

Confronting Christianity

Week Five: Doesn't Religion Cause Violence?

Pre-Group Reading Material: Chapter 5 (Pages 75-94)

Questions:

- Read the following passages and discuss how they should shape our understanding of violence in the Old Testament? (on the final verse, see additional resource below)
 - o Genesis 9:5-6 _____
 - o Exodus 12:29-30 _____
 - o Exodus 20:13 _____
 - o Joshua 6:21 _____
- Why do Christians believe that God is justified in taking human life? After losing his children, how could Job say; *“Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.”* (Job 1:21)?
- God's authority, as a loving and merciful Creator, to take human life may make sense to Christians, but how can Christians talk about this with those who don't know the Lord or trust his character?
- The crusades are frequently cited as an example of violence imposed by Christianity. Is this true? What does the author say about the crusades that counters the popular narrative?
- In this chapter the author points out that violence and wars have occurred in both religious and nonreligious contexts throughout history. This being the case, do we have reason to believe that Christianity actually *reduces* violence in a society?
- What shift do we see from the Old Testament to the New Testament regarding violence? Is the New Testament void of violence and judgement?
- Drawing on passages such as Matthew 5:38-42 (read together), McLaughlin suggests that; *“Jesus consistently taught nonviolence”* (78). If God remains the same, how can we align violence in the Old Testament with Jesus's teaching of nonviolence?
- How does McLaughlin respond to the critique of Christianity, offered by Karl Marx, that Christianity has failed to live up to the ethical norms it claims to represent? (92-93) What two biblical reasons does she give for this failure?
- On page 93 the author says that *“For many of us in the West today, our selfishness is not served by violence.”* What does she mean by this? In other circumstances do you think we would see more violence in the West?
- How should the violence that Jesus endured shape our understanding of violence? (93-94)

Additional Resource: <https://bibleproject.com/blog/why-did-god-command-the-invasion-of-canaan-in-the-book-of-joshua/>