

WAR AND PEACE SPECTRUM WORKSHOP

(This workshop is based on a talk given at the 2011 General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) by Dr. Sharon Warner.)

Leader's Instructions

PREPARATION

Read through the materials thoroughly and make sure you understand all the material. All the information about holy war, just war and pacifism that you will need to lead the workshop is contained on the cards or in the leader's notes. (You can contact DPF Co-moderator Bruce Ervin at 812-369-7684 if you have questions.)

Decide if you're going to do the whole workshop all at once (approximately 90 minutes), or if two 45-minute sessions would work better for you.

If you can anticipate how many people will be participating, consider whether any of the activities will need to be adjusted for a smaller or larger number. This material is designed for use with groups of 5-30 people. You may want to divide the group up into two groups (with two separate sets of cards) if you have more than 30 people.

Prepare the cards for the various group activities by printing out those pages and cutting them into slips with one piece of information on each. (They will not all be the same size.) If you don't have access to a color printer, you should print the different categories of cards on different colors of paper, so that the groups can easily identify them.

Arrange for an observer/recorder to take notes on entire Faithful Conversations session, including key points shared in small groups and how material can be used or modified going forward. Notes should be shared with Faithful Conversations Steering Committee. Observer/recorder should circulate among small groups.

During small group time, leader should circulate among groups, pausing to listen and answering questions. Let groups know that leader and recorder/observer will circulate.

Encourage participants to lead a Faithful Conversation in their congregations. Pass out resource material or tell folks where they can find these materials on line.

End: Observer shares key points, leader thanks everyone for participating and prays.

LEADING THE WORKSHOP

Introductory Remarks

1. Resource person introduces self (name, home church, region, etc.)
2. Concept of Faithful Conversations is explained in resource person's own words (see overview of process for further information)

3. An opening prayer is offered

4. Topic and format of this particular Faithful Conversation is briefly introduced:

Begin by explaining that in the next 90 minutes, the group is going to explore three historic positions the church has held on war and peace. The positions are pacifism, just war theory and holy war. Explain that these three constitute a spectrum with innumerable positions somewhere in between the three.

PART ONE – THE BASICS

Ask the group to line up based on where they think their beliefs fall upon that spectrum, with pacifism at one end, just war in the middle, and holy war at the other end. Take a moment to have everyone observe the various positions people have chosen. Which perspectives are represented? Which are not? How do you know where to stand in relation to someone else?

Then starting at one end of the line, number people off by 2, creating two groups.

One group will explore pacifism, the other holy war. Each group will receive two sets of cards, Historical Context and Biblical References & Theology. (The different kinds of cards should be colored coded. The two groups do not have the same number of cards.) Have someone in each group distribute the cards to the people in their group. If the groups are small, try to give each person one of each category. If the groups are large, just pass all the cards out, and it doesn't matter if some people don't have one.

Give the groups 10 minutes to discuss the content of the cards and come to a group understanding of them. The cards in each category are numbered, and going through them in order will probably be most effective, but any order will work. Then give each group 5 minutes to present their perspective to the other group.

Collect the Pacifism and Holy War cards.

Explain that you are now going to move into a discussion of Just War Theory.

Explain the context of the development of Just War Theory. Tell the group that Just War Theory evolved as Christianity shifted from being an underground movement to being the religion of the empire. As threats to the empire appeared, the faith's historic commitment to pacifism was stretched, as situations arose that seemed like they might justify violence. Augustine, for instance, concluded "that wars of aggression are never acceptable, but there are occasions when the resort to force may be tragically necessary – never a normative good, but a tragic necessity."¹ Just War "permits a limited resort to arms, yet rejects an 'anything goes' approach to violence."² There are eight criteria that are generally agreed upon as the basic requirements for a war to be justified.

Then distribute the Just War Theory criteria cards throughout the whole group. There are only eight cards, so people should form pairs or small groups with each card. Give the small groups seven minutes

¹ Jean Bethke Elshtain, "Terrorism and 'Just War': Seeking Justice," *Christian Century* 18 (November 14, 2001): 26.

² *Ibid.*, 27.

to read through and discuss the information on their card. Then each small group should take about a minute to explain the Just War criterion on their card to the whole group.

(Short break if needed. Not included in 90 minutes.)

PART TWO – MORE ON JUST WAR

Explain that now that you've been introduced to the criteria for Just War, you're going to get into a deeper discussion of them. Have each group hold onto their criterion card and consider the upcoming questions from the perspective of that particular criterion.

Discussion Questions:

(5 min) Just War requires a willingness to lose more of our combatants in order to minimize "enemy" non-combatant deaths. What does your faith tell you about that? How do you feel about it politically?

(10 min) How have current global politics and/or modern warfare made "just war" less possible?

(10 min) Use the American Revolution as a test case with the Just War criteria. Does it pass? Why or why not?

(10 min) Follow-up: Does the Just War theory have anything to say to people in need of revolution? How might it apply to, for instance, the civil war in Syria that began with the 2011 uprising? (If another current example seems like a better example, feel free to use it instead.)

Conclusion:

(10 min) Discuss whether Just War is possible. Can it be a reasonable compromise with global realities for people of faith, or is it a theoretical model that bears little relation to reality?

Make another spectrum across the room. Where are you now? Has anyone moved? Have them share why, if they will.

Closing Prayer. (You might sing "Let There Be Peace on Earth" as the closing.)

PACIFISM

Historical Context 1

In the early church, pacifism was part of an attitude of almost total withdrawal from worldly life.

PACIFISM

Historical Context 2

For Tertullian and other church fathers, Christians were forbidden to participate in military service.

PACIFISM

Historical Context 3

Pacifism was not absolute. Some soldiers continued to serve in the army after becoming Christian and were accepted in the church and served communion.

PACIFISM

Historical Context 4

The dominant attitude restrained most from military service. Christ was non-violent; therefore all who follow him need to be non-violent.

PACIFISM

Biblical References & Theology 1

“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist and evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also.” – Matthew 5:38-39

PACIFISM

Biblical References & Theology 2

“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.”
– Romans 12:17-21

PACIFISM

Biblical References & Theology 3

“Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but on the contrary, repay with a blessing. It is for this that you were called—that you might inherit a blessing.”
– First Peter 3:9

PACIFISM

Biblical References & Theology 4

“Suddenly, one of those with Jesus put his hand on his sword, drew it, and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, ‘Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.’”
– Matthew 26:51-52

PACIFISM

Biblical References & Theology 5

Destruction of life is a right belonging to God alone. Fear of idolatry; the support of the state or any earthly power can and often does take the place of the sovereignty of God.

PACIFISM

Biblical References & Theology 6

Basing life on the Bible means using the Sermon on the Mount as the primary rule of life; non-violence is the law of Christ. Alexander Campbell advocated pacifism on the basis of the teachings he found in the New Testament.

PACIFISM

Biblical References & Theology 7

Reformation Anabaptists and others emphasized suffering as part of the Christian ethic, eliminating motivation for retribution against those causing suffering.

HOLY WAR

Historical Context 1

In the Middle Ages, the “crusade” was a war fought to defend Christendom against the heathen.

HOLY WAR

Historical Context 2

The notion of a war “for the cross” has some affinity with the “holy war” of the Old Testament.

HOLY WAR

Historical Context 3

For Christians the idea of holy war emerged more fully at the end of the 11th century after the holy places in Jerusalem had been captured by the Turks.

HOLY WAR

Historical Context 4

To wage war upon non-Christians was seen as a righteous act; God’s will was being served; a common slogan for a crusade or holy war was “God wills it!”

HOLY WAR

Biblical References & Theology 1

“Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you wish to have no fear of the authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive its approval; for it is God’s servant for your good. But if you do what is wrong, you should be afraid, for the authority does not bear the sword in vain! It is the servant of God to execute wrath on the wrongdoer.” – Romans 13:1-4
(divine right of kings)

HOLY WAR

Biblical References & Theology 2

Augustine: “How are kings to serve the Lord with fear, except by preventing and chastising with religious severity all those acts which are ‘in opposition to the commandments of the Lord?’”

HOLY WAR

Biblical References & Theology 3

Augustine: While it is better to come to God through teaching, coming to God through fear is needed at times, even “fear of punishment or pain.”

HOLY WAR

Biblical References & Theology 4

Augustine: Political authority bears the sword to enforce God’s commandments, both the commandments on how we treat each other and the commandments to love God (to have no other gods before me, etc.).

HOLY WAR

Biblical References & Theology 5

Augustine: Therefore, for ‘heathens’ the sword is justified. “For why when free-will is given by God to [humans] should adulterers be punished by the laws, and sacrilege [dishonor of God, idolatry, etc.] be allowed? Is it a lighter matter that a soul should not keep faith with God, than that a woman should be faithless to her husband?”
[That is, if a state is going to enforce some moral laws, it should enforce all of them, including faithfulness to God.]

JUST WAR CRITERION 1

(Jus ad bellum – criteria for going to war)

Just cause: War is justified when it is a response to aggression or injury by another.

The aggression must be substantial, intentional (not accidental), and unilateral (not provoked).

JUST WAR CRITERION 2

(Jus ad bellum – criteria for going to war)

Legitimate Authority: War is justified when it is waged by the legitimate government of a nation.

JUST WAR CRITERION 3

(Jus ad bellum – criteria for going to war)

Right Intention: War is justified when the over-all goal is righteous.

Peace is the overarching moral obligation for waging war; the goal is to restore a situation of peace.

Non-justified motivations for war include:

Personal/national character flaws: hatred, vengeance, cruelty, love of violence.

Political power, dominance, acquisition.

Economic wealth.

Cultural fame, prestige, legacy, eternal honor.

JUST WAR CRITERION 4

(Jus ad bellum – criteria for going to war)

Last Resort: War is justified when other means of establishing peace have been attempted in good faith.

Diplomatic negotiation, mediation, arbitration.

Cooling off periods to give opportunity to save face and engage in diplomacy.

Economic embargoes and other strategies of isolation.

JUST WAR CRITERION 5

(Jus ad bellum – criteria for going to war)

Proportionality of Ends: War is justified when the overall damage caused by waging war does not exceed the original injury suffered.

JUST CRITERION 6

(Jus ad bellum – criteria for going to war)

Probability of Success: War is justified when the “prospect of success is sufficiently clear to justify human and military costs.”

“... A justifiable war must stay **impeccably modest, controlled, and practical**. Probability for success guards against utopian goals like establishing a golden age where evil is wiped out and purity always prevails, and therefore restricts waging war within the bounds of a doable, realistic, and **sustainable peace**.” – Daniel M. Bell

JUST WAR CRITERION 7

(Jus in bello – criteria for how to wage war)

Noncombatant Immunity: War is justified when civilians are not intentionally or directly killed.

JUST WAR CRITERION 8

(Jus in bello – criteria for how to wage war)

Proportionality of Means: War is justified when the means are proportional to the ends.

“Morality requires choosing weapons that fit the value and difficulty of securing or defeating a particular target, and no more. In other words, don’t use a cannon to defeat a slingshot because using weaponry that is out of proportion to the target raises the risk of unnecessarily damaging either enemy combatants or noncombatants. Proportionality of means recognizes the intrinsic moral dignity of even the life of an enemy and is therefore a key component of Just War.”

– Gary M. Simpson