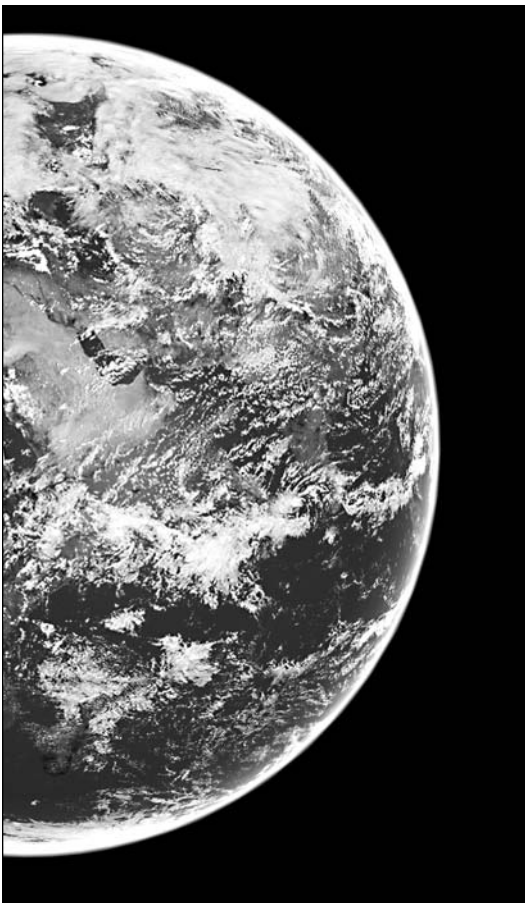




# Seeking Peace

## **PARTICIPANT STUDY GUIDE: V**

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### *War's Silent Casualty* *The Eco-Footprint of War*

#### *Rationale*

THIS STUDY GUIDE examines the tremendous ecological footprint of weapons production and war, highlighting the impact of human violence on all of God's creation. Preventing war and curbing weapons production are integral to caring for God's creation.

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#### *Objectives*

- to care for God's creation by examining the destructive power of war on the environment.
- to offer people of faith a new perspective on the national dialogue on climate change by considering the environmental impact of weapons production and war.
- to consider the role of war and violence in alienating humanity from the Earth and how we might restore a right relationship with God's creation.

#### *Outcomes*

- participants will see themselves and their communities of faith as an integral part of the solution to the current ecological crisis.
- through the use of poetic imagination, hope in restoring the relationship between humanity and the Earth will be buoyed.
- participants will gain an informed understanding of the role of the military industrial complex in climate change and will consider advocacy to reduce militarism and violence and thus curb climate change.



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.



WAND EDUCATION FUND

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## EXERCISE 1

# A Culture of Extinction: Genesis in Reverse

### Instructions

Read aloud the opening prayer. Invite a participant to read the excerpt below. Post the discussion question and offer two minutes of contemplative silence (“think”), followed by a mini session (“pair”), then an opportunity to share reflections with the larger group (“share”).

### Opening Prayer

Gracious Creator,

With joyful awe of your manifold works, we open our hearts like the daffodil unfurls her golden petals at the first sign of spring. Together, we reflect the many colors of your image, as the rainbow trout gliding through a summer stream. We join the company of autumn trees unfolding their flaming limbs in praise of your radiance. And when all the leaves have fallen down around us and the songbird perches on a solitary limb, we too lift our voices to sing a song of simple gratitude to you, our Creator.

In the midst of your beautiful world, we confess the brokenness of our ways. We have depleted the richness of the land, poisoned the rivers, and polluted the air. In our haste to make ourselves more secure, we have spawned a culture of extinction that endangers the habitat of sister species.

In this way, we heap contempt upon you our Creator, and the Earth mourns.

We ask that you would embolden our feet to turn from our unsustainable ways. Renew in us hearts that love this Earth as a newborn loves her mother’s heartbeat. Remind us of our place in the web of creation; that whatever we do to the Earth we do to ourselves and to our children.

Restore us to right relationship within the holy family of all living things, that together we might continue to praise your sacred name.

Amen.

### Think, Pair, Share

“The world is full of creatures that for some reason seem stranger to us than others, and libraries are full of books describing them—hagfish, platypuses, lizardlike pangolins four feet long with bright-green, lapped scales like umbrella-tree leaves on a bush hut roof, butterflies emerging from anthills, spiderlings wafting through the air clutching tiny silken balloons, horseshoe crabs...the Creator creates...Of all the known forms of life, only about ten percent are still living today. All other forms—fantastic plants, ordinary plants, living animals with unimaginably various wings, tails, teeth, brains—are utterly and forever gone. That is a great many forms that have been created...The Creator goes off on one wild, specific tangent after another, or millions simultaneously, with an exuberance that would seem to be unwarranted, and with an abandoned energy sprung from an unfathomable font...the Creator loves exuberance.”

—Annie Dillard<sup>1</sup>

### Discussion Question

Author and columnist Jonathan Schell suggested that the atomic bombing of Hiroshima inaugurated “the Age of Extinction” in which humans are killing off entire species and ecosystems—a “Genesis in reverse.” How do militarism and war contribute to a culture of extinction?

**EXERCISE 2**

# Scarred Lands and Wounded Lives

**Instructions**

View an excerpt of the film “Scarred Lands and Wounded Lives” at [www.linktv.org/video/2990](http://www.linktv.org/video/2990) and participate in the mini session that follows. Read the excerpts printed below from the film’s participants, and conclude with the discussion questions.

**Introduction by Facilitator**

There is a compelling relationship between ecology and war. An ecological footprint calculates the impact of human living on the Earth. It measures the production of greenhouse gases and the destruction of ecology through the use of non-renewable resources and pollution. We often measure the ecological footprints of individuals, corporations, and nations. Rarely do we measure the environmental impact of war. The excerpt we are about to watch from the film “Scarred Lands and Wounded Lives” claims that the environment is “war’s silent casualty.” As our weapons become increasingly toxic, the virus of human violence impacts even greater reaches of God’s creation.

*Clip from “Scarred Lands and Wounded Lives”*



**Mini Session**

As a steward of God’s creation, how do you respond to this film clip?

**Quotes from Film Participants**

“We bombed oil refineries, resulting in mile-long oil slicks that extended down the Danube through Romania into the Black Sea.

We bombed petrochemical plants and fertilizer factories...and there were carpets of dead fish in the river as a result of that. In fact, Serbia itself is seething at this point with carcinogens in the landscape, cratered fields — it will take the ecosystems decades to recover.”

—Lt. General Robert Gard, Jr. (USA, Ret.); Senior Military Fellow, Veterans for America

“Whether it is sonic booms affecting marine mammals, or it is the burning of oil fields in Iraq, or it is destroyed coral reefs in the Pacific for landing purposes, the list just goes on and on. There is absolutely no question that war and the preparations for it have an impact on biological diversity.”

—Dr. Thomas E. Lovejoy, President of the Heinz Center for Science, Economics, and the Environment and Founder of the PBS Series “Nature”

“The amount we are spending on climate change, which is the long-term threat, is about ten percent as much as we’re spending on terrorism and about one percent as much as we’re spending on defense...Sea level is also rising, and in Louisiana we have been losing about thirty square miles of land per year. If the United States were losing that to some foreign power, we’d have the military out there defending it.”

—Dr. Michael MacCracken, Chief Scientist for Climate Change at the Climate Institute

“I grew up near the Hanford Nuclear Reservation, which is in Washington State. When the nuclear bombs were developed there in WWII, little thought was given about what to do [with] the waste that would result afterwards. Indeed, now the Department of Energy calls Hanford the ‘World’s Largest Environmental Cleanup Project.’”

—Marie Rietmann, Public Policy Director of Women’s Action for New Directions (WAND)

**Discussion Questions**

1. Brainstorm a list of all aspects of the environmental impact of war.
2. Does the impact of war on God’s creation deepen your commitment to the biblical mandate to “pursue peace?” If so, how?
3. What unique contribution can communities of faith make to national conversations about war and/or climate change?

<sup>1</sup>“Pilgrim at Tinker Creek,” *The Annie Dillard Reader* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers) 1994, p. 358-359.

**EXERCISE 3**

# Earth Cries Out

**Instructions**

Invite three volunteers to tell the story of Cain and Abel by reading sequentially the three-word phrases prepared by the facilitator. As they read, ask them to hold up each phrase so others can follow along. Discuss the questions listed below. Invite all participants to create a three word phrase to describe reconciliation with the Earth. Share these words aloud with one another. Close by reading Mary Oliver's "Morning Poem."

## The Story of Cain and Abel: Genesis 4:1-16

**Discussion Questions**

1. What role does the Earth play in the story? Had you thought of the Earth as an active character in previous hearings of this story?
2. How does our relationship with God have consequences for our relationship with one another and the Earth? How does our relationship with the Earth impact our relationship with God and one another?

**Facilitator Wrap-Up**

Cain's disastrous decision to act upon his anger with violence toward his brother shattered his relationship with his human family, God, and the Earth. Although Cain lived with the natural consequences of his behavior, God still loved Cain and protected him—

becoming a "keeper" for Cain. The story of Cain and Abel is also about human alienation from the Earth, raising the stakes significantly.

How have we, like Cain, broken our relationship with the Earth? What hopes do we have for restoring a right relationship with the Earth?

**Sharing Three Words of Reconciliation**

Take a moment to create a three-word phrase to describe reconciliation of the relationship between God's people and the rest of creation.

**Take Action**

Visit [www.fundforsustainabletomorrows.org](http://www.fundforsustainabletomorrows.org) to order a copy of the film "Scarred Lands and Wounded Lives: The Environmental Impact of War." The website contains contact information for filmmakers Alice and Lincoln Day to arrange a screening of the film for your congregation or the wider community.

The Interfaith Power and Light Campaign, [www.theregenerationproject.org](http://www.theregenerationproject.org), is mobilizing a national religious response to global warming while promoting renewable energy, energy efficiency, and conservation. Their website offers resources for education and worship, action ideas, advocacy initiatives, and links to state affiliates.

# Closing Poem

**Morning Poem**

Every morning  
the world  
is created.  
Under the orange

sticks of the sun  
the heaped  
ashes of the night  
turn into leaves again

and fasten themselves to the high branches

and the ponds appear  
like black cloth  
on which are painted islands  
of summer lilies.

If it is your nature  
to be happy  
you will swim away along the soft trails

for hours, your imagination  
alighting everywhere.  
And if your spirit  
carries within it

the thorn  
that is heavier than lead ---  
if it's all you can do  
to keep on trudging ---

there is still  
somewhere deep within you  
a beast shouting that the earth

is exactly what it wanted ---

each pond with its blazing lilies  
is a prayer heard and answered  
lavishly,  
every morning,

whether or not  
you have ever dared to be happy,  
whether or not  
you have ever dared to pray.

—from *Dream Work* (1986) by Mary Oliver