer. That little Bible was a gift from his wife, and when he realized that it was gone, he sent word to his fellow soldiers. Those men who had mocked him for his religious observance, and then watched him risk his life countless times to save the wounded, went back to the battle field to find his Bible. They did, and they mailed it to him.

In the middle of war, separated from his wife and family, wading through gunfire, mud and blood, in the middle of hell on earth, Desmond Doss was able to bring God’s comfort to men who might otherwise have died without knowing the truth about God’s love for them. God’s beauty was able to shine into the most horrific circumstances because Doss chose to serve both God and country. God needs his people in every walk of life, even in the military. Doss proved that he did not need to kill in

iFollow  
Discipleship  
Series:  
Walking with  
Jesus

Action Plan  
& Presenter  
Notes

**Ethical  
Issues:**  
War and  
Peace

6



order to serve his country, and was awarded a Medal of Honor, three Bronze Stars and two Purple Hearts in recognition of his valor.

## Striving for Peace

War may be an ugly reality, but it isn't our goal. As Christians, we look ahead to Heaven, where there will be no more war, or tears or death. It is our responsibility to make the earth better for our having lived on it. Christians are commissioned to "Love one another," and we cannot do that while trying to kill each other. Jesus promoted peace, even in the face of danger: "Put your sword back in its place ... All who take the sword will die by the sword." (Matt. 26:52) Jesus valued life, all life. He died for our lives! He told them: "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of, for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." (Luke 9:56) War and violence is the spirit of God's enemy. God desires to bring His kingdom, where the lion and the lamb lay down together, to reality. Even what we think of as the "natural food chain" will be disrupted to stop all violence. It is not as God intended, but the animal kingdom has also been twisted by human sinfulness.



Peace is like righteousness. It's never quite attainable through our own efforts, but we keep striving for it. We know that we live in a scarred and broken world that fights and damages and kills. We know that countries will continue to war against each other. We know that people will continue to die and that atrocities will continue to occur. We know that governments will continue to oppress, people will continue to scramble for power, and that groups will declare themselves more worthy than others. Wars will continue to be waged, soldiers will continue to be deployed and politicians will continue to pontificate on the virtues of dying for the sake of a government's agenda. We know all these things, but we continue to strive for peace. Why? Isn't it useless? Because when we continue to strive for peace, we show the world what God really wants for us. We show the world God's love through our actions that seem so small. But like Desmond Doss, who was only one medic in the army, God can do large and far-reaching things through us if we will let Him. The world will see the difference in Christians. The world will see the God they need but keep trying to avoid.

Peace may not come on a global scale. We may not stop wars. We may not change national agendas. However, we can make a difference in the life of one person. Like Desmond Doss, we can stand up for our convictions and reach out to one person at a time. And each person is invaluable to God!

iFollow  
Discipleship  
Series:  
Walking with  
Jesus

Action Plan  
& Presenter  
Notes

**Ethical  
Issues:**  
War and  
Peace

7

## Wars and Rumors of Wars

War is frightening. It seems every time we turn on our TVs, there are more wars on the news. We see the dirty-faced children, looking in horror at the demolition of their homes and families. We see people running in fear. We see soldiers marching, mines exploding and guns rattling off their ammunition. The threat keeps coming closer and closer to home. War. It terrifies us. We dread it. If you were to ask a new immigrant to North America why they left their home to come here, most will answer that they were trying to find safety from war.

If you look at Handout 3, there is a short list of wars that have occurred since 1990. The list is not complete, but it gives you an idea of how many wars continue to happen each year. With each war, people are killed, children are left orphaned and homes are destroyed. Millions upon millions die, the casualties of war. And every year, it seems to get worse!

“It isn’t any worse,” some people say. “The news just blows it out of proportion. It’s their job to make it seem more awful!” And that might be true. But dying and killing *are* horrible! The drama of the news doesn’t have to work at making that a travesty. Orphaned children *are* heartbreaking. Grieving widows and mothers *are* something to be serious about. And it seems that these wars are coming faster and faster upon the heels of the last. Countries that seem stable suddenly erupt into violence and war. Places that seem to be nice vacation spots suddenly melt down into civil strife. What is happening to our world?

Jesus warned us about this very phenomenon: “You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.” (Matt. 24:6) It is a sign of the end of time. When we see these things, we know that Jesus’ coming is that much closer. War is terrible, but we know that this will not last forever. In fact, we are in the last days with the signs of the end being fulfilled before our very eyes. While we shudder at the reality of war, we can also raise our eyes to the skies, filled with hope for a beautiful, sinless life with God.

“Such things must happen ...” (Matt 24:6). All we can do is keep close to our God and live the life He would have us live. We can strive to show His love through our decisions and actions. We can trust Him that He will put everything right again, and that He will end the suffering of this world and give us the perfect, beautiful life He had willed for us from the very beginning.



iFollow  
Discipleship  
Series:  
Walking with  
Jesus

Action Plan  
& Presenter  
Notes

**Ethical  
Issues:**  
War and  
Peace

8

Yes, the wars and rumors of wars are terrible. We cringe at the news footage and ask God why He has not come yet. Why has He let things go this far? Why hasn't He come to end the suffering yet? Is He really coming, or are we just fooling ourselves?

No, we aren't fooling ourselves. Jesus promised He would come, and He will not fail us. He is waiting out of love. We are in a grace period, and He will come for us.

We are experiencing the wars and rumors of wars now. The signs are being fulfilled. However, He is waiting, waiting just a little longer, so that as many as possible might be saved. Perhaps He is waiting for me. Perhaps He is waiting for you.



## Handouts in this Package

1. Adventist Church Position on Weapons
2. Adventist Church Position on War and Peace
3. List of Wars Since 1990

iFollow  
Discipleship  
Series:  
Walking with  
Jesus

Action Plan  
& Presenter  
Notes

**Ethical  
Issues:**  
War and  
Peace

## Additional Resources

Morgan, Douglas, ed. (2005). *The Peacemaking Remnant: Essays and Historical Documents*. Silver Spring, MD: Adventist Peace Fellowship.

Stassen, Glen (1992). *Just Peacemaking: Transforming Initiatives for Justice and Peace*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.

Stassen, Glen, ed. (1998). *Just Peacemaking: Ten Practices for Abolishing War*. Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press.

Stassen, Glen and Gushee, David (2003). *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Wilcox, F. M. (1936). *Seventh-day Adventists in Time of War*. Takoma Park, MD: Review & Herald Publishing Association. (Republished in 2006 by Kessinger Publishing in a photo-reproduction of the original book and sold on Amazon.com.)

## Articles

Freudenrich, Craig and Fuller, John (n.d.). "How Nuclear Bombs Work." Published on line at: <http://science.howstuffworks.com/nuclear-bomb5.htm>

"Gospel Nonviolence: Documents Demonstrating an Historic Adventist Commitment." Published on line at: <http://www.adventistpeace.org/templates/System/details.asp?id=39491&PID=465434>

Sterner, C. D. (2008). "Desmond T. Doss: The Soldier and His Sword." Published on line at: [http://www.homeofheroes.com/profiles/profiles\\_doss.html](http://www.homeofheroes.com/profiles/profiles_doss.html)

"Technology of War." Published on line at: <http://www.howstuffworks.com/war-tech.htm>

## Films

*The Conscientious Objector*, a documentary film on Desmond Doss is available in DVD from: [www.desmonddoss.com](http://www.desmonddoss.com)

## Website

Adventist Peace Fellowship, a network of Seventh-day Adventists interested in this topic which provides resources and support for those who may face immediate issues in their lives and have questions: [www.adventistpeace.org](http://www.adventistpeace.org)

## Discussion Questions

1. Is there ever a time when war is necessary?
2. Do you believe war is ever God's will? Explain.
3. How can Christians show God's love during war?
4. How can we as Christians both promote peace and support our country? Is it possible, or must one be less important than the other?
5. Do you think that God supports war in some situations, or is there another way that we are missing?
6. If war is a sign of the end, how important are our actions and attitudes towards war and killing? Should we be actively pursuing peace, or sitting back to watch events unfold?
7. There are Seventh-day Adventists who are citizens of almost every nation on the globe. When there is a confrontation between nations, how can Adventists on both sides be loyal to their country and maintain their loyalty to their worldwide fellowship of brothers and sisters in Christ at the same time?

## Group Activity

### Group Exercise

**Purpose:** To investigate and share differing views and insights concerning war and peace.

**Preparation:** You will need space for four small groups, and writing materials. Tables or desks would be ideal. Before the meeting, put the four scenarios below on slips of paper or 3x5 cards. On a board or flipchart, write the following questions to guide the discussion:

Why do you decide the course of action that you do?

What are your motivators?

Do all of your group members agree?

Do you feel that these are issues that you must stand firm on, no matter what? How does your faith in God factor into your decisions?

Do you think that there is a right or wrong answer?

Is there one best Christian way to deal with the situation?

**Assignment:** Divide the group into four smaller groups and give each group one scenario to discuss, using the posted questions and others that may occur to them.

**Time:** Allow each group 15-20 minutes to discuss their scenario. Allow another 20-30 minutes to share with the larger group.

**Scenario A—**You are drafted into the army and have three weeks to report to duty. Do you report to duty as commanded? Do you run away to Canada where you can have a free conscience in respect to war? Do you accept a prison sentence for refusing to answer the draft? Do you believe that being active in the war effort is the same as killing, even if you do not personally carry a gun?

**Scenario B—**You are a civilian during a war. The battle is being fought on your soil. Wounded soldiers come to you for help, and you hide them in your house. The enemy comes to your house and demands if the soldiers are with you. Do you lie? Do you tell the truth? Why or why not?

**Scenario C—**You see an enemy soldier aiming his rifle at small children. You are positioned above the soldier and have a large rock close by that you can drop on the soldier, killing him and saving the children. Do you kill the soldier? Is his life of less value than the children? Is killing the soldier murder?

**Scenario D—**Your commanding officer commands you to carry a gun. If you refuse,

you can be court marshaled and sent to prison. Do you carry it, but vow to yourself to never use it? Do you refuse to even touch the gun?

iFollow  
Discipleship  
Series:  
Walking with  
Jesus

Group  
Activities

**Ethical**  
**Issues:**  
War and  
Peace

# Handout 1

## The Seventh-day Adventist Church Official Position on Weapons

Automatic or semi-automatic military-style weapons are becoming increasingly available to civilians. In some areas of the world it is relatively easy to acquire such guns. They show up not only in the street, but in the hands of youngsters at school. Many crimes are committed through the use of these kinds of weapons. They are made to kill people. They have no legitimate recreational use.

The teachings and example of Christ constitute the guide for the Christian today. Christ came into the world to save lives, not to destroy them (Luke 9:56). When Peter drew his weapon Jesus said to him: "Put your sword back in its place ... All who take the sword will die by the sword" (Matt. 26:52 *TEV*). Jesus did not engage in violence.

The argument is made by some that banning assault weapons limits the rights of people and that guns do not commit crimes, but people do. While it is true that violence and criminal inclinations lead to guns, it is also true that availability of guns leads to violence. The opportunity for civilians to acquire by purchase or otherwise automatic or semi-automatic assault weapons only increases the number of deaths resulting from human crimes. Possession of guns by civilians in the United States has increased by an estimated 300 per cent in the past four years. During the same period there has been a staggering increase in armed attacks and resulting deaths.

In most of the world such weapons cannot be acquired by any legal means. The Church views with alarm the relative ease with which they may be acquired in some areas. Their availability can only open the possibility of further tragedies.

Pursuits of peace and the preservation of life are to be the goals of Christians. Evil cannot be effectively met with evil, but must be overcome with good. Seventh-day Adventists, with other people of good will, wish to cooperate in using every legitimate means of reducing, and eliminating where possible, the root causes of crime. In addition, with public safety and the value of human life in mind, the sale of automatic or semi-automatic assault weapons should be strictly controlled. This would reduce the use of weapons by mentally disturbed people and criminals, especially those involved in drug and gang activities.

*Released by the General Conference officers on July 5, 1990, at the General Conference Session in Indianapolis, Indiana.*

iFollow  
Discipleship  
Series:  
Walking with  
Jesus

HANDOUT

**Ethical  
Issues:**  
War and  
Peace



## Handout 2

### **The Seventh-day Adventist Church Official Position on War and Peace**

One of the great political and ethical issues of our day is the question of war and peace. It is both complicated and convoluted. Despair hovers around hearts and minds, for millions expect a nuclear holocaust without the basic hope of afterlife or eternal life.

Today there is a new situation, unparalleled in history. Human beings have developed the means of humanity's own destruction, means that are becoming more and more "effective" and "perfected"—although these are hardly the right words. Since World War II, civilians are no longer just occasionally or incidentally harmed; they have become the target.

Christians believe that war is the result of sin. Since the Fall of man, strife has been a perennial fact of human existence. "Satan delights in war. ... It is his object to incite nations to war against one another."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 589. It is a diversionary tactic to interfere with the gospel task. While global conflict has been prevented during the past forty years, there have been perhaps 150 wars between nations and within nations, with millions perishing in these conflicts.

Today virtually every government claims it is working for disarmament and peace. Often the known facts appear to point in a different direction. Nations spend a huge portion of their financial resources to stockpile nuclear and other war materials, sufficient to destroy civilization as it is known today. News reports focus on the millions of men and women and children who suffer and die in wars and civil unrest and have to live in squalor and poverty. The arms race, with its colossal waste of human funds and resources, is one of the most obvious obscenities of our day.

It is therefore right and proper for Christians to promote peace. The Seventh-day Adventist Church urges every nation to beat its swords into plowshares" and its "spears into pruning hooks" (Isa. 2:4). The church's Bible-based Fundamental Belief No. 7 states that men and women were "created for the glory of God" and were "called to love Him and one another, and to care for their environment," not to destroy or hurt one another. Christ Himself said, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matt. 5:9).

While peace cannot be found in official church pronouncements, the authentic Christian church is to work for peace between the first and second advents of Christ. However, hope in the Second Coming must not live in a social vacuum. The Adventist hope must manifest and translate itself into deep concern for the well-being of every

iFollow  
Discipleship  
Series:  
Walking with  
Jesus

HANDOUT

**Ethical  
Issues:**  
War and  
Peace

member of the human family. True, Christian action today and tomorrow will not of itself usher in the coming kingdom of peace; God alone brings this kingdom by the return of His son.

In a world filled with hate and struggle, a world of ideological strife and of military conflicts, Seventh-day Adventists desire to be known as peacemakers and work for worldwide justice and peace under Christ as the head of a new humanity.”

*Released by the General Conference officers on June 27, 1985, at the General Conference Session in New Orleans, Louisiana.*

iFollow  
Discipleship  
Series:  
Walking with  
Jesus

HANDOUT

**Ethical**  
**Issues:**  
War and  
Peace

## Handout 3

### List of Wars Since 1990

1990-98	First Tuareg Rebellion
Aug 1990-Feb 1991	Persian Gulf War
Oct 1990-Aug 1993	Rwandan Civil War
1991-1995	Croatian War of Independence
1991-1992	Ossetian-Ingush conflict
	Togolese Civil War
	War in South Ossetia
1991- 2002	Sierra Leone Civil War
1991	Slovenian War
1991-1994	Djiboutian Civil War
1991-2002	Algerian Civil War
1992-1992	War of Transnistria
1992-1993	War in Abkhazia
1992-1996	Afghan Civil War (part 2)
1992-1995	War in Bosnia
1992-1997	Civil War in Tajikistan
1992-1995	War in Bosnia and Herzegovina
1992-Ongoing	Conflict in the Niger Delta
1993-2006	Burundi Civil War
1993-Ongoing	Ethnic Conflict in Nagaland
1994	Zapatista Rebellion in Mexico
	Yemeni Civil War
1994-1996	First Chechen War
1995-Ongoing	Insurgence in Ogaden
1995	Cenepa War
	Hanish Island Crisis
1996-2006	Nepal Civil War
1996-1999	Kosovo War
1996-1997	First Congo War
1997	Unrest in Albania
	Iraqi Kurdistan War
1998-2000	Ethiopia-Eritrea War
1998	Six-Day War of Abkhazia
1998-2003	Second Congo War
1998	U.S. bombings of Afghanistan and Sudan
	U.S. bombing of Iraq
1999	Kargil War
	Dagestan War

iFollow  
Discipleship  
Series:  
Walking with  
Jesus

HANDOUT

**Ethical  
Issues:**  
War and  
Peace

1999-Ongoing  
1999-2003  
1999-2007  
2000-2001  
2000-Ongoing  
2001

2001-Ongoing  
2002-2007  
2003-Ongoing  
2003-Ongoing  
2003  
2004  
2004-Ongoing  
2004-Ongoing  
2004-2007  
2004-Ongoing  
2004-Ongoing  
2004  
2005-Ongoing  
2006-Ongoing

2006  
2006-2007  
2007-2008  
2008

Second Chechen War  
Second Liberian Civil War  
Ituri Conflict  
Presevo Valley Conflict  
Al-Aqsa Intifada  
Macedonia Conflict  
Indo-Bangladesh Border Conflict  
Kodori Crisis  
War in Afghanistan  
Civil War in Côte d'Ivoire  
Darfur Conflict  
Iraq War  
Islamic insurgency in Saudi Arabia  
Haitian coup d'état  
War in North-West Pakistan  
Sa'dah insurgency  
Central African Republic Bush War  
Kivu Conflict  
South Thailand insurgency  
Ivorian-French War  
War in Chad  
Mount Elgon insurgency  
Mexican Drug War  
Second Tuareg Rebellion  
War in Somalia  
Lebanon War  
Fatah-Hamas conflict  
Civil unrest in Kenya  
Invasion of Anjouan  
Conflict in Lebanon  
South Ossetia War

This list is not necessarily comprehensive.

Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org>

iFollow  
Discipleship  
Series:  
Walking with  
Jesus

HANDOUT

**Ethical**  
**Issues:**  
War and  
Peace