

Waging Peace

Muslim and Christian Alternatives

— STUDY GUIDE —

Purpose of the documentary

While Christianity and Islam both have warrior-like histories and people who have taken up the sword in the name of faith, another reality exists. In this time of mistrust and war, some Muslims and Christians are dedicating their lives to the pursuit of peace. This documentary examines the streams of peace that flow through both the Christian and Muslim worlds by telling stories of Muslims and Christians finding ways to build bridges of understanding. Efforts to live together peacefully in the future may depend on these bridges.

Using this study guide

Waging Peace is 58:30 minutes in length. If using in a group, you may want to divide your viewing and discussion of the documentary into at least two sessions or more, using the four major topics in the documentary. If showing in sessions, use the Scene Selection option on the DVD menu. You will need to stop the DVD at the time code shown below as all segments run to the end of the program.

- Opening and History 00:00 – 15:18
- Peace Threads 15:18 – 19:36
- Current Stories 19:36 – 36:48
- Interfaith Dialogue 36:48 – 58:30

Agree to have peaceful dialogue. You may want to establish ground rules for your discussion so that people covenant to listen to everyone in the group with respect and tolerance.

OPENING AND HISTORY 00:00 – 15:18

1. In the opening segment for this program, do the images of violence and fighting generate more stereotypes about Muslims and violence? How do you respond to that if you are a Muslim? How do you respond if you are a Christian? An atheist?
2. How do you feel about using the footage from the September 11, 2001, attacks in New York City in this film? Do you feel differently as a westerner than if you are from the Middle East?
3. What do you say about the statement “There are extremists in every community”?
4. What are some veils you would name that have to be lifted, that impair us from being merciful, forgiving, kind, loving, supporting?
5. What do you think of the rose and gun motif as artwork for this documentary? What does it suggest to you?

Understanding Christian History

1. Have you heard anyone say something like “I don’t think there will be Muslims in heaven”? What do you say to someone who says that? What do you think personally?
2. Do you consider Jesus radical? Why or why not?
3. What images do you see of Christianity in the media? What media stories about Christianity are common?
4. What has been the Christian church’s relationship to political power?
5. How do different religious groups view the conversion of Constantine in the fourth century and his edict that the whole empire be “Christian”? Was this a good or bad thing in your view?
6. “And within a few decades Christians are doing to others what had been done to them,” [in regard to persecution] says Martin Marty. Why do you think this happened?
7. What are the advantages or disadvantages of having (or promoting) the concept of a “Christian nation” or a “Muslim nation”?
8. Review the period of the Crusades. Why did they happen? How do you view this period? How is your view different if you are Muslim? If you are Christian? If you are some other faith or a non-believer?
9. How did we get to this place of hostility and hatred on both sides? Was it largely the September 11, 2001, attacks and subsequent war and fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan? Or what would you point to?
10. The peaceful teachings of Jesus, or pacifism, have remained in many areas of Christendom a minority viewpoint or teaching. Why?

Understanding Islamic history

1. What images do you see of Islam in the media? What media stories about Islam or Muslims are common?
2. What are some common associations or stereotypes regarding Islam and Muslims?
3. Why do Muslims fear the West? What does Western colonialism and the image of “Christian conquerors” do for Muslims? What does that mean for Christians?
4. In the film, Jihad Turk distinguishes between Islam as a religion of peace, but not a *pacifist* religion. What is the difference to you?
5. Rashied Omar says that in the Koran, Muslims are given permission to do whatever they need to do to defend life, family, or property. Moderate Muslims do not carry this principle out to the extent that extremists do. Is this principle the same for a Christian? Why do you think like you do?
6. Tamim Ansary (an Afghan-American author/historian) says that Mohammed’s impulse was to set up a community that went beyond warring tribes: to join a community that was a “non-tribal community of God.” How is that like the Christian concept of “Christ’s kingdom”?
7. The film talks about how Mohammed moved from his birthplace in Mecca to Medina because of persecution. Christians and others sometimes portray that move as an effort to set up a political community and wage war. How do you understand that history?
8. Mohammed negotiated the pact of Medina where everyone was to live peacefully with other tribes: Jewish, Muslim, and Christian—all three of the Abrahamic faiths. Do you think most Christians know about this pact? Do most Muslims? How does that shape your view of Islam/Christianity?
9. In the documentary, Tamim refers to how the Protestant Reformation in Europe was about the increasing impulse to give more knowledge and information to ordinary people: less religious top-down authority. However, in Islam, the religion did not experience a “reformation” because the premises were different. Muslims might have viewed Christian reformers as colonialists and imperialists. How does that set up differences between the faiths?
10. **For deeper study:** Additional historical background that Tamim Ansary gave (too long/detailed for the documentary) helps to explore different worldviews because of history. In later years, Mohammed formed a small “city state” (political community) in Medina and gave permission for Muslims to defend themselves as part of that. The whole Arabian Peninsula became Muslim, leading to the “Golden Age of Islam.” This Golden Age began to disintegrate when Christians and others got into sailing and commerce/trade with other lands and peoples, coming in contact with Muslims. Muslims didn’t get into shipbuilding and that kind of commerce.

The economic influence from outside became lopsided, and the Muslim empire disintegrated under the weight of that commerce. The political communities began to disintegrate in the 1400-1600s. How does that impact the world view of some Muslims? Tamim feels that some Muslim fundamentalists today have never gotten used to this underdog role and look at Islam as a theocracy (a government ruled by or subject to religious authority). The bigger question may be, How does Islam coexist with governments, especially in “the West”? Are the cries of some for the U.S. to go back to being a “Christian nation” similar to wanting to look at the U.S. as a theocracy?

PEACE THREADS 15:18 – 19:36

1. Philip Clayton, theologian, admits, “There are sharp differences between Christianity and Islam. The two can’t sort of be brought together into one little synthesis. But from a peacemaking perspective, that’s exactly the point where we should begin.” How do you begin to find common ground with someone with whom you will never agree or change?
2. David Shenk says that Anabaptists (the stream of faith from which Mennonites and other groups come) said, “We will die rather than kill a Muslim.” Is that still true today?
3. Shafiq Huddah reiterates the oft-heard statement that Islam is a peace-loving religion, because the word itself means peace, or “salaama,” but that Muslims can defend themselves when compelled by motives of faith, land, or family. Is that true under Christianity’s “just war” theory as well? Do you support the idea of a just war?
4. Jihad Turk quotes the Koran as saying, “If one kills one innocent life, it is as if you kill all of humanity.” How is that like Jesus’ command to “Love your enemies”?

CURRENT STORIES 19:36 – 36:48

Christian Peacemaker Teams

1. How can you try to understand an enemy? (Thinking here of the work of Christian Peacemaker Teams [CPT] begun in 1994, as described by Elizabeth Pyles and Peggy Gish in the documentary.)
2. How do you treat strangers?
3. One of the frequent activities in CPT is helping people looking for loved ones who have had to be refugees in dangerous situations. Would you be willing to go to a dangerous place if you knew it would likely make it safer for others?
4. A similar organization, Muslim Peacemaker Teams has similar goals and activities. You can read more about this activity at <http://mpt-iraq.org/>.
5. One CPT volunteer, Tom Fox, who was eventually kidnapped and killed in Iraq in 2006 said in his writings, “Forgive them, even if they kill me.” How does a person today get to the place where they can live with that kind of spirit in a war-torn country?
6. Would you volunteer? If people risk their lives in armed services, why does it feel different to volunteer to risk your life for peace (some would say foolhardy)?
7. Lynne Hybels points out that Christ’s command is not to just tolerate or try to be nice, but to love one’s enemies. How can you really love your enemies?

Refugees—Canada

1. In Ontario, Shafiq Hudda first ate breakfast with a Mennonite pastor and over ten years built a friendship and relationship between their religious communities. What steps can you take in your community to initiate or expand dialogue and relationships?
2. Lynne Hybels talks about how God values each and every life. “Maybe we don’t, but God does,” she says. How do you see that functioning in the world?
3. How can you walk in the way of Jesus regarding peace?

4. What good does it do to learn to know and identify with someone on a personal level?
5. Why do you think working together is a good way to get to know each other? How can you do that in your neighborhood or workplace?

Christian high school

1. In Ontario, Muslim families have appreciated sending their children to Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, a private Christian high school. Do you want your children to learn about as many faiths as possible, as mentioned by one mother in the documentary? Are there drawbacks to kids learning about other faiths?
2. How does having diverse classmates contribute to the well-rounded education of kids?
3. What is important in your friendships? Could you be friends with a Muslim? Or a Christian?
4. As kids become friends, logically that will lead to interfaith marriage, not addressed in the documentary. Would you have a problem with that for your children? Discuss.
5. What are the core values you share with other families in your community?

Claremont Lincoln University

1. In Claremont, California, the seminary administration saw that in today's world, religious leaders are going to be in contact with leaders of other religions and that it would benefit them to have some of their training be side by side with people of other faiths. What are the advantages and disadvantages of this?
2. Najeeba Syeed-Miller says you can "'Cherry pick' (scriptures) for violence and also 'cherry pick' for peace" and encourages people not to ignore the peace teachings of any tradition. Why do you think she says that, in spite of the tendency to pick those passages which support our own position?
3. How do you translate peacemaking into your community and daily life?
4. Christopher Cotter, one of the students from Claremont says, "To build community with those who differ from you, you have to give up a sense of entitlement [that your way is right above all others]." What does that mean and how can you do that? How can you do that without giving up your own faith?
5. **For deeper study:** Many Christians and Muslims have a slightly (or radically) different concept of justice. Theologically, in many Christian groups, the justice that God and Jesus ask them to work for is for others, not so much for themselves. In Islam, justice is for the community or the *ummah*—to make things right for themselves and their community. This is a tension between the two faiths that is not articulated very often. How does this impact conflicts, views of world events, and theology? How was that reflected or articulated in the documentary?

Islamic Center/Baptist church, Temecula, California

1. The question of how far do you go with tolerance is highlighted in the story about the clash in Temecula, California, over the building of an Islamic center in close proximity to a Baptist church. How are the viewpoints of the Baptist pastor, William Rench presented? Do you agree with him? How would you feel if you were the imam of the Islamic center?
2. What is the difference between sharing one's faith and proselytizing? Is there a place for sharing faith?
3. Do you feel your faith compels you to invite others to join your faith group? How far do you take that? To the point of confrontation about different beliefs?
4. Respecting another's faith can mean an increased desire to practice your own faith more dearly. How is this different from accepting an ideology that all religions lead to the same end?
5. Can you live peaceably with people who are very different than you? How?
6. What is true religious freedom?
7. Lynn Hybels says, "Evangelicals tend to be focused on truth. We see Islam as counter to the truth" and says we need to learn to value people rather than ideas. How do you feel about that? How can we learn to value people more than ideas?

Muslim Free Clinic

1. The documentary highlights a free clinic started by Muslim-American medical volunteers in South Los Angeles serving anyone in that needy area, which wouldn't have happened without the support of the entire interfaith community. What kind of statement does this make? What outreach might you undertake in your community to help others *together*?
2. A Christian-Muslim consultative group in Southern California has increased participants' understanding of the breadth and depth of perspectives and theology of their respective religions. How can you make opportunities for this to happen?
3. Jihad Turk references a verse in the Koran which says Allah created all of us different "so you can get to know each other. If God would have so willed, he could have made you all the same." What do you think of that? Is this kind of teaching present within Christianity?
4. How can clergy benefit from increased discussion and dialogue with leaders of other religions?

Interfaith Peace Camp

1. What are your impressions of the Interfaith Peace Camp? Would you want such an experience for your child? Why or why not? Have you visited other houses of worship than your own?
2. How do you define God (for yourself or with your children)?
3. Have your children asked you questions about other faiths? Share.

INTERFAITH DIALOGUE 36:48 – 58:30

1. Lynne Hybels says, "If Christians get to know people from other faiths, we have the benefit of knowing Jesus better." Do you agree? Is this also true for Muslims regarding Mohammed and Islam?
2. In a country where the value of religious freedom is paramount, how should that impact your views and relationships with those of other religions?
3. Richard Cizik says, "The challenge of pluralism, of living together, is made difficult when we don't grant to others the freedom we want them to grant to us." Do you agree or disagree?
4. Lynne Hybels says that an atmosphere of increasing pluralism is, "A wonderful opportunity to be more Christian." Does this attitude resonate with you? Why or why not?
5. **For deeper study:** Richard Cizik says that some people think that "pluralism is tolerance gone amuck," into moral and ethical relativism. Pluralism, according to Wikipedia.com, is used in a number of different ways and it may be helpful to dissect what people in your group think when they hear the word. Read the definitions below and respond to what is the closest to your usage and thinking:

From Wikipedia, Sept. 2011:

Religious pluralism is a loosely defined expression concerning acceptance of various religions, and is used in a number of related ways:

- As the name of the worldview according to which one's religion is not the sole and exclusive source of truth, and thus that at least some truths and true values exist in other religions.
- As acceptance of the concept that two or more religions with mutually exclusive truth claims are equally valid. This posture often emphasizes religion's common aspects.
- Sometimes as a synonym for ecumenism, i.e., the promotion of some level of unity, co-operation, and improved understanding between different religions or different denominations within a single religion.
- As a term for the condition of harmonious co-existence between adherents of different religions or religious denominations.
- As a social norm and not merely a synonym for religious diversity.

Legacy International

1. Legacy International has a number of programs working at helping citizens learn from each other, one-on-one, about other countries, forms of government, religion, and culture. How can your family or organization tap into this approach? How can you work in your community to help build mutual understanding?
2. Legacy’s founder, J. E. Rash says, “Citizen to citizen is the greatest diplomacy.” What are the limits of that kind of diplomacy? What are the strengths?

Interfaith Youth Core

1. Eboo Patel quotes U.S. President Barak Obama’s 2009 inaugural speech saying “Our patchwork heritage is a strength, not a weakness. We are a nation of Christian, Muslim, Jewish, non-believer.” How does diversity improve the U.S.? How does diversity make any country better? What are the drawbacks?
2. What does your faith have in common with other faiths? (e.g., service, as mentioned in the documentary)
3. Eboo noted, “Every time I saw religion represented on television, it was always somebody killing somebody else in the name of God.” Do you agree? Discuss.
4. Eboo grew up in an area that was extremely diverse where students at his school got along well. “I thought, why can’t the world look more like my high school lunch table: people from different religions, getting along positively, viewing faith as a bridge of cooperation rather than a as a bomb of destruction?” What do you hear from your kids or kids at church or school regarding how kids get along across religious, ethnic, and cultural lines?
5. “The most powerful vehicle to [increase understanding]is inspired young people,” says Eboo. Discuss any examples of that which you have seen; also discuss how you can help that happen to an even greater degree. What are the drawbacks?

ENDING

1. Jihad Turk says, “The best place to be a Muslim is in the U.S. because we have the freedom to practice in context of pluralism.” Discuss.
2. David Shenk ends the documentary saying: “Every Christian needs a Muslim friend and every Muslim needs a Christian friend.” Do you have a friend from another religion? What has that meant to you? What has that done for your interreligious understanding and relationships?

A note about the scope of this program. The scope of this documentary is far reaching, yet it is far from comprehensive. It also does not attempt to delve into threads of peace in Jewish history or throughout Judaism; the producers felt that would make the scope even broader with additional issues needing development—too much material for an hour long documentary. Some participants do mention Jewish faith and experience related to this topic. For purposes of study and discussion, feel free to add whatever knowledge you have from your own experience of history, life, and your religious faith. Feel free to pick and choose questions to suit your group, many of which are somewhat repetitious as they relate to similar points in various parts of the documentary.

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