

GCSE RE

Theme D – Religion, Peace and Conflict

Key words (Create your own glossary here)

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Revision guide – GCSE RE – Topic Three – Religion, Peace and Conflict

The glossary of key words

Civil War – armed conflict between groups of people within the same country

Conflict – disagreement which gets worse

Conscientious objector – a person who refuses to do something, here fight in war, because of their conscious

Forgiveness – willingness to not blame a person any more for the wrongs they have done

Justice – making things fair again

Just war – rules around fighting a war acceptable to Christianity

Nuclear weapons/war – a weapon/war of mass destruction

Pacifism – belief that all violence is wrong

Peace – the opposite of war; harmony

Protest – voicing disagreement with something

Reconciliation – making up between two groups after disagreement

Terrorism – use of violence and threats to intimidate, especially for political purposes to create a state of fear in a population

Violence – causing harm to someone

War – armed conflict between two or more sides

Weapons of mass destruction – weapons which cause uncontrollable and untold damage, for example, nuclear weapons

Five key terms for this topic:

Justice – this means fairness; making **right** and **fair** a situation which has been unjust. **Religion is meant to bring justice to the world**, and to **fight injustice** where it is seen. Many wars are about, or include the abuse of, justice, so many **religious people feel duty-bound** to fight against that. For example, Christians vow to fight injustice

Peace – this has to be the aim and goal of all people, as it means to live in harmony and without fear. Many religions talk about a time to come where there is peace. It may be the Kingdom of Heaven, paradise, or enlightenment, but it is a goal for all to reach and work towards. Having peace on Earth (no wars) is a step towards that

Reconciliation – most religious people will be involved in reconciliation after war. The Quakers (a Christian organisation) are pacifists who try to bring sides together and help them resolve issues so they can live peaceably. If we do not bring the opposing sides together and get their issues resolved, how can we expect any peace to last?

Forgiveness – This is the belief we should be able to move a relationship forward with someone who has done wrong to us, by accepting their apology and putting the wrongdoing behind us. It is a central teaching of Christianity and important in all religions

Conflict – before the actual fighting starts, there is conflict. Conflict is disagreement; armed conflict is the actual fighting. Religious people might have been involved in trying to resolve the original disagreements, but might also then get involved in the armed conflicts as often as they feel they have no other option. For example, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German pastor, was involved in a plot to kill Hitler. Many religious people have died in battle

God as Just – the evidence

Why is it important for Christians to believe God is just

The news often makes us think there is no justice, only terrible situations in which people suffer, and wicked people get away with their behaviour.

Believing in Judgement Day or the afterlife and that God is just, means that you believe those things will be addressed and made fair

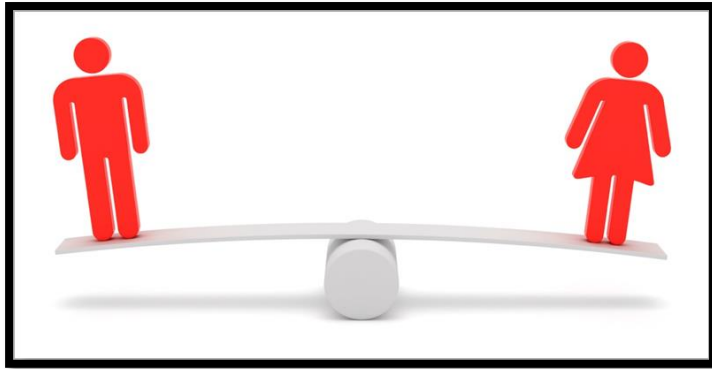
The Bible portrays God as just and says that He expects believers to behave justly. Many Christians work for justice in society because of this.

The Bible contains rules for life, such as the Ten Commandments, which believers are expected to obey.

Jesus taught: 'in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you'
(Matthew 7:12)

Christians believe that God created all people equally –

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27)



This is a quote that we can use for lots of topics so learn it and be prepared to see it appear again over the topics you are studying

The **Bible** tells us that **God is just**. This means that He is **fair to all people**.

It also means that **He hates the ill-treatment and oppression of people**. The fact that God is just means that **He can and will judge between right and wrong and He will reward the good and punish the bad**

Do you agree that is a form of justice – people who have been good get rewarded and people who do bad should be punished?

Many times in the Bible **God is pictured as a judge**. The Bible says that He will one day judge **all the people who have lived**.

Social justice – the belief that people should be treated fairly and with respect in a society, that they should have equal access to housing, education and have the same human rights

Liberation theology was a radical movement that **grew up in South America** as a response to the **poverty and the ill-treatment of ordinary people**.

Liberation theology said the church should originate its rightfulness by growing out of the poor. The **Bible** should be read and experienced from the perspective of the poor.

The church should be **a movement for those who were denied their rights and plunged into such poverty** that they were deprived of their full status as human beings. The church should take the example of **Jesus** and use it to bring about a **just** society.

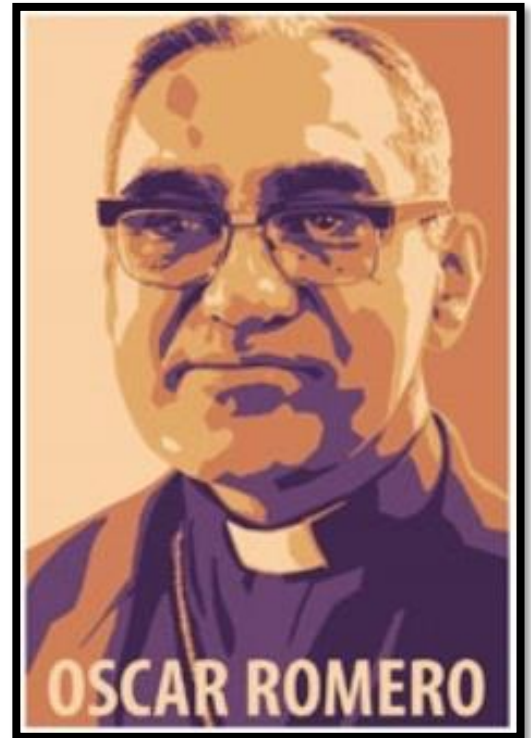
Óscar Romero (1917-1980)

One of the most high profile Christians associated with liberation theology was the Archbishop of San Salvador, Óscar Romero.

He became increasingly an outspoken supporter for the poor and oppressed as the security situation in **El Salvador** deteriorated in the late 1970s.

He was **assassinated** while saying mass in a cancer hospice in San Salvador on 24th March 1980.

He was a quiet, shy man and nobody thought he would speak out about how poor people were being treated. They thought he would be too afraid.



A voice for the voiceless - from that point Oscar Romero stopped being a quiet man and spoke out. He told the truth about what was happening to poor people in his country. Every week in his sermons on the radio, he spoke out against the violence. "Many would like the poor to keep on saying it is God's will for them to live that way. But it is not God's will for some to have everything and others to have nothing. That cannot be of God."

A brave man - even though he was afraid that he would be killed, his strong faith in God helped him carry on. "if they kill me I will rise again in the Salvadorian people". He believed that his death would be an inspiration to the people to carry on his fight for justice for the poor.

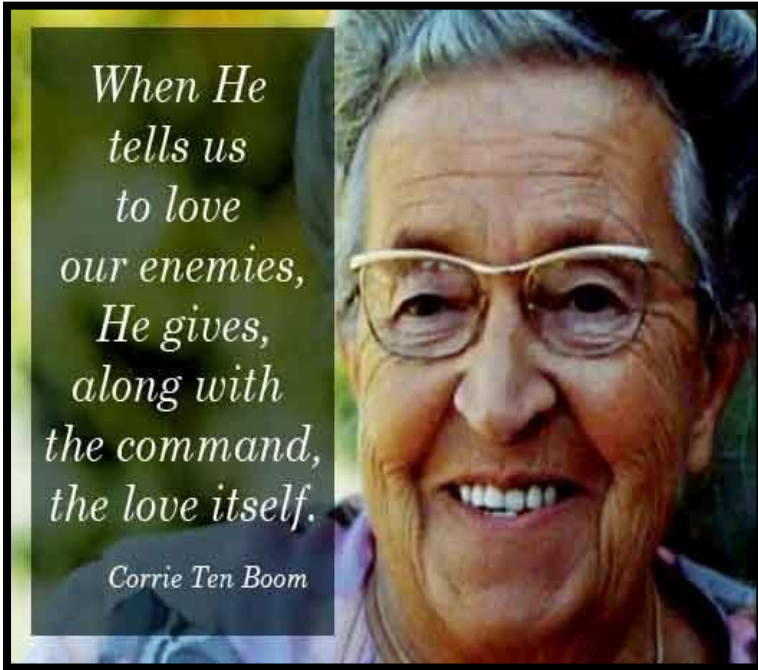
The importance of forgiveness in Christianity

Jesus taught Christians:

"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you"



The story of Corrie Ten Boom



Then she felt that her emotional state was a sin, and began to tell herself off because she believed Jesus had died for all including this man. So, she prayed to God for help to forgive him. She tried to smile and to raise her hand to shake his. However, she still could not engage with this man, so she prayed again for the help from Jesus. This time, she said, when their hands touched, it was as if a current was flowing from her to him and she felt love (agape) for this man who had formally been her cruel guard. Corrie interpreted this to mean that the rifts in the world are healed by God's love. She believed that through Jesus' command to his followers to love their enemies, the ability to love enemies also comes from Jesus

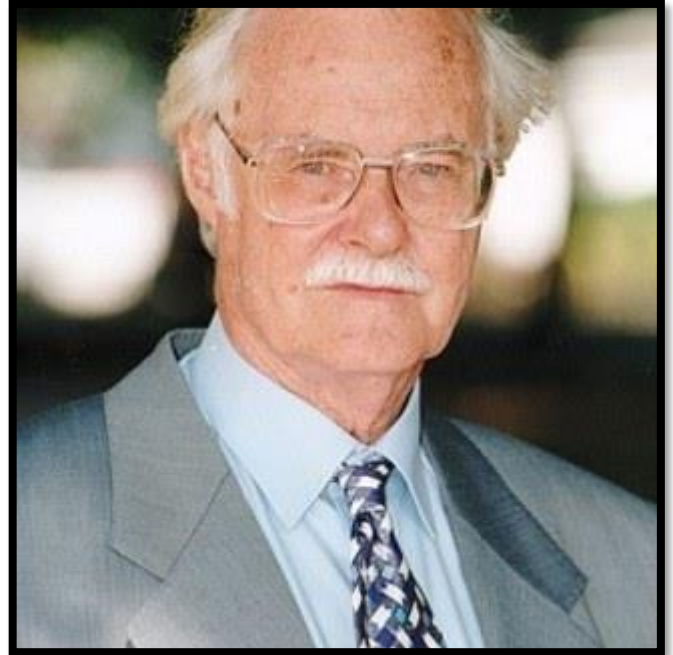
Corrie Ten Boom was a Dutch girl who helped save Jewish lives in Holland in the Second World War. She was caught with her father and sister both of whom were killed by the Nazis. She was for some reason released – an act of God she claimed.

Later, when giving talks about the Holocaust, she met the SS man at a church in Munich who had guarded them in Ravensbrook concentration camp. As he held out his hand to shake hers, all her memories flooded back. She kept her hand by her side, even though she had preached many times that we should forgive those who hurt us. She recalled the treatment in the camps, her anger growing alongside a desire for revenge.

The story of Eric Lomax

Eric Lomax was a British soldier who was tortured by the Japanese during the Second World War, but was able to forgive one of his tormentors. He was one of thousands of British soldiers who surrendered to the Japanese in Singapore in 1942. Many were relocated to Thailand and forced to build the Burma Railway, also known as the Death Railway.

After his captors found a radio receiver he had made he was repeatedly tortured; multiple bones were broken and water was poured into his nose and mouth. One of his constant torturers stood out: Nagase Takashi, an interpreter. 'At the end of the war, I would have been happy to murder him'. Eric told The New York Times in 1995. Eric had actually searched for the man, and his wife wrote a letter to arrange a meeting between the two in Thailand.



He learned that after the war Nagase had become an interpreter for the Allies and helped locate thousands of graves and mass burial sites along the Burma Railway. 'When we met, Nagase greeted me with a formal bow,' Eric said on the website of the Forgiveness Project (a British group that seeks to bring together victims and perpetrators of crimes). 'I took his hand and said in Japanese, 'Good morning, Mr. Nagase, how are you?' He was trembling and crying, and he said over and over again: 'I am so sorry, so very sorry'.

Jesus taught Christians:

The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant

²¹

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?"

²²

Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, **but seventy times seven times.**

Lord, How Many Times Should I Forgive My Brother?

70 X 7

Matthew 18:21-22

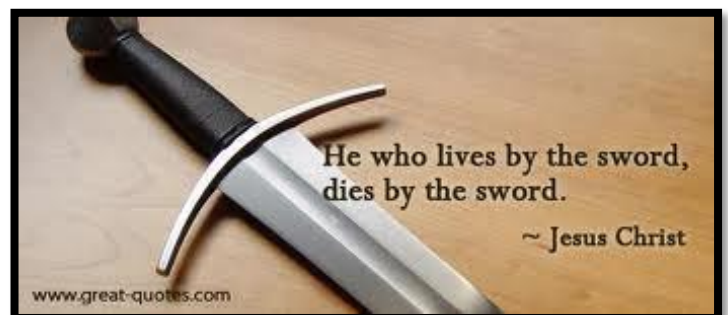
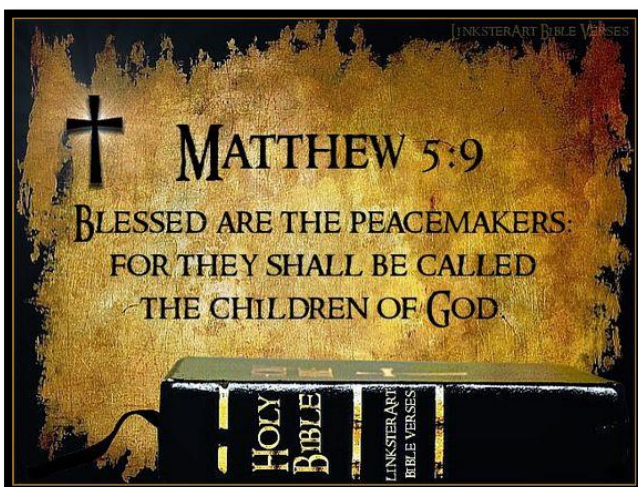
Jesus had been beaten to an inch of death, nailed to a cross and left to die in the most painful way, yet as he died he asked God to forgive the people who had done this to him – this shows the importance of forgiveness for Jesus and Christians



The importance of peace for Christians

Jesus taught his followers to say the Lord's Prayer.

...nity. Part of this prayer talks about forgiveness – once more showing the importance of prayer in Christianity



Love your Neighbor

MARK 12:30-31

The Quaker Church – a pacifist Christian church

Let me introduce you to the Quakers Christian group

Quakers believe that there is something of God in everybody and that each human being is of unique worth

Quakers do not celebrate Christian festivals such as Easter and Christmas but they strongly believe in non-violence and promoting peace



Key word: *Pacifism* – a belief that all violence is wrong

Christian response to violence

Some Christians believe that God will support them when violence may well be necessary

Some Christians believe it is just to be violent towards those they see as sinning against God

They may see war or violence as justified

There are many stories in the Old Testament where God aided the Jewish people in war against their enemies and commanded violent punishment for certain crimes

This implies that God is not completely against violence, but approves of it in certain circumstances

Story one:

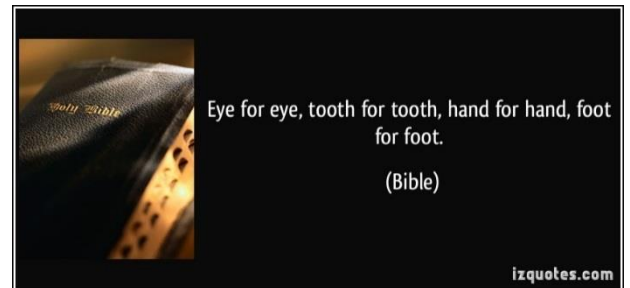
God destroyed two cities in the plains of Jordan, called Sodom and Gomorrah, because their wickedness was exceedingly great (Genesis 13:10-13) – this shows that violence may be justified towards those that sin against God



Story two:

In the Old Testament, it is stated that we should retaliate (strike back) when someone is violent to use

In the Old Testament, it is stated that we should retaliate (strike back) when someone is violent to use



“eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth” (Exodus 21:23-25)

The Just War Theory

Obviously, Jesus could not have given advice for every situation in his short life
Many Christians have thought that while peace is preferable, sometimes war seems unavoidable, or at least the lesser of two evils

A thirteen-century monk called Thomas Aquinas decided that Christians needed clearer guidelines about whether going to war was the right thing to do

These guidelines became known as the Just War theory

St. Thomas Aquinas and the Just War Theory

Thomas Aquinas thought it was important to have good reasons to go to war, behave fairly while at war and behave properly and fairly after the war



The Just War Theory

1. The war must be approved by a recognised authority, like the United Nations
2. There must be a Just Cause
3. It must be a last resort
4. It must aim to make things better – the right (*just*) intentions
5. Everything must be done to restore peace and order
6. It should use no more force than is needed to achieve its aims – proportionality

An example of a Just War –

Some wars can appear to meet all of these conditions. For example, World War Two (1939-1945) would appear to have been a Just War.

- It was fought by Germany and the Allied countries who were **legal authorities**
- Germany was being attacked for invading other countries making it a **just cause**
- The **just intention** was to correct the evil Hitler was doing for Nazi Germany
- All forms of negotiation with Hitler and the Third Reich had failed so war was **the last resort**
- Most of the fighting was limited to the armies concerned and to harbours and munitions sites making it **proportional and avoiding civilians**
- After the war, money was lent and given to Germany to rebuilt their country so **peace and order could be restored**

Holy War for Christians

Holy War –

Wars are not considered holy just because they involve religious soldiers, but a war has to be fought in the name of religion to count as a holy war

Crusades –

A series of Christian holy wars between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries, trying to reclaim the Holy Land for Christians

Holy Land –

Jerusalem and some of the surrounding areas; important within Judaism, Christianity, and, to some extent, within Islam

Holy Wars – a Religious cause

Wars may be considered holy wars if people feel that there were only religious motivations for them, or that they would not have occurred without a religious cause

However, most wars have several different motivations and it may be hard to separate religious from political motivations

A political leader might wish to conquer land due to greed, but convince their soldiers to fight by claiming that the war is the will of God

The Crusades –

On **November 27, 1095**, **Pope Urban II** makes perhaps the most influential speech of the Middle Ages, giving rise to the Crusades by **calling all Christians in Europe to war against Muslims** in order to reclaim the Holy Land, with a cry of “Deus vult!” or **“God wills it!”**

At the Council of Clermont, in France, at which several hundred priests and noblemen gathered, **Urban delivered a rousing speech** summoning rich and poor alike to stop their in-fighting and **embark on a righteous war to help their fellow Christians in the East and take back Jerusalem.**

Urban belittled the Muslims, exaggerating stories of their anti-Christian acts, and **promised forgiveness of sins for all who died in the service of Christ.**

The historian **Giles Constable** says: "each person made his own crusade". Some reasons for going were:

- To obey the **Pope's call.**
- To be **forgiven for past sins.** This was important for knights who had killed many people in battle.
- To steal and kill. **Kings encouraged violent knights to go on Crusade because it got them out of the country.**
- To see the world, **have an adventure** and prove their bravery.
- To **get land** overseas. This was tempting for a younger son who would not inherit his father's lands.
- Serfs joined the Crusades because the **Pope promised them their freedom** if they went.

Nowadays, many Christians reject the idea of holy war, believing that God does not want innocent people to be killed

Many other religious people will also believe that God prefers peace to fighting

Non-religious people will disagree with holy wars, believing that killing in the name of a God or gods who does/do not exist is completely unnecessary, and brings much unnecessary suffering

Therefore, holy wars in modern times are much less common than they have been in the past

Attitudes towards terrorism

Terrorism is an act of violence which is intended to create fear

A terrorist is anyone who plans or carries out such an act

The United Nations Security Council regards terrorist attacks as criminal:

Acts intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants with the purpose of intimidating a population or compelling a government or an international organisation to do or abstain from doing any act



Impact and influence

Instances of terrorist attacks may influence countries to fight back against countries which they feel are responsible for terrorism

It may also mean the introduction of stricter security measures

However, many people, including religious believers, see terrorism as an opportunity to try to strengthen friendships between different groups of people and work for peace

They do not wish to let terrorism result in an endless circle of violence

Why do terrorists carry out attacks?

- They are fighting against social and political injustice, where a group of people are being denied their human rights
- They are fighting against poverty

- They are fighting to assert their religious beliefs, especially where they feel these are denied to them

When people are fighting for a cause they believe in, some are prepared to go to any lengths to have their voice heard

It has been said that, 'One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter'

There are many examples where a person was classed as a terrorist, but later seen as a legitimate leader – for example Martin McGuinness in Northern Ireland and Nelson Mandela in South Africa

Weapons of mass destruction and nuclear weapons

Most Christians disagree with weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and many have joined protests against them

WMD are capable of killing and maiming large numbers of people



They can also cause massive levels of destruction to both the natural landscape and human-made structures, such as cities

There are several types of these weapons:

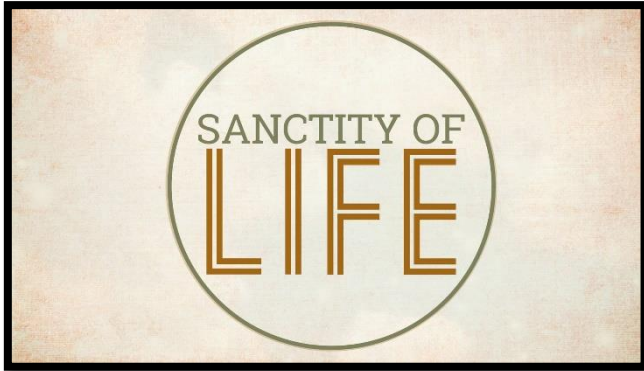
1. Nuclear weapons – also known as atomic bombs; they cause immediate destruction of all life and structures within their range. The radioactive 'fallout' has long-term effects

2. Biological warfare – also known as germ warfare, uses living disease – causing bacterium or viruses such as anthrax, to bring about the death or serious illness in people

3. Chemical warfare – uses non-living toxins such as nerve agents and mustard gas, to cause death, incapacity or illness in people

4. Radioactive weapons – also known as 'dirty bombs' are weapons that use conventional explosives to create bombs that can disperse radioactive material. As well as killing people, they make the impact are useless because of contamination

A really important Christian teaching –



This is a central Christian belief that all human life is sacred or holy as our lives are given to us by God and only God is responsible for taking life

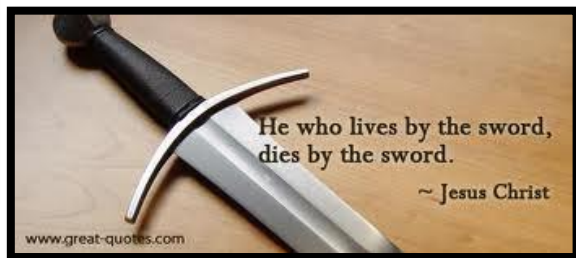
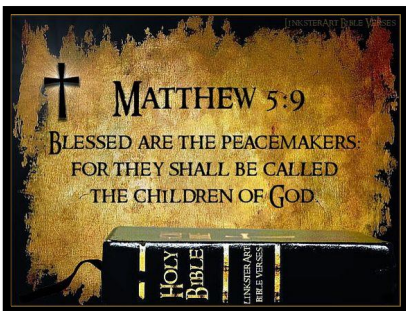
Christians against the use of nuclear weapons

They are seen as too extreme and uncontrollable

Christians believe in the sanctity of life and so the effects of these weapons go completely against this belief

They do not fit with the Just War theory – they are not a weapon that is used proportionally. Also, they do not fit with ideas of moral behaviour in war

Religious people also believe that wars should be fought to gain justice for the people – these weapons are considered unjust because they kill and maim civilians



Christians that believe that nuclear weapons can be a deterrent

Key word –

Deterrence – something used to stop someone from doing something

“eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth” (Exodus 21:23-25)

Nuclear deterrence – this is a phrase used to show that nuclear weapons can deter others from attack. A country which has nuclear weapons ‘feels’ safe because of those weapons.

In other words, they help to keep the peace

They can be used to retaliate against another nuclear strike or in an extreme emergency – ‘eye for an eye’

Weapons of mass destruction and nuclear weapons

Causes of war –

- ✓ Land
- ✓ Self defence
- ✓ To get power
- ✓ To re-establish human rights
- ✓ For resources – such as oil
- ✓ Greed
- ✓ Retaliation

Does religion cause war?

Yes....	....on occasions people have claimed that religion is the cause of a war by claiming that their religion is under attack
Ah but....	....if it was the religion under attack wouldn't someone just bomb their holy city, and hit the religion directly?
No....	....it is more true to say that religion rises to the surface in conflicts whereas power, land and self-defence are the real causes . War creates tensions and religious divisions surface. Also people use religion as the cause to get support

	(money/people/weapons) from people of the same religion around the world
Mmm however....	....perhaps it is religion, but countries do not want to admit it

Is religion the defining factor between sides in a war?

Yes....	....religion may not be a cause directly, but often religion becomes a key issue as communities are divided . Israel and Palestine is an issue over land and living conditions yet it is defined as a Jewish vs. Muslim conflict
Ah well....	....it is just easier to see who is fighting who by separating on religious grounds , isn't it?
No....	....although many claim it is. Historical divisions often rise to the surface even between members of the same religion, but this is secondary to the root cause(s). Tensions bring out the worst in people and religion often gets caught in the middle . All religions speak of peace not war, especially with people or nations of the same religion
Mmm true....	....but if it rises to the surface so easily does this not say it could be the root cause?

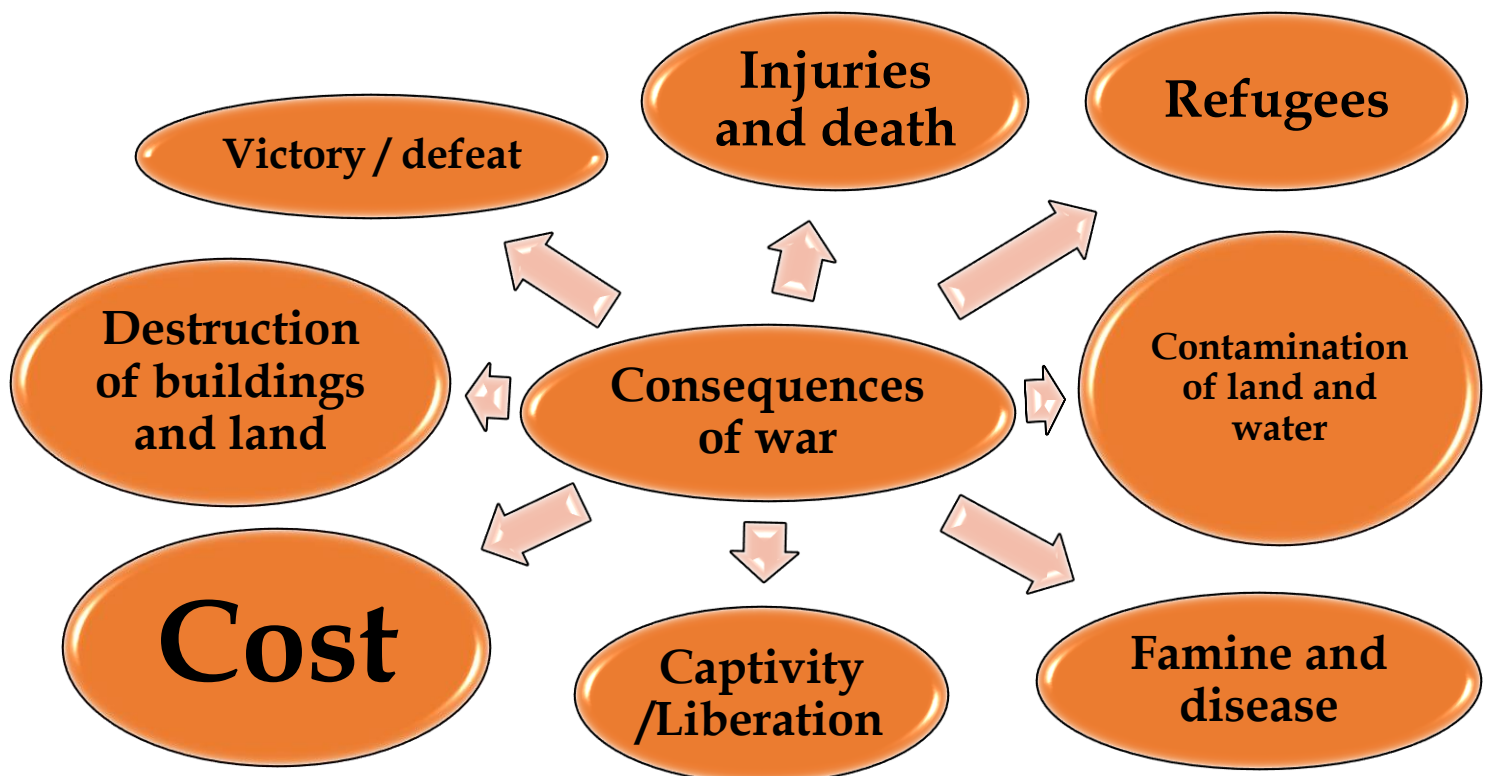
Does religion play a part in ending wars?

Some people would say yes....	....religious leaders often call for the end of conflict . For example, the Pope has called for the end of conflict in Syria and in Northern Africa. In 2013, the Archbishop of Canterbury (Top person in the Church of England) appointed Canon David Porter as a Director of Reconciliation – his role is to make a powerful contribution to transforming violent situations around the world. Many religious leaders and groups are involved in bringing resolutions to war or speaking out against violent actions
Mmm....	....but the Pope calling for the end of the war does not actually end it , does it?
Some people would say no....	....where religious extremism is concerned, groups often want to spread war and they only want to see an end of everyone conforms to their demands. Even then they will find another excuse to continue their violence because of their need for power
Ah....	....but extremists are only a small part of a religion...the majority in the religion do want to see the war end

Does religion keep the peace?

Some people would say yes....	Christianity teaches to ' Love your neighbour ' and all other religions have similar messages. If all these teachings were followed, then there would be peace. Religious groups are regularly involved in peace-keeping in war torn areas and in negotiations to prevent wars happening
Mmm....	....it may be true to say teachings want peace, but many believers ignore these teachings and start wars!
Some people would say no....	....sometimes even with all the best efforts, religion cannot keep the peace because there are greater overriding factors, such as the craving for power, the need to react to attack or to join allies to protect others
True....	....but without the efforts of religions there would be more wars , so is it win some, lose some?

Consequences of war



Christian responses to victims of war

- Praying for them, believing that God will help them
- Campaigning for their government to provide support to war-torn countries and/or to help refugees who have escaped from war zones

Many victims of war need food, clothing and shelter, and so many Christians will feel that they should help them

Christian Aid



Christian Aid is one charity which helps the victims of war and conflict, among other things

For example, they have helped civilian victims of war in places such as South Sudan and the Middle East – especially Syria

Things they have done to help them include:

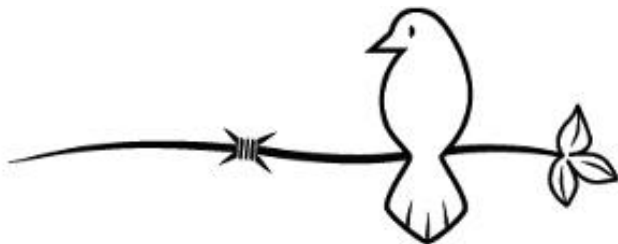
- ✓ Providing food and water
- ✓ Providing education
- ✓ Providing healthcare
- ✓ Providing everyday items, clothing and shelter

Christian  Aid
We believe in life before death

Christian peacemaker teams

Christian Peacemaker Teams was founded in 1984 by three historic peace Churches, Mennonite, Church of the Brethren and Quaker, though now has support and membership from a wide range of Christian denominations

They send small teams to work on peace-making in conflict zones, trying to end conflict between sides by peaceful means, and bring aid and support to the victims of war



christian peacemaker teams