## Small Groups – Just War Theory and Terrorism Date

*By Dick Braun* Week \_\_\_\_

### Mood Meter

How concerned are you today regarding terrorism? Have you personally been affected by the War on Terror? Have you lost anyone from attack or while in the armed forces in the past couple of years?

### Opening Prayer

Lord, you have been truly good to us. In James, you tell us every perfect gift comes from our Father in heaven, and we thank you for everything you have given us. We know you are not a respecter of persons in that you send rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. Help us now to be open, share our thoughts and feelings, and keep emotions in check as we discuss a serious topic. Let us learn more about each other and keep us in a relationship with each other and with you. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

### Open It

1. Why do countries go to war against one another? Can a war have redeeming outcomes? If so, which war, in your opinion, has had some, what were they, and are they still meaningful today?

2. What does it mean to be a Pacifist in your mind? Are there grades or levels of Pacifism? Explain

3. Was Jesus a Pacifist? Please sight examples or scripture to support your conjecture.

4. What do you know about Just War Theory? Can you explain what you know about it to the group?

**Scripture to Consider**

1) Jesus was speaking to a crowd along with his disciples. This scripture is from Mt 5:43-48 – the Living Bible. “You have heard that the law of Moses says, ‘Love your neighbor’﻿ ﻿and hate your enemy. 44 But I say, love your enemies!﻿ Pray for those who persecute you! 45 In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and on the unjust, too. 46 If you love only those who love you, what good is that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. 47 If you are kind only to your friends,﻿how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that. 48 But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.[[1]](#footnote-1) It sounds here like Jesus is turning the law of Moses on its head. How on earth can anyone live up to these words from Christ?

2) Again Jesus is still teaching the same group as he did above and he says this from Mt 5:38-4238“You have heard that the law of Moses says, ‘If an eye is injured, injure the eye of the person who did it. If a tooth gets knocked out, knock out the tooth of the person who did it.’﻿ 39 But I say, don’t resist an evil person! If you are slapped on the right cheek, turn the other, too. 40 If you are ordered to court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too. 41 If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile,﻿ carry it two miles. 42 Give to those who ask, and don’t turn away from those who want to borrow.[[2]](#footnote-2) Think about Just War Theory – how do these words stack up against that concept?

3) Paul says a good bit about how we are to respect authority. This scripture is from Romans 13:1-7

Obey the government, for God is the one who put it there. All governments have been placed in power by God. 2 So those who refuse to obey the laws of the land are refusing to obey God, and punishment will follow. 3 For the authorities do not frighten people who are doing right, but they frighten those who do wrong. So do what they say, and you will get along well. 4 The authorities are sent by God to help you. But if you are doing something wrong, of course you should be afraid, for you will be punished. The authorities are established by God for that very purpose, to punish those who do wrong. 5 So you must obey the government for two reasons: to keep from being punished and to keep a clear conscience.

6 Pay your taxes, too, for these same reasons. For government workers need to be paid so they can keep on doing the work God intended them to do. 7 Give to everyone what you owe them: Pay your taxes and import duties, and give respect and honor to all to whom it is due.[[3]](#footnote-3) Looks like Christians don’t get a free ride.

### Explore It

1. Jesus’ words are pretty direct in Mt 5:43-48 – we must love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. Is this something we can really do in light of today’s terrorism? Are we missing something regarding Just War Theory? See the basic tenets of Just War Theory below:

* A lawful authority must prosecute the war with actual power to wage war,
* The war was undertaken with just cause, and
* The war was undertaken with the intention “to achieve some good or to avoid some evil.”

1. How does Luther’s doctrine of two kingdoms figure into the Romans 13:1-7 text? What kingdom is being talked about here? Why does this concept matter?
2. Some say revenge is sweet. I’ve also heard, “don’t get mad; get even. Have you ever felt revenge against another person? Explain. Are you over it now? If not, how are you dealing with the feelings of revenge you have been keeping inside?
3. Don’t both Matthew’s scriptures lead you to believe that Jesus advocates Pacifism? If not, what are they telling you relative to being a Pacifist?

### Apply It

1. Analyze the War in Afghanistan for yourself to see if it was begun based on Just War Theory. Explain your arguments either for or against your hypothesis.
2. We need to honor and support our troops who have given so much in our fight for freedom. Find a veteran of any war and tell them that you respect their work in fighting for their government.
3. Closing Prayer **- any praise reports or needs you’d like to share with the group**?

1. *Holy Bible : New Living Translation.* 1997 (Mt 5:43-48). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Holy Bible : New Living Translation.* 1997 (Mt 5:37-42). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Holy Bible : New Living Translation.* 1997 (Ro 13:1-7). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)