

# Peacemaking: a Christian vocation

## Resources for young people

This is a programme designed for young people to help them explore the ideas around peacemaking and a Christian faith. There are four topics to explore.

### Suffering.

This session explores whether our belief in a benevolent God through studying Isaiah 63:9 and Romans 8.

### Non-violence.

This session is based on non-violent strategies for dealing with conflict and uses quotes from famous peacemakers to explore this.

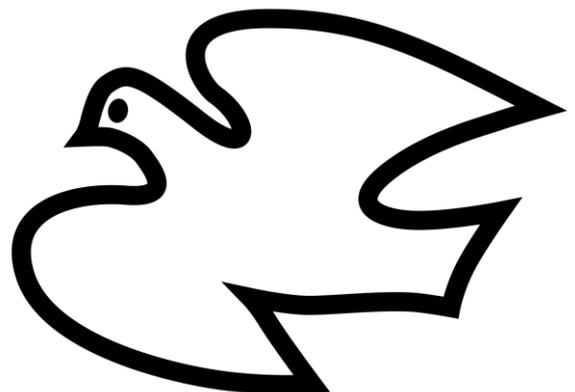
### The use of force.

This session is based on non-violent strategies for dealing with conflict and uses quotes from famous peacemakers to explore this.

### Nuclear weapons.

This session looks at what nuclear weapons are, and what our response as Christians should be.

This resource has been produced by the Joint Public Issues Team (the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Church of Scotland, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church). For more information and resources, visit: [www.jointpublicissues.org.uk](http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk)



# Suffering



Items Needed: Bibles, handouts, bluetak, Song: *Casting Crowns – Praise you in this storm*, (candles and a rug for prayer time is needed).

## Introduction

Inform the group that across the world many people live on less than £1.50 a day. This causes a significant amount of suffering. Explain that today we're going to be exploring the idea of helping people who need peace in their lives. It's a very complicated issue, and one which we may not find any complete answer to.

Mention that the joint churches, the United Reform Church, the Baptist Union, Methodist Church and the Church of Scotland work on peacemaking. The next three sessions will centre on some ideas from that work, called *Peacemaking: A Christian Vocation*.

First we're going to explore the issue of suffering.

Suffering can upset our inner peace and peace in our societies. It can cause resentment and anxiety. It is therefore vital that, as Christians, we seek to end suffering in order to build a peaceful world.

## Begin with an icebreaker

This game, made by TEAR Australia, will take up about half of the session, followed by a reflection and bible study time.

Living in poorer cities around the world, a way that many people make money is to drive rickshaws, auto-rickshaws and taxis. (Show photos of rickshaws and auto-rickshaws in handout.)

Quickly mention that this situation focuses on transport in crowded cities of India and Asia. Explain that today they are going to pretend that they are either passengers or drivers in one of these places.

### 1. Rules

- Passengers must visit all destinations on their list in the order they are written.
- All passengers must use the transport available (Rickshaw or Auto Rickshaw) to visit each destination. This is still the case even if the destinations are next to each other.
- Players **may not** walk.
- Drivers/Vehicles are to choose a starting destination before passengers take their starting places.
- Once at a place the auto-rickshaws are **not** able to travel without a passenger (as the fuel costs too much). Rickshaws, however, may move freely about without passengers.

### 2. Divide players into three groups

1. **Rickshaws:** One person acts as a rickshaw and piggy-backs people around.



2. **Auto-rickshaws:** Two people per auto, link arms and passenger sits on arms in the middle.

3. **Passengers**

There need to be many more drivers/vehicles than passengers for the game to work.

A suggested breakdown for a group of 15:

6 passengers

5 rickshaws

4 for auto-rickshaws (making 2 – 2 per auto)

**3. Passengers go to their starting point**

Explain the bargaining system and demonstrate it. Explain that the more comfortable and quick a vehicle is, the more you would expect to pay. For the purpose of this game there are no fixed prices; all trips should be agreed before the trip begins.

Because they are more comfortable and able to travel at greater speeds, Auto-rickshaws would normally be more expensive than a pedal rickshaw.

15 – 20 minutes is a good length of a time for a fast-paced game. Give players enough time to divide their money at the end and count how much money people made.

During the debriefing session, you might like to raise some or all of the following questions. Try to get a chance to hear at least once from everyone about their experience during the game.

- What were some of the experiences of the passengers?
- Was it easy to get a ride? How did the bartering go?
- Did you find it difficult to know who to choose?
- Were the prices fair?
- What were some of the experiences of the drivers/vehicles?
- How much money did different people make?

## **Reflection**

Have a look at the price poster handout and see how much you could afford to buy with the money that you ended up with.

How many days would you have to work to pay your rent? How long would you have to save up to buy clothes or a TV? What would life be like for you if this was all you had to live on?

- Who in the game got a lot of work? Why?
- Was there enough work for everybody or were too many people trying to make money from the same service?
- How do you think this experience might be similar to that of people who really work at these jobs in countries like India and Bangladesh?

Ask the group if they have heard the question ‘why is there suffering in the world?’ or asked it themselves? It is one of the most complicated issues of Christianity, and where Christians often get a lot of aggression from non-Christians.

Would we say that the Indian rickshaw drivers are suffering; if not, do we have any other examples from the news recently?



In the Bible it says ‘that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.’ (Romans 8:28)

The Bible tells us that behind every bad thing that happens to us, God is at work, turning it around for our good. It’s easy to worship God and say ‘God is good’ when everything *is* good but how hard is it to do that when everything seems to be going wrong?

If you have time mind-map other Bible passages that show people praising God despite their difficult circumstances. What can we learn from them? How can these suffering Christians across the country maintain such strong personal peace in times of trouble?

Since we pray every Sunday to ‘*Save us from the time of trial*’ in our Lord’s Prayer, let’s move on to some prayer time now.

## **Prayer time**

Play the song *Praise you in this storm* by Casting Crowns and read to the young people a story of persecuted Christians, one is attached below but find one that is more appropriate to your group if needed. An example prayer to end with is also placed below, but again please alter this to suit the group if needed.

**“Alimjan had just begun planting fruit trees on his land when he met and married his wife Gulner. They both were active in their church and were soon blessed with two children. Life was good for this young family.**

**Several years later, as the first fruit of the harvest grew near, the government arrested Alimjan and confiscated everything he owned. Accused of ‘harming national security’ and using his business as a cover for ‘preaching Christianity among people of Uyghur ethnicity,’ in January 2008 Alimjan was sentenced to 15 years in prison; the maximum penalty in China for the charge of ‘divulging state secrets.’**

**Prison life has been hard for Alimjan; his shiny black hair is now streaked with grey. Life has also been difficult for Gulner as she struggles to raise their two young children on her own. The children miss their father, and because of the pressure the family has experienced from society and authorities in their hometown, they have been forced to move.”**

*O Lord God,  
your Son Jesus Christ suffered and died for us.  
In his resurrection he restores life and peace in all creation.  
Comfort, we pray, all victims of intolerance  
and those oppressed by their fellow humans.  
Remember in your kingdom those who have died.  
Lead the oppressors towards compassion  
and give hope to the suffering.  
Through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*



# Non-violence



Items needed: String, a ring, 3 pieces of A3 paper, colouring pens or magazines to cut up, scissors and glue, laptop or projector and screen, CD player with calming music.

## **Begin with an icebreaker.**

The aim is for the group to get a ring the entire way around the group on a piece of string without a chosen member of the group seeing it. The group must stand in a circle, each holding the string in both hands creating an inner circle with the string. The chosen member of the group who must find the ring then turns his or her back, and the ring is put onto the giant string circle and 'lost' somewhere. When the ring is sufficiently 'lost' the chosen member turns back around and begins searching.

The ring must not stop moving, and bluffs are allowed, for example making it look like you're passing the ring to the next person. The chosen member has three guesses to find the ring! Play as many times as you like or have time for.

## **Paper discussion.**

Split the group into 3 smaller groups. Using A3 pieces of paper mind-map on one piece what being a peacemaker is and what it means, on another what we as God's peacemakers can do, and on the last what the game had to do with being, *or not being*, a peacemaker?

*Perhaps the game shows how a peacemaker must work one step at a time to cross difficult situations, or maybe it's showing the opposite of peace -suggesting deception, suggesting what a peacemaker shouldn't be.*

They can write, draw, or use cut outs from magazines to create a collage, just express an answer to the questions in the easiest way.

Create a rotation of the groups, spending 3 minutes on each, then feedback.

## **Introductory film clip.**

Evan Almighty Clip – 1 hours 22 minutes until 1 hour 25 minutes

(YouTube link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=80x9FmKsyg4>)

Explain: In that clip God tells Evan that we can change the world 'one act of random kindness at a time'. It's not about big things; otherwise the challenge from Jesus becomes something daunting. It's about taking the opportunities we have in our everyday lives and using them to show others about God, fighting injustice as Jesus did one step at a time.



## **Creative discussion:**

Ask the group to put up their hands as to who in their family sorts things out and keeps everyone in order – sibling, parent, grandparent, aunt or uncle etc.

Arrange the groups out of their choices, so one group for ‘Mother’ and so on. If the groups are hugely uneven you may wish to organise the groups yourself.

Ask the groups to create a drama showing how their ‘peacemaker’ goes about solving the problems and keeping the peace.

Depending on the attitudes of the group, leave 7-8 minutes to discuss and prepare their performances.

After the performances, ask each group the following questions:

1. What can we learn from our ‘peacemaker’ role models?
2. Do they act in a non-violent way, an aggressive way or a mixture of both?

## **Blessed are the peacemakers – quiet reflection.**

This is a reflective prayerful activity. Set the scene by creating a quiet mood. It may be helpful to have some appropriate music playing quietly and a table with a lit candle.

Jesus said, ‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God’.

Ask the young people to sit where they are and show a slideshow of organisations and people that support community development and action for justice. This can be the one provided, or create one of your own.

Read notes from slide whilst playing calming music.

## **Ending discussion:**

Go round the group, saying one person outside of their family who they admire for peacemaking, they can have appeared on the slide show, or be someone they know personally.

Suggest the young people think about why they admire them, what they can do to be more like them, and to hold them up in the following prayer.

## **Let us pray:**

*Gracious God,*

*We pray for those who fight for peace this day and every day, may they find the strength and courage to continue to live out their call as peacemakers.*

*We pray for all those who suffer from violence, may they know your healing and peace.*

*We pray for political leaders in Britain and across the world; may they seek wisdom and work together for peace.*

*May your kingdom come, your will be done, and the earth be filled with your glory.*

*Amen*



# The use of force

Items needed: Bible, printed worksheets, laptop or screen and projector for large groups, small pieces of paper (two for each young person), a hat, candles and reflective music if required for prayer.



## **Begin with an icebreaker:**

Truth or dare: The aim of this game is to get the young people to understand what it might mean for someone to be forced into violence, such as the conscientious objectors of WW1 or child soldiers around the world.

First split the group into two, and ask the group to nominate two members of the group (persons 1 and 2). You ask them a question about the Bible (this is the 'truth').

You start with person 1 and ask them the question. If person 1 gets it right person 2 has to do the 'dare'. If person 1 doesn't get it right then person 2 has a chance to answer. If he gets it right she has to do the 'dare'. If they both get it wrong then they both have to do the 'dare'.

Use the 'dare' sheet provided, or make up some of your own.

At the end, ask the group how they felt – pressured, nervous, excited?

Explain that this is our third and final session on Peacemaking, and that you will focus on the use of force through objection to violence.

Ask the group what connection they made with the game and the use of force, and what they know about what 'force' might mean.

Ask the group to put up their hands if they know what conscientious objection is? (A good definition is: a person who refuses to serve in the armed forces or bear arms on moral or religious grounds)

## **Introductory clip:**

*The Village* is a drama charting life in a Derbyshire village through the eyes of one man, Bert Middleton, who lives there from birth through to old age. The first series covers Bert's boyhood from 1914 to 1920 during WW1.

As a young boy, Bert's teacher writes to the army to present himself as a conscientious objector. A law brought in, in the same month, allowed for objectors to be absolutely exempt from the military if they could convince a Tribunal of the quality of their objection. Tribunals were harsh towards conscientious objectors, reflecting widespread public opinion that they were lazy, degenerate, ungrateful 'shirkers' seeking to benefit from the sacrifices of others.

Play from 0:35:16 – 0:39:21 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FT-xdaqQHvY>)

What does the teacher mean when he says; 'it would be hypocrisy for me to rely on the sixth commandment just as it's hypocrisy for Christians to believe in it and then go and kill each other in France.'



The sixth commandment is 'Thou Shalt Not Kill' Exodus 20:13. This clip shows a man standing up for his right not to fight, he is helpless and is shot by the Military at the end of this programme for refusing to join the war.

We might think that this kind of this situation does not exist anymore, and praise God that it does not happen in our country.

But, ask if the young people have heard of 'child soldiers' and what they understand it might mean.

## **Creative discussion:**

Here we will be filling in a 'Facebook profile page' for a child soldier.

Ask the group to draw a child of their choice of the Facebook profile sheet provided. Boy or girl, from any part of the world, and consider what their characters, thoughts and additions to their profile might be.

Create a character profile for that person, including status updates, places they've been to, photos and videos watched etc. This should be similar to a Facebook page and chart their everyday life. This is to encourage the young people to put themselves in the shoes of a child soldier.

**Ask:** What might the child soldier ask of the world, what might they want?

Read out the following information:

*Worldwide, it is estimated that 230 million children live in countries affected by armed conflict. In some countries children are used or recruited by government forces and armed groups, with some even being kidnapped and taken away from their families to fight in wars.*

*Michel Chikwanine was 5 years old when rebel militiamen kidnapped him from a soccer field near his school in the Democratic Republic of Congo. He had decided to stay out to play rather than follow his father's instructions to head straight home. As the fighters approached his group of friends, he was more concerned about having disobeyed his dad than about what the men would do.*

*Chikwanine's life would quickly and irreconcilably change, however, as the militia abducted the boys and took them to its camp. There, a fighter drugged him with a mix of cocaine and gunpowder. Chikwanine was blindfolded and made to hold a gun, then told to shoot it.*

*"I was forced literally to kill my best friend as an initiation process into the army," Chikwanine told The WorldPost. "That's something I will never forget, and I still fight with every single day."<sup>1</sup>*

---

<sup>1</sup> Huffington post (date) title [online] [https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/child-soldier-book\\_us\\_561d55dfe4b050c6c4a313d8?guccounter=1](https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/child-soldier-book_us_561d55dfe4b050c6c4a313d8?guccounter=1)



## Reflection:

This is a reflective prayerful activity. Set the scene by creating a quiet mood. It may be helpful to have some appropriate music playing quietly and a table with a lit candle.

The Wesleyan Methodist Recorder wrote in 1870 that war was an inescapable part of the human condition that could be supported when fought 'for a just cause, to free the enslaved, to lift up the down-trodden'.

Nevertheless, **all** should be free to choose whether or not to participate in war, and never forced into violence.

Look at the page you have created for a child soldier, and consider what we can do to help them.

The bible tells us how:

*They'll turn their swords into shovels,  
their spears into garden tools.  
No more will nation fight nation;  
they won't play war anymore.  
Isaiah 2.4*

God invites us to live in harmony with one another, which can seem like a monumental task. In the first session we talked about suffering and in the second session we talked about being peacemakers.

If we look at these child soldiers in the Democratic Republic of Congo forced into conflict, it encourages suffering and lessens peace. It goes against what God asks of us in the bible.

## Let us pray

Lord, may they dance,  
but not to adult fancies,  
and may they play,  
but not in dust of war.  
May their small hands  
not toil for others' profit.  
May they grow safely,  
nurtured by your love.



And Lord,  
we ask that your Spirit  
blow the mist from the  
minds of  
war-mongers, arms  
traders, task masters.  
Kindle their imagination  
'til they no longer  
'know not what they do'.

And may your Spirit  
kindle a fire in us  
and all earth's people,  
that we may hunger and  
thirst for justice  
and never be satisfied,  
until children everywhere  
can run into the meadow  
of your kingdom  
and gather flowers  
in safety, joy and peace.  
Amen

# Nuclear Weapons



Items needed: spaghetti, marshmallows, projector, laptop, speakers, Bible quotes sheet, paper, pens, origami paper and instruction sheets.

## **Begin with an icebreaker**

Split the group into two and ask each group to use spaghetti and marshmallows to build the biggest tower they can in 10 minutes. Ask each team to nominate a member of their team to be the 'secret weapon'. This team member is able to go over and destroy the other team's tower at any point during the 10 minutes.

Tell both teams that the team with the tallest tower wins. If there are no towers left standing at the end, both teams lose.

The aim of the game is to show how the theory of mutually assured destruction works and its failings. It is likely that the losing team will destroy the taller tower at the last moment, and that in response the other team will destroy their tower. This shows that weaker states are more likely to use nuclear weapons or to want nuclear weapons. Explore some of the wider issues around mutually assured destruction.

## **Introduction**

Explain that today we are going to be exploring the topic of nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons are weapons which use nuclear energy and are very destructive. Only a small number of states own nuclear weapons, they are: China, USA, Russia, France, India, Pakistan, Israel, North Korea and the UK. The only times the nuclear weapons have been used was in 1945 when the USA dropped two bombs on Japan. It is estimated that 214,000 people died when those two bombs were dropped.

## **Video clip**

This clip comes from a programme called 'Yes, Prime Minister' which was on television in the 1980s. In this clip the Prime Minister has a discussion about when he would use Nuclear Weapons.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XyJh3gKjSMk>

What were the arguments made in favour of nuclear weapons?

Are they convincing?

## **Destructive effect**

As mentioned at the end of the video nuclear weapons can have a huge destructive effect. Use [this website](#) to see what would happen in your town if a nuclear bomb was dropped on it. If you don't have time to look up your town here is a breakdown of what would happen if a 100-kilotonne nuclear bomb was dropped:



- 3 km radius - A radioactive fireball hotter than the Sun and with the force of 100,000 tonnes of TNT kills everyone.
- 5 km radius - The vast majority of people die quickly from blast injuries, asphyxiation or (over weeks) radiation sickness.
- 10 km radius - About half die from trauma and burns. Many succumb soon after to fires and radiation sickness.
- 80 km radius - Radioactive fallout spreads. Over time, many thousands will die from radiation sickness and cancers.

Environmental effect:

The International Red Cross produced research claiming that even a limited regional nuclear war (only 100 Hiroshima-sized bombs, which is less than 0.5 percent of the world's nuclear weapons) could cause global climate cooling that would cut food production for many years and put one billion people at risk of starvation worldwide. This research also estimates that a large-scale nuclear war would create ice-age conditions likely to eliminate most of the human race.

## **Creative Discussion**

What should a Christian response to nuclear weapons be?

Spread the bible quotes and statements around the room and ask the young people to pick one and read through it alone. Then ask them to draw the kind of world that is described in the bible quotes. Bring the group back together and ask each of them to share their bible quote and describe the world they have drawn.

Do any of the pictures include nuclear weapons?

## **Hope**

But there is still hope – watch the Joint Public Issues Team's video about the Nuclear Ban Treaty, a new international treaty which aims to rid the world of nuclear weapons.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oYiCtLJ4WYk>

## **Prayer/reflection**

Put some appropriate music on and ask the young people to make a peace crane. You can either use the instruction sheet or the video found [here](#). Ask the young people to think about the world they want to live in as they fold their cranes and then to write a single word on the wing of their crane.

When everyone is finished read this prayer:

Another flame is kindled

Flickering into being like a voice that pierces

The silence of the wilderness

Calming our fears; stilling restless spirits; declaring salvation's dawn.

The road to God's eternity lies straight before us



Drawing our gaze beyond the turmoil and anxieties of the here and now  
And though its route may lead through deserts of despair  
The peace of God confounds mere earth-bound expectation.  
Ours is to know the peace of God's presence  
And ours is the call to pursue its cause in the face of hostility  
To be those whose will not repay evil with evil  
Whose words and deeds would breed calm and contentment.  
Our peace is found not by escaping this world's turmoil,  
But knowing God with us in its midst.  
By trusting that his purpose will one day be fulfilled  
And choosing those pathways that lead to its coming.



If your group want to do something with their cranes, they could send them to the local MP with a letter explaining why the UK should sign the Nuclear Ban Treaty.

**Produced by the Joint Public Issues Team**

[www.jointpublicissues.org.uk](http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk)

**To give feedback or ask any questions on this resource please email**  
[enquiries@jointpublicissues.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@jointpublicissues.org.uk)



The Church of Scotland

