



Seeking Peace

PARTICIPANT STUDY GUIDE: III



A Nuclear Free World

Rationale

THIS STUDY GUIDE invites participants to grapple with the threat to God's creation posed by nuclear weapons. Participants will discuss the events of August 1945 when the U.S. dropped atomic bombs on Japan, consider the cost of nuclear weapons testing, examine the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) from an ethical perspective, create a plan of action toward building a nuclear weapons-free world, and meditate on the words of the prophet Micah that nations "shall beat their swords into plowshares."

Objectives

- To reflect on the history of nuclear weapons in the U.S.
 - To weigh the impact of nuclear weapons testing on God's creation.
- To assess the ethical underpinnings of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).
 - To recognize the present window of opportunity to build a nuclear weapons-free world.
 - To practice "lectio divina" as a way toward a deeper understanding of the prophet Micah's words about war and peace.

*God who birthed
creation,
Whose works wield life,
Whose faithfulness harvests good fruit,
Grant us wisdom in the study of your
Word and world that,
overtaken by the beauty of all you
have fashioned,
We might seek life.
In the name of Jesus Christ,
The one who died that we might
live.
Amen.*

Outcomes

- Participants will gain understanding of the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. security policy.
- Participants will have the opportunity to respond to the call issued by former Senator Sam Nunn, former Secretaries of State Henry Kissinger and George Shultz, and former Secretary of Defense William Perry, among others, to build a nuclear weapons-free world.
- Participants will gain a deeper understanding of God's call to peace by prayerfully attending to the words of the prophet Micah.



Women
of Faith
in Action



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Women of Faith in Action is a program of WAND Education Fund that seeks to reorder national priorities — away from militarism toward peace and real security. We do this by educating women of faith and engaging their voices and values in the political process.



This curriculum is endorsed by the Peacemaking Committee of the Atlanta Presbytery. It has been promoted by the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, National Council of Churches, and Church Women United.

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EXERCISE 1

The Use of Nuclear Weapons: 1945 Japan

Remembering Hiroshima

Introduction by Facilitator

It is difficult for us to discuss nuclear weapons in the context of Christian faith without reflecting on the events of August 1945 when the U.S. dropped the only atomic bombs ever used in warfare on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima (August 6) and Nagasaki (August 9), killing more than 200,000 people. Many who survived suffered psychological, spiritual, and bodily trauma.

The Memories of Children Survivors

- “A dragonfly flitted in front of me and stopped on a fence. I stood up, took my cap in my hands, and was about to catch the dragonfly when...”
- “Grandfather was tending the many trees and plotted plants in his yard. I was riding my tricycle barefooted when...”
- “I left the house in high spirits, grasping the money mother had given me for ice candy, when...”
- “Mother was ironing father’s good shirts in the living room. I sat next to her. There was a big roar as an airplane flew right over our house. ‘It’s so low, it makes me nervous,’ she said. Just then...”

Discussion Questions

1. For those living at the time, how did you experience the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki? Have your thoughts and feelings changed over the years?
2. For those born after 1945, what have you been taught about Hiroshima and Nagasaki? What is your understanding of these events?
3. Can the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki be squared with Just War thinking? If so, how? If not, how are we to understand the bombings from an ethical standpoint?
4. How is God’s intention for creation threatened by the use of nuclear weapons?

“I got to the point where I thought I cannot bear this any more. The last resort for me was prayer. I say, ‘God, please help my mother, because I can’t find her,’ and every time I called out my mother’s name, I was saying, ‘I hope I don’t really find her here. Everyone looks terrible.’ So I started to hum some of the songs that she used to love to sing to me, and I said, ‘God, please carry this tune, if you could, and comfort her.’”
—survivor Hideko Tamura Snider, 10 years old and home alone when the bomb was dropped



EXERCISE 2

Testing Nuclear Weapons

Reader 1

In the 1940s, the U.S. removed the residents of the islands of Bikini Atoll in order to test atomic weapons there. The Bikini tests took place from 1946 to 1958. The residents, fewer than 200, were placed on nearby Pacific islands. Although it has been 50 years since the testing ended, Bikini Atoll will continue to be radioactive for years. The diversity of species in the surrounding coral reef is 65% of what was present before the atomic tests,¹ and eating locally grown produce over a long period of time can still significantly increase radioactivity in the body.² Many of the islanders have developed illnesses from testing fallout, and from an attempt to resettle the atoll in the 1970s after the government mistakenly told them it was safe to go home.³

Reader 2

Utah author Terry Tempest Williams writes in her book *Refuge* about sitting on her pregnant mother’s lap while driving with her family north of Las Vegas on September 7, 1957. Just before dawn, they felt an explosion so powerful that they thought the oil tanker on the road in front of them had blown up. They pulled over and saw a gold-stemmed mushroom cloud rising from the desert floor. There was an eerie pink glow and in a few minutes light ash rained down on their family car. Williams goes on to explain how this sort of thing, a common occurrence in Utah and Nevada in the fifties, was not without cost.

Reader 3

She writes, “I belong to a Clan of One-Breasted Women. My mother, my grandmothers, and six aunts have all had mastectomies. Seven are dead. . . . I’ve had my own problems: two biopsies for breast cancer and a small tumor between my ribs.”⁴

Reader 4

In 1963, the Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT), or Limited Test Ban Treaty (LTBT), banned nuclear weapon tests by the United States and the former Soviet Union in the atmosphere, outer space and under water. It allowed underground tests. The treaty aimed to slow the arms race as well as stop the excessive release of nuclear fallout into the Earth’s atmosphere.

Reader 5

The Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) bans all nuclear explosions in all environments, for military or civilian purposes—a key to arms control because countries are restricted from developing, expanding, and modernizing nuclear weapons programs without testing. 180 countries (including the U.S.) have signed the CTBT, and 148 have ratified it. The U.S. Senate has not ratified the CTBT.

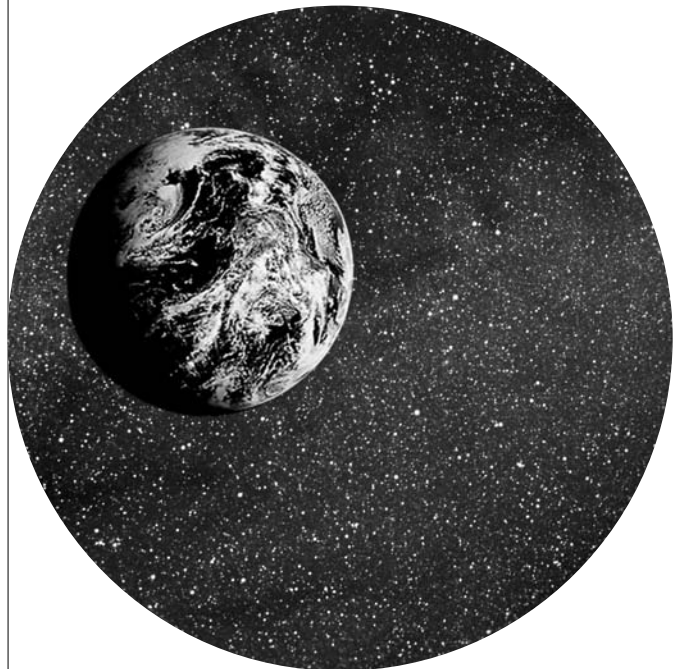
Reader 6

The catechism of the Catholic Church states: “God wills the interdependence of creatures. The sun and the moon, the cedar and the little flower, the eagle and the sparrow: the spectacle of their countless diversities and inequalities tells us that no creature is self sufficient. Creatures exist only in dependence on each other, to complete each other, in the service of each other.”⁵

Mini Session

Discussion Question

Can people of faith support the testing or use of nuclear weapons, given their destructive nature and legacy of harming God’s creation? Why or why not?



EXERCISE 3

Nuclear Nonproliferation

Nuclear Arsenals

Instructions

This exercise uses nine lengths of yarn, each representing the nuclear arsenal of a nation. Invite nine participants to come forward, one at a time, to read the name of a nuclear nation, display the length of yarn, and to tell how many weapons that length of yarn represents. Read the text below, then engage in a discussion of the questions that follow.

Reader 1

Rev. Tyler Wigg-Stevenson defines the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as: “the simple bargain that has kept the world from the disaster of unchecked proliferation: in 1970, the non-nuclear powers agreed not to acquire nuclear weapons in exchange for the promise from the nuclear powers that they would someday eliminate their own arsenals.”⁶ The NPT is reviewed every five years, with the next review set for 2010.

Reader 2

Some challenges to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) include:

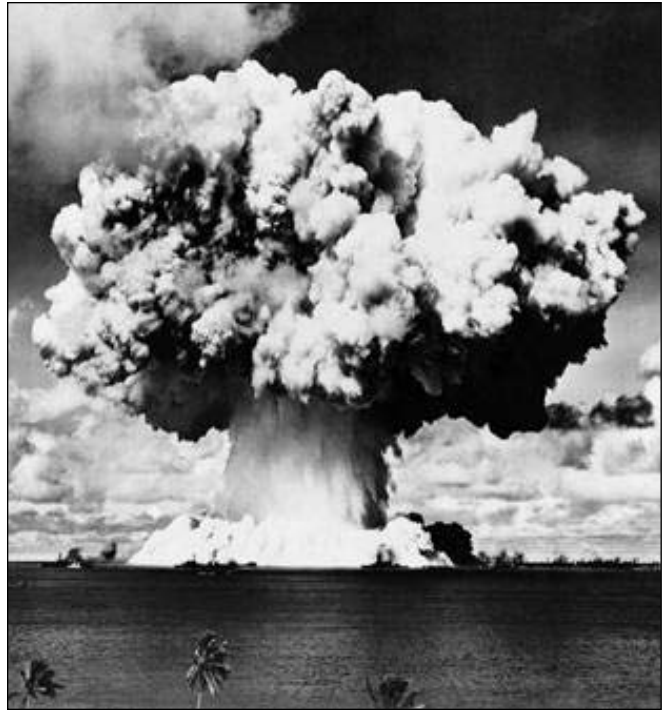
- More and more nations, as well as terrorist networks, seek to acquire nuclear weapons.
- Not all nuclear nations are NPT signatories. India, Israel, North Korea, and Pakistan are not currently party to the treaty.
- Nuclear nations that are NPT signatories have not upheld their commitment (as stated in Article VI) to take steps toward the elimination of their nuclear arsenals. For example, the Department of Energy announced in October 2008 a \$150 billion plan to revitalize and rebuild the nuclear weapons complex.
- There exists a danger that some non-nuclear nations party to the treaty will cease to comply or opt out of the NPT.
- The NPT has been criticized as being unsustainable, because it divides nations into two classes, those which are nuclear powers and those which are not, which some ethicists and nations have deemed discriminatory.

Reader 3

According to the nation of Brazil, “One cannot worship at the altar of nuclear weapons and raise heresy charges against those who want to join the sect.”

Discussion Questions

1. It has been said that the more we perfect the nuclear bomb, the less secure we become. Are nuclear weapons an asset or a liability to national security?
2. The Catholic Church, the Lutheran Church (ELCA), the Presbyterian Church (PCUSA), the United Church of Christ, and the United Methodist Church have all created statements that support the NPT and the reduction of nuclear arms. How do we reconcile this widespread agreement among Christians with the size of the U.S. nuclear arsenal? How much power or authority do voices of faith have in the public square on an issue like nuclear nonproliferation?



EXERCISE 4

The Top of a Very Tall Mountain

Introduction by Facilitator

Nuclear weapons abolitionist movements have swept our nation at critical points, such as the mid-90s when hopes that the end of the Cold War held the promise of nuclear disarmament. Today a new wave is building—one that is more likely to succeed because it is moving not only from the grassroots, but also from the center out—from insiders and foreign policy realists like George Shultz, William Perry, Henry Kissinger and Sam Nunn. These men have gained support from 70 percent of living former national security advisors and secretaries of state and defense, and from leaders across the world. Their experience and credibility, combined with the very real nuclear weapons dangers that confront us, clearly present a window of opportunity to build a nuclear weapons-free world.

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen...Therefore, lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.”

—Hebrews 11:1; 12:12

“The eyes of the future are looking back at us and they are praying for us to see beyond our own time. They are kneeling with hands clasped that we might act with restraint, that we might leave room for the life that is destined to come.”

—Terry Tempest Williams

Take Action for a New Direction

1. Communicate with your members of Congress expressing your thoughts and concerns in response to this lesson, and encouraging them to act accordingly. (For assistance in effectively communicating with Congress, contact WAND’s Washington office at 202-544-5055.)
2. To organize a program to educate your community and encourage citizen engagement, contact WAND’s Washington office at 202-544-5055; peace@wand.org.
3. Join and/or support an organization (see below) that is working daily to build a nuclear weapons-free world, and sign up for action alerts to stay informed and involved.

WAND: www.wand.org

Faithful Security: www.faithfulsecurity.org

FCNL: www.fcni.org

Ploughshares Fund: www.ploughshares.org



Toward a Nuclear-Free World

The accelerating spread of nuclear weapons, nuclear know-how and nuclear material has brought us to a nuclear tipping point. We face a very real possibility that the deadliest weapons ever invented could fall into dangerous hands.

The steps we are taking now to address these threats are not adequate to the danger. With nuclear weapons more widely available, deterrence is decreasingly effective and increasingly hazardous.

... There [is] general agreement about the importance of the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons as a guide to our thinking about nuclear policies.

... In some respects, the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons is like the top of a very tall mountain. **From the vantage point of our troubled world today, we can’t even see the top of the mountain, and it is tempting and easy to say we can’t get there from here.** But the risks from continuing to go down the mountain or standing pat are too real to ignore. We must chart a course to higher ground where the mountaintop becomes more visible.

—“Toward a Nuclear-Free World,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 1-15-08, by George Shultz, William Perry, Henry Kissinger and Sam Nunn

EXERCISE 5

Lectio Divina

Lectio (Reading/Listening):

Hear these words from the prophet Micah...

*God shall judge between many peoples,
And shall arbitrate between strong nations far
away;
They shall beat their swords into plowshares,
And their spears into pruning hooks;
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
Neither shall they learn war any more.*

—Micah 4:3

Meditatio (Meditation): Meditate on Micah 4:3. How does it speak to your life? Which word or phrase stands out?

Oratio (Prayer): Enter into conversation with God about Micah's words. How might God transform your understanding of this verse?

Contemplatio (Contemplation/Resting): Rest in the presence of God. Quiet your mind and spirit, and listen for the voice of God.

(Optional) Group Share



¹Catherine Brahic, "Nuked Coral Reef Bounces Back," www.newscientist.com, April 14, 2008.

²IAEA *Bikini Advisory Group Report*, 1997.

³"Back to Court, Decade After Atomic Tests," *The New York Times*, August 7, 2008.

⁴Terry Tempest Williams, *Refuge*, p. 281.

⁵Catholic Catechism, "II. The Visible World," 340.

⁶Tyler Wigg-Stevenson, "An American Christian Response to Ambassador Sergio Duarte's 'Moral Leadership and Nuclear Weapons'," 2008 Sarah Smith Conference on Moral Leadership, Yale Divinity School, September 19, 2008, www.yale.edu/faith/downloads.