

THE WARRIOR'S SOUL

SESSION 1 LEADER GUIDE TITLE: THE ETHICS OF KILLING

LEADER GUIDE PURPOSE

This guide is designed to help facilitators guide conversations in a healthy, biblical, emotionally safe, and mission-focused direction. This study is not about creating tougher warriors. It is about helping warriors remain spiritually healthy human beings while confronting evil in a fallen world.

LEADER REMINDERS BEFORE DISCUSSION

1. Avoid Extremes.

Don't say: "Taking life is no big deal." OR "Anyone who has taken life is permanently ruined." Not only are both of those extreme positions untrue, but neither extreme is biblical. Scripture recognizes the sacredness of life, the reality of evil, the need for justice, and the emotional weight violence places on the soul.

2. The Goal Is Soul Care.

This study is not simply theological education. It is discipleship and care for warriors' and first responders' souls. Participants may leave with unresolved questions, emotional reactions, painful memories, and spiritual convictions. And that's okay. Health and healing often begin with honest conversations and internal wrestling.

3. Create Space for Honesty.

Some participants may joke to avoid vulnerability, stay emotionally guarded, over-spiritualize pain, or remain silent. Do not pressure people to share more than they're ready to share. Healthy leaders create safety, not forced vulnerability.

4. Anchor in Grace.

The realities of combat, taking a life, or surviving when others didn't can produce overwhelming guilt. Remind your group that there is no action, no order, and no combat scenario that separates a believer from the love of Christ. Killing in combat does not sever a believer's relationship with God. Point them consistently back to the Gospel: Christ's blood washes us completely clean.

SESSION OVERVIEW FOR LEADERS

This session establishes the theological foundation for the entire series.

Key themes include the sacredness of human life, the Image of God (Imago Dei), the origin of death, justice and evil, the difference between killing and murder, and the emotional/spiritual consequences of violence.

Participants should leave this session understanding that human life has divine value, evil is real, justice matters, violence impacts the soul, and warriors must guard their humanity while confronting evil.

KEY LEADERSHIP EMPHASIS

"Protectors must never lose their humanity while confronting evil." Be intentional with this statement and say it often. It should become a recurring theme throughout the discussion. And here's why: Combat, crisis response, and violence can slowly harden the human heart. So the danger of being in a military or first responder role is not merely physical injury. The danger is also becoming emotionally numb, cynical, angry, detached, and even unable to value human life anymore. Healthy warriors fight evil without becoming consumed by it.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS WITH LEADER GUIDANCE

1. Before we dive in, does anyone have a specific takeaway, challenge, or thought they'd like to share from their personal reflection questions?

Leader Direction – Use this question to bridge the gap between their individual study and the group discussion. It gives participants permission to share what God was doing in their hearts during the week. Read the room—if appropriate, allow a few moments of silence for people to gather their thoughts, but do not force anyone to share if they aren't ready.

Direction of Thought – Personal reflection is where head knowledge becomes heart transformation. Sharing these insights builds camaraderie and trust within the squad.

Leadership Emphasis – Good leaders create safe spaces for others to process out loud. Listening to someone else's honest reflection can often spark growth for the entire group.

Follow-up Question – "Was there a specific reflection question this week that you found particularly difficult to answer or that challenged your initial perspective?"

2. Why do warriors sometimes struggle spiritually after combat?

Leader Direction – This question gets to the heart of moral injury, trauma, guilt, grief, and spiritual confusion. Some participants may feel shame, replay decisions, question God, struggle with anger, or feel emotionally numb.

Direction of Thought – Combat affects people because humans are not machines, taking life impacts the soul, and witnessing evil and continual exposure to violence change people. Many warriors struggle spiritually because combat can create guilt, grief, confusion, unanswered questions, or emotional isolation. Others struggle because they saw evil up close, lost friends, survived when others didn't, or felt abandoned by God. Remind participants that struggling spiritually after trauma does not automatically mean weak faith. Sometimes it means someone is human.

Leadership Emphasis – Healthy warriors process pain instead of burying it. Ignoring soul wounds does not heal them.

Follow-up Question – "What are some signs that someone may be struggling spiritually even if they never say it out loud?"

3. Why is celebrating death dangerous for the human soul?

Leader Direction – This question is about preserving humanity. The danger isn't only violence itself; it's also about becoming emotionally comfortable with death.

Direction of Thought – Scripture recognizes that force may sometimes be necessary, but the Bible never celebrates human death casually. When people begin mocking death, enjoying destruction, dehumanizing enemies, or finding identity in violence, something unhealthy begins happening internally. Celebrating death can harden compassion, distort conscience, normalize cruelty, and slowly erode humanity. Healthy warriors may understand the necessity of killing while also grieving loss.

Important Clarification – This doesn't mean warriors can't feel relief after surviving, teams can't celebrate mission accomplishment, or protectors should carry shame for defending innocent life. The issue is whether the heart begins enjoying destruction itself.

Leadership Emphasis – A warrior can be strong without becoming cold.

Follow-up Question – "What are warning signs that someone is becoming emotionally hardened or numb?"

4. How can leaders prevent emotional hardening inside their teams?

Leader Direction – This question focuses on leadership culture. People become hardened when pain is ignored, emotions are mocked, weakness is punished, or performance matters more than people. Leaders set the emotional climate of teams.

Direction of Thought – Healthy leaders check on their people, normalize honest conversations, encourage counseling when needed, create trusted relationships, and model emotional maturity themselves. Teams become unhealthy when leaders say things like "suck it up," and create a "mission over people" mindset. The bottom line is this: good leadership creates a healthy team by balancing toughness, accountability, compassion, and emotional awareness. Healthy teams include

after-action emotional debriefs, peer accountability, mentorship, chaplain involvement, counseling resources, and spiritual support systems.

Leadership Emphasis - The strongest leaders are not emotionally detached. They are emotionally disciplined.

Follow-up Question - "What kind of leadership culture helps people stay healthy under pressure?" "How are you helping create a healthy team culture where you are?"

5. What are practical ways to care for the soul in high-stress professions?

Leader Direction - This question helps participants understand holistic health. To be healthy is not just about being physically fit but also having spiritual and emotional health. The soul requires intentional care, just like the physical body requires maintenance.

Direction of Thought - Soul care is not weakness; it's preparation. To care for the soul, one can pray, read Scripture, spend time with loved ones, go to counseling, journal, exercise, worship, sleep, confess sin, fish, and even process difficult experiences honestly. Encourage participants not to isolate. Isolation leads to anger, depression, addiction, shame, and hopelessness.

Important Clarification - Soul care isn't simply "self-care." It's remaining spiritually, emotionally, mentally, and relationally healthy over time.

Leadership Emphasis - If warriors only train physically while neglecting their souls, eventually something breaks internally.

Follow-up Question - "What are some habits that can help people stay grounded and healthy under prolonged stress?"

6. Why do you think modern culture either glorifies violence or ignores its consequences?

Leader Direction - This question helps participants think critically about culture, media, entertainment, and emotional desensitization. Avoid turning this into merely political frustration, complaining, or culture-war arguments. Keep the discussion focused on the human soul.

Direction of Thought – Modern culture often glorifies revenge and violence, turns killing into amusement, and disconnects violence from emotional consequences. Movies, games, media, and social platforms can sometimes portray violence as exciting, humorous, heroic, or emotionally cost-free. At the same time, society often ignores PTSD, moral injury, grief, suicide, addiction, and the emotional aftermath carried by warriors and first responders. Here's the problem with that: it creates a dangerous disconnect, applauding violence from a distance while ignoring the people who carry its weight afterward.

Leadership Emphasis – The more casual a culture becomes about violence, the easier it becomes to lose sight of human dignity.

Follow-up Question – "How do we stay compassionate and human in a culture becoming increasingly numb to violence?"

7. What other questions would you like to discuss?

Leader Direction – Use this final question to open the floor for anything the group wrestled with that wasn't explicitly covered. Give participants permission to bring up difficult scenarios, specific combat/service memories, or lingering theological tensions. Don't feel pressured to have an immediate answer for every hard question—it is okay to say, "I don't know, but let's wrestle with that together."

Direction of Thought – Unexpressed questions often turn into unresolved doubts or emotional isolation. Allowing open-ended discussion lets the group focus on what is most pressing on their hearts and minds. It transitions the study from a structured curriculum into real-world, peer-to-peer soul care.

Leadership Emphasis – Great leaders don't need to have every answer. They just need to create a safe space where hard questions can be asked out loud.

Follow-up Question – "Is there a specific real-world scenario, moral dilemma, or scripture passage related to this topic that you've been wrestling with recently?"

CLOSING REFLECTION

After the questions and discussions, invite participants to reflect again on this: "Protectors must never lose their humanity while confronting evil." How has your mindset shifted—if at all—since we first started this conversation?

CLOSING ENCOURAGEMENT

Remind the group: Healthy warriors care for their souls, not just their skills.

RECOMMENDED CLOSING PRAYER

"Lord, help us become people who protect others without losing our humanity. Give us wisdom, courage, restraint, compassion, and integrity. Help us confront evil without becoming consumed by it. Heal wounded hearts and guide us into Truth. In Jesus' Name, Amen."

THE WARRIOR'S SOUL

SESSION 2 LEADER GUIDE

TITLE: GOD, GOVERNMENT, AND GUNS

LEADER GUIDE PURPOSE

This guide is designed to help facilitators lead conversations in a healthy, biblical, emotionally safe, and mission-focused direction. This study is not about promoting violence, politics, or personal opinions about weapons. It is about helping warriors, first responders, and protectors understand the biblical concept of authority and how to faithfully exercise power under God's authority.

LEADER REMINDERS BEFORE DISCUSSION

1. Avoid Political Arguments.

This is not a debate about political parties, gun rights, military policy, or current events. Keep the conversation grounded in Scripture. Participants may hold different political views, but the goal is to understand God's design for authority—not defend personal ideologies.

2. The Goal Is Stewardship of Authority.

This session is not primarily about weapons. It is about authority. Scripture teaches that authority is a trust from God, not a possession of man. Help participants wrestle with how power, influence, responsibility, and force should be exercised in a way that honors God.

3. Create Space for Honest Tension.

Many participants may carry questions about military service, law enforcement, self-defense, rules of engagement, use-of-force incidents, leadership failures, or abuse of authority. Some may have experienced situations where authority was

exercised well, while others have experienced deep wounds from authority being abused. Allow honest discussion without forcing agreement on every issue.

4. Keep Bringing the Conversation Back to God.

Participants will naturally focus on governments, weapons, leaders, policies, and systems. Continually redirect the discussion toward the central truth of the session: God alone possesses ultimate authority over life and death.

SESSION OVERVIEW FOR LEADERS

This session explores the biblical relationship between God's authority and human authority.

Key themes include God's sovereignty, delegated authority, the purpose of government, the role of warriors and protectors in restraining evil, the responsibility that accompanies power, and the dangers of authority being abused.

Participants will wrestle with questions like:

- How can a follower of Jesus carry a weapon?
- When is force justified?
- Why does God allow governments to exercise authority?
- What responsibilities come with carrying power?

The session teaches that government authority is not independent authority. It is delegated authority. God entrusts certain responsibilities to governments, military personnel, law enforcement officers, and other protectors for the purpose of restraining evil and protecting human flourishing.

Participants should leave this session understanding that authority is never ownership. The authority they possess ultimately belongs to God and must be exercised under His authority.

KEY LEADERSHIP EMPHASIS

"Authority is a stewardship, not a possession." Be intentional to help participants understand that power is safest in the hands of those who recognize it does not belong to them. God entrusts authority to people so they may serve others, protect the innocent, and restrain evil—not exalt themselves. So, repeat often: "God alone possesses ultimate authority over life and death."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS WITH LEADER GUIDANCE

1. Before we dive in, does anyone have a specific takeaway, challenge, or thought they'd like to share from their personal reflection questions?

Leader Direction - Use this question to bridge the gap between their individual study and the group discussion. It gives participants permission to share what God was doing in their hearts during the week. Read the room—if appropriate, allow a few moments of silence for people to gather their thoughts, but do not force anyone to share if they aren't ready.

Direction of Thought - Personal reflection is where head knowledge becomes heart transformation. Sharing these insights builds camaraderie and trust within the squad.

Leadership Emphasis - Good leaders create safe spaces for others to process out loud. Listening to someone else's honest reflection can often spark growth for the entire group.

Follow-up Question - "Was there a specific reflection question this week that you found particularly difficult to answer or that challenged your initial perspective?"

2. Why do people often struggle with authority?

Leader Direction - Allow participants to share both positive and negative experiences with authority. Be careful not to let the discussion become a complaint session about leaders, supervisors, commanders, politicians, or parents. Acknowledge bad experiences while steering the group toward the deeper issue of the human heart.

Direction of Thought – Help the group see that our struggle with authority often stems from pride, independence, mistrust, or previous experiences with authority being abused. Since the Fall, humanity has naturally resisted being under authority—even God's authority.

Leadership Emphasis – Healthy leaders understand that resistance to authority is often rooted in pain or mistrust, not simply rebellion. Good leaders earn trust through consistency, integrity, and service.

Follow-up Question – "How have your past experiences with authority shaped the way you respond to leaders today?"

3. Scripture refers to government officials as "servants" (or "ministers") of God. How does viewing your role—whether your future commission, current rank, or past service—as a "ministry" change the way you approach your duties and training?

Leader Direction – Keep the conversation focused on biblical principles rather than current political leaders or policies. Remind participants that Romans 13 was written during the rule of the Roman Empire—not under a Christian government.

Direction of Thought – Guide participants toward understanding that government authority is delegated authority. Governments may be imperfect, but God established authority structures to restrain evil, preserve order, and promote justice. When a warrior views their profession as a ministry, it shifts their mindset from merely surviving training or wielding power, to actively stewarding a divine calling.

Leadership Emphasis – Authority is not ownership. Every leader, regardless of position or rank, is ultimately accountable to God for how they exercise authority.

Follow-up Question – "How would leadership change if every leader genuinely viewed themselves as a servant accountable to God?"

4. What responsibilities come with carrying the sword?

Leader Direction – Encourage participants to think beyond weapons. The sword represents authority, power, and the ability to enforce justice. Help warriors, first responders, and leaders consider both the privilege and burden of that responsibility.

Direction of Thought – The ability to use force carries tremendous moral weight. Scripture teaches that authority exists to protect the innocent and restrain evil—not to serve personal agendas, anger, or pride.

Leadership Emphasis – The greater the authority someone possesses, the greater their responsibility to exercise wisdom, restraint, accountability, and character.

Follow-up Question – "Why do you think character is just as important as capability when someone is entrusted with authority?"

5. How can warriors remain humble while holding positions of significant responsibility?

Leader Direction – Allow participants to discuss practical habits that keep them grounded. Encourage transparency and honesty. This question often produces meaningful discussion among military personnel, law enforcement officers, and leaders.

Direction of Thought – Humility grows when we remember that authority is entrusted by God, not earned solely by achievement. Warriors remain humble by staying accountable, remaining teachable, and remembering their dependence on God.

Leadership Emphasis – Jesus possessed all authority and yet consistently chose servanthood. The strongest leaders are often the most humble leaders.

Follow-up Question – "Who has permission to challenge you, correct you, or speak truth into your life when you begin drifting toward pride?"

6. What are practical ways leaders can protect themselves from abusing authority?

Leader Direction – Encourage participants to think practically rather than theoretically. Focus on habits, relationships, and safeguards that help leaders remain healthy and accountable.

Direction of Thought – No leader is immune to temptation. Authority becomes dangerous when leaders become isolated, unaccountable, or convinced that the rules no longer apply to them. Healthy leaders intentionally build guardrails into their lives.

Leadership Emphasis – Accountability is not a sign of weakness—it is a sign of wisdom. Leaders who voluntarily place themselves under accountability are far less likely to misuse authority.

Follow-up Question – "What safeguards have you seen effective leaders use to stay grounded and accountable over the long term?"

7. What happens when a government does evil, or a commander gives an unlawful/unjust order?

Leader Direction – Be prepared for this tension. Participants will naturally point out historical atrocities (like the Holocaust) or modern examples of corrupt leadership. Do not shy away from this; validate that human governments are fallen and frequently fail.

Direction of Thought – Remind the group that government authority is delegated, meaning it is not absolute. It is strictly bound by God's moral law. When a government or a commander commands what God forbids, or forbids what God commands, the believer's highest allegiance belongs to God. Use Acts 5:29 as your anchor: "But Peter and the apostles answered, 'We must obey God rather than men.'"

Leadership Emphasis – A Christian warrior is a servant of God's justice first. While lawful orders must be obeyed with excellence, an unlawful, immoral, or evil order must be courageously resisted.

Follow-up Question – "It is easy to say we will disobey an unlawful order, but doing it in the moment can cost you your career or your freedom. How do you build the moral courage now to stand up to the chain of command later?"

8. What other questions would you like to discuss?

Leader Direction – Use this final question to open the floor for anything the group wrestled with that wasn't explicitly covered. Give participants permission to bring up difficult scenarios, specific combat/service memories, or lingering theological tensions. Don't feel pressured to have an immediate answer for every hard question—it is okay to say, "I don't know, but let's wrestle with that together."

Direction of Thought – Unexpressed questions often turn into unresolved doubts or emotional isolation. Allowing open-ended discussion lets the group focus on

what is most pressing on their hearts and minds. It transitions the study from a structured curriculum into real-world, peer-to-peer soul care.

Leadership Emphasis – Great leaders don't need to have every answer. They just need to create a safe space where hard questions can be asked out loud.

Follow-up Question – "Is there a specific real-world scenario, moral dilemma, or scripture passage related to this topic that you've been wrestling with recently?"

CLOSING REFLECTION

The issue is not whether we have authority. The issue is whether we will steward that authority in a way that reflects the character of God.

The ultimate model for every warrior and leader is Jesus Christ—the One who possessed all authority yet used it to serve, protect, sacrifice, and redeem.

CLOSING ENCOURAGEMENT

The warrior who understands authority best is the warrior who remains most surrendered to the authority of God.

RECOMMENDED CLOSING PRAYER

"Lord, give us wisdom to exercise the authority You have entrusted to us, protect us from pride, anger, and the misuse of power, and help us lead and serve others with humility and integrity. Strengthen those called to protect others, keep our hearts fully submitted to Your authority, and shape us into warriors and leaders who reflect the character of Jesus Christ in all we do. Amen."

THE WARRIOR'S SOUL

SESSION 3 LEADER GUIDE TITLE: JUST WAR AND JIHAD

LEADER GUIDE PURPOSE

This guide is designed to help facilitators lead honest, thoughtful, and spiritually healthy conversations. Session 3 moves beyond discussions about authority and enters the personal realm of moral decision-making, spiritual formation, and the condition of the soul.

Participants may come from a variety of backgrounds. Some may be preparing for military or first responder service. Others may have experienced combat, trauma, leadership failures, or moral struggles that continue to affect them today.

The goal of this session is not to turn participants into experts on Just War Theory. The goal is to help them understand that ethical frameworks can provide guidance, but ultimately every warrior must seek God's wisdom and prepare their soul before the moment of crisis arrives.

LEADER REMINDERS BEFORE DISCUSSION

1. Keep the Focus on the Soul.

Participants may become interested in debating military strategy, foreign policy, rules of engagement, historical wars, or current events. While these discussions may have value, continually bring the conversation back to the central theme: What is happening inside the soul of the warrior? The focus of this session is not winning arguments about war. It is preparing the heart before difficult decisions must be made.

2. Avoid Turning This into a Political Discussion.

Just War Theory can easily lead participants into debates about specific wars, governments, or political leaders. Redirect conversations toward biblical principles

rather than political opinions. You may say: "Rather than debating a specific conflict, let's talk about how warriors seek wisdom when facing difficult decisions."

3. Create Space for Honest Struggle.

Some participants may have faced moments where they still question decisions they made years ago. Others may be wrestling with guilt, grief, regret, or confusion. Do not rush to provide easy answers. Allow people to acknowledge the complexity of life, leadership, and conflict while pointing them toward God's grace and truth.

4. Remember the Goal.

The goal of this session is not simply learning what is permissible. The goal is helping participants ask "What is right before God?" and, "Who am I becoming in the process?"

SESSION OVERVIEW FOR LEADERS

Session 1 established that human life is sacred.

Session 2 established that God delegates authority to governments and warriors.

Session 3 asks a deeper question: How should warriors exercise that authority while preserving their souls?

Throughout history, people have attempted to answer difficult questions about war through ethical frameworks such as Just War Theory. These frameworks seek to determine when war is justified, how war should be conducted, and what responsibilities remain after conflict ends.

While these frameworks provide guidance, they cannot fully answer the deeper spiritual questions that every warrior eventually faces.

This session emphasizes that God's Word remains the ultimate authority and that spiritual preparation must happen before the crisis arrives.

Participants should leave understanding that:

- Character matters more than competence.
- Spiritual readiness matters as much as physical readiness.
- Godly wisdom must be pursued before difficult decisions arise.
- The greatest battle is often the battle within.

KEY LEADERSHIP EMPHASIS

"Prepare your soul before the battle arrives." Warriors spend years preparing physically for future challenges. Faithful leaders understand that spiritual preparation requires the same intentionality. Prayer, Scripture, worship, Christian community, accountability, and humility are not emergency measures. They are habits that prepare the soul long before pressure and conflict arrive.

DISCUSSION GUIDANCE

1. Before we dive in, does anyone have a specific takeaway, challenge, or thought they'd like to share from their personal reflection questions?

Leader Direction – Use this question to bridge the gap between their individual study and the group discussion. It gives participants permission to share what God was doing in their hearts during the week. Read the room—if appropriate, allow a few moments of silence for people to gather their thoughts, but do not force anyone to share if they aren't ready.

Direction of Thought – Personal reflection is where head knowledge becomes heart transformation. Sharing these insights builds camaraderie and trust within the squad.

Leadership Emphasis – Good leaders create safe spaces for others to process out loud. Listening to someone else's honest reflection can often spark growth for the entire group.

Follow-up Question – "Was there a specific reflection question this week that you found particularly difficult to answer or that challenged your initial perspective?"

2. What do you think is the greatest threat to a warrior's soul?

Leader Direction – Allow participants to answer broadly. Some may mention combat, trauma, moral injury, pride, anger, bitterness, isolation, or spiritual complacency.

Direction of Thought – Guide participants toward recognizing that external threats often expose internal vulnerabilities that already exist within the heart.

Leadership Emphasis – A warrior's greatest danger is not always the enemy in front of them. Sometimes it is the unchecked attitudes growing within them.

Follow-up Question – "Why do you think some people emerge from hardship stronger while others become bitter or hardened?"

3. Why is it possible to win a battle, accomplish the mission, and still lose something important within yourself?

Leader Direction – This question often creates meaningful discussion. Allow participants to wrestle with the emotional, spiritual, and relational consequences of difficult experiences.

Direction of Thought – Help participants understand that success in the eyes of the world does not always equal health in the soul.

Leadership Emphasis – Mission accomplishment matters, but preserving character, integrity, and spiritual health matters too.

Follow-up Question – "What are some warning signs that someone may be succeeding externally while struggling internally?"

4. How can someone distinguish between what is merely permissible and what is truly right before God?

Leader Direction – Encourage participants to think beyond rules, policies, and technical compliance.

Direction of Thought – Lead the group toward the importance of wisdom, discernment, prayer, Scripture, and seeking God's character rather than simply asking what is allowed.

Leadership Emphasis – Mature leaders ask more than "Can I?" They ask, "Should I?" and "Does this honor God?"

Follow-up Question – "Who or what most influences your moral decision-making today?"

5. What habits help prepare a person spiritually before they face difficult decisions, suffering, temptation, or conflict?

Leader Direction – Make this discussion practical. Encourage participants to identify specific disciplines rather than speaking in generalities.

Direction of Thought – Preparation happens long before the crisis arrives.

Leadership Emphasis – Character is built through consistent habits, not dramatic moments.

Follow-up Question – "Which spiritual discipline has had the greatest impact on your life and why?"

6. What role do Christian community and accountability play in protecting a person's soul?

Leader Direction – Encourage participants to discuss mentors, friends, churches, spouses, and trusted leaders who have influenced them.

Direction of Thought – Isolation often magnifies struggles while community creates support, encouragement, correction, and perspective.

Leadership Emphasis – Strong warriors are not independent warriors. They intentionally remain connected to a healthy community.

Follow-up Question – "Who currently has permission to challenge you, encourage you, or speak the hard truth into your life? How can the church walk alongside those who have served and support their healing process?"

7. If pressure exposed your heart today, what would it reveal about the person you are becoming?

Leader Direction – Allow this question to be partially reflective. Silence is okay.

Direction of Thought – Pressure rarely creates character. More often, it reveals character.

Leadership Emphasis – The goal of spiritual readiness is not perfection but ongoing transformation into the likeness of Christ.

Follow-up Question – "What is one area of your life that God may be calling you to strengthen before the next crisis arrives?"

8. What other questions would you like to discuss?

Leader Direction – Use this final question to open the floor for anything the group wrestled with that wasn't explicitly covered. Give participants permission to bring up difficult scenarios, specific combat/service memories, or lingering theological tensions. Don't feel pressured to have an immediate answer for every hard question—it is okay to say, "I don't know, but let's wrestle with that together."

Direction of Thought – Unexpressed questions often turn into unresolved doubts or emotional isolation. Allowing open-ended discussion lets the group focus on what is most pressing on their hearts and minds. It transitions the study from a structured curriculum into real-world, peer-to-peer soul care.

Leadership Emphasis – Great leaders don't need to have every answer. They just need to create a safe space where hard questions can be asked out loud.

Follow-up Question – "Is there a specific real-world scenario, moral dilemma, or scripture passage related to this topic that you've been wrestling with recently?"

CLOSING REFLECTION

Ask participants, "If a major challenge entered your life tomorrow, what spiritual habits would support you?"

Then ask: "What is one habit you need to strengthen this week to better prepare your soul?" Small acts of faithfulness today often prepare us for larger tests tomorrow.

CLOSING ENCOURAGEMENT

The greatest battle is often not the one around us, but the one within us. Prepare your soul before the battle arrives.

CLOSING PRAYER

"Father, help us prepare our souls before the battle arrives. Give us wisdom to seek what is right in Your eyes, strengthen us through Your Word and Your Spirit, and shape us into men and women who remain faithful to Jesus no matter what challenges we face. In Jesus' Name, Amen."

THE WARRIOR'S SOUL

SESSION 4 LEADER GUIDE

TITLE: PACIFISM, PTSD, OR SOMEWHERE IN THE MIDDLE?

LEADER GUIDE PURPOSE

This guide is designed to help facilitators lead a thoughtful, biblical, and emotionally safe conversation about one of the hardest tensions in the warrior's soul: how to hold justice and mercy together while facing the realities of violence, trauma, grief, and moral injury. The goal is not to settle every historical debate about pacifism or warfare. The goal is to help participants think biblically about the use of force, recognize the spiritual and emotional weight that can follow conflict, and understand that caring for the soul is part of the warrior's responsibility.

LEADER REMINDERS BEFORE DISCUSSION

1. Do Not Turn the Session into a Debate.

Participants may hold different convictions about military service, violence, conscientious objection, law enforcement, or the use of force. The study acknowledges that Christians have historically reached different conclusions. Keep the conversation centered on Scripture, the tension between justice and mercy, and the spiritual health of the person rather than allowing the group to become argumentative or political.

2. Do Not Force Personal Disclosure.

Questions about combat, trauma, guilt, grief, regret, or moral injury may touch deeply personal experiences. Never require someone to tell their story in front of the group. Give participants permission to pass, listen, or speak privately after the session. Honest conversation is valuable, but emotional safety matters.

3. Do Not Treat Struggle as Weakness.

The study intentionally reminds participants that grief, sadness, emotional struggle, and the effects of trauma do not automatically indicate weakness. Leaders should reinforce that seeking help, carrying burdens together, and caring for the soul are consistent with strength, maturity, and biblical community.

SESSION OVERVIEW FOR LEADERS

This session explores the tension between the Jesus who teaches His followers to love their enemies and turn the other cheek and the Jesus revealed in Revelation 19 as the faithful and true King who judges and wages war with justice. Participants are invited to wrestle with whether a Christian can serve in combat or use force while still following Christ.

The study then moves from the ethics of force to the effect of force on the human soul. Even when force is legally justified, emotionally necessary, or morally required, violence can leave wounds. The session distinguishes PTSD, described in the study as a psychological and physiological response to traumatic experiences, from moral injury, described as a deeper spiritual wound involving guilt, responsibility, regret, shame, and the meaning of what was experienced.

Participants should leave understanding that justice matters, mercy matters, trauma and moral injury are real, healing is possible, and no one was designed to carry life's burdens alone. The direction of the session should consistently move toward honesty, healthy community, accountability, dependence upon Christ, and intentional care for the soul.

KEY LEADERSHIP EMPHASIS

“Strong warriors confront evil without surrendering compassion.” Return to this statement throughout the discussion. Strength and compassion are not opposites. The mature warrior is not someone who becomes numb to suffering, nor someone who refuses to confront evil. The study calls participants to protect the innocent, restrain evil when necessary, preserve human dignity, and remain people whose conscience and compassion are still alive.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS WITH LEADER GUIDANCE

1. Before we dive in, does anyone have a specific takeaway, challenge, or thought they'd like to share from their personal reflection questions?

Leader Direction – Use this question to bridge the gap between their individual study and the group discussion. It gives participants permission to share what God was doing in their hearts during the week. Read the room—if appropriate, allow a few moments of silence for people to gather their thoughts, but do not force anyone to share if they aren't ready.

Direction of Thought – Personal reflection is where head knowledge becomes heart transformation. Sharing these insights builds camaraderie and trust within the squad.

Leadership Emphasis – Good leaders create safe spaces for others to process out loud. Listening to someone else's honest reflection can often spark growth for the entire group.

Follow-up Question – "Was there a specific reflection question this week that you found particularly difficult to answer or that challenged your initial perspective?"

2. Why do you think many warriors struggle to discuss emotional and spiritual wounds?

Leader Direction – Begin by creating permission for honesty without demanding it. Participants may mention warrior culture, fear of appearing weak, concern about career consequences, shame, difficulty finding words for what happened, or the belief that others will not understand. Allow those answers to surface without criticizing warrior culture as a whole.

Direction of Thought – People trained to move toward danger are often trained to function under pressure, compartmentalize emotion, and complete the mission. Those abilities can be necessary in crisis but may make it difficult to process what happened afterward. The study's point is that emotional or spiritual struggle does not mean a person failed. Sometimes it reflects the reality that a human being experienced something human beings were never meant to experience casually.

Leadership Emphasis – Strength is not the absence of wounds. Mature strength includes knowing when a wound needs attention and refusing to carry it alone.

Follow-up Question – "What makes it easier for a warrior to be honest about what is happening beneath the surface?"

3. How do you reconcile the Jesus who turns the other cheek with the Jesus who returns as a Warrior King?

Leader Direction – Let the tension remain for a moment rather than rushing to an easy answer. Matthew 5:38–39 and Revelation 19:11 are intentionally placed beside one another in the study. Help the group see that Scripture presents both the mercy of Christ and His commitment to justice.

Direction of Thought – Matthew 5 confronts personal retaliation and the instinct to answer insult or injury with vengeance. Revelation 19 presents Christ judging with justice. Romans 12:18 adds an important posture: "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." The study does not erase the tension; it challenges the warrior to reject personal vengeance while recognizing that evil may still need to be restrained.

Important Clarification – Avoid using this question to claim that every use of force is righteous or that every refusal to use force is cowardice. The study explicitly acknowledges conscientious objectors and the fact that Christians have historically held different convictions regarding warfare and violence.

Leadership Emphasis – Biblical strength seeks peace, rejects vengeance, values human life, and takes justice seriously.

Follow-up Question – "What is the difference between personal revenge and the responsible restraint of evil?"

4. Is it possible to be both compassionate and dangerous when necessary? Practically speaking, how do you navigate the tension between 'turning the other cheek' when you are personally offended, and using force to defend others professionally?

Leader Direction – This question gets directly at the leadership principle of the session. Encourage participants to define what they mean by "dangerous." The goal is not aggression, intimidation, or enjoying violence. The healthier idea is capability under control: having the ability to protect while remaining governed by character, restraint, and compassion.

Direction of Thought - A protector may need the courage and competence to confront real evil while still seeing the dignity of human beings. Compassion does not require passivity, and strength does not require cruelty. The study's vision is a warrior who can act decisively when necessary without allowing hatred, bitterness, or dehumanization to take over the soul.

Leadership Emphasis - The strongest warrior is not controlled by fear, rage, or the desire for revenge. Strength is most trustworthy when it is submitted to moral conviction and compassion.

Follow-up Question - "What safeguards help keep strength from turning into cruelty, pride, or vengeance?"

5. Historical figures like Alvin York initially leaned toward pacifism before ultimately deciding that God uses good people to restrain evil. How have you personally reconciled your faith with the realities of military or first responder service?

Leader Direction - This question shifts the conversation from theory to personal testimony. Allow participants to share their own journeys. Keep it personal and reflective rather than turning it into a historical debate.

Direction of Thought - Many who serve go through a phase of questioning whether their profession is compatible with their faith. Hearing how others have resolved this tension, realizing that God equips believers for noble professions that restrain evil, is incredibly validating for younger warriors in the room.

Leadership Emphasis - You do not have to leave your faith at the door to be an effective protector.

Follow-up Question - "If a young cadet or recruit came to you struggling with this exact same tension, what advice would you give them based on your own journey?"

6. What are some healthy ways people can process trauma, grief, or moral injury?

Leader Direction - This is an important pastoral question, but group leaders should not present themselves as mental health professionals unless they are qualified to do so. Keep the discussion within the study's framework: honesty, trusted relationships, community, accountability, dependence upon Christ, and seeking appropriate help rather than isolating.

Direction of Thought – The study distinguishes PTSD from moral injury because not every wound is processed in the same way. PTSD may involve the mind and body's response to traumatic circumstances, while moral injury raises questions of guilt, responsibility, shame, regret, and meaning. Time alone may not resolve those deeper spiritual questions. Healing can involve naming what happened, grieving honestly, allowing others to carry burdens with us, receiving grace, and refusing to pretend we are unaffected.

Important Clarification – Do not diagnose anyone in the group. If a participant describes severe or ongoing symptoms, danger to self or others, or an inability to function safely, encourage them to connect with an appropriate chaplain, counselor, medical provider, or emergency resource according to your organization's procedures.

Leadership Emphasis – Asking for help is not surrender. Caring for the soul is part of being prepared for the long fight.

Follow-up Question – "Which is harder for most warriors: admitting they are hurting, identifying what they are feeling, or allowing someone else to help carry it?"

Leader Note: Community and Support – We love veterans by stopping the expectation for them to be 'normal' and instead creating space for their transformed selves.

Leadership Emphasis – As you transition into these next questions about isolation and community, keep this truth in mind. The burden is not solely on the veteran to "adapt" and pretend the war never happened. True biblical community means we stop expecting them to be the exact same person they were before they served, and instead, we create a safe, gracious space for their transformed selves.

7. Why is isolation often one of the greatest dangers after combat or crisis?

Leader Direction – Connect this question directly to Galatians 6:2: "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." The study's closing challenge asks every participant to identify one trusted person they could call if they were struggling spiritually, emotionally, or morally.

Direction of Thought – Isolation removes the very relationships that can help a person process grief, challenge distorted thinking, notice dangerous changes, offer

perspective, pray, listen, and remind someone that they are not alone. Pain tends to grow when it remains hidden. Biblical community does not remove every wound, but it creates a place where burdens can be shared rather than silently carried.

Leadership Emphasis – Warriors prepare equipment, skills, and plans before a crisis. Healthy warriors also build trusted relationships before they desperately need them.

Follow-up Question – "Who needs to know the real version of how you are doing, not just the answer you give everyone else?"

8. What role should faith, community, and accountability play in healing?

Leader Direction – Use this final question to bring the entire session together. Psalm 34:18 reminds participants that the Lord is close to the brokenhearted. Galatians 6:2 calls believers to carry one another's burdens. Healing in the study is not presented as pretending pain never happened; it involves bringing wounds into the presence of God and into a trustworthy community.

Direction of Thought – Faith gives a person somewhere to bring questions, guilt, grief, anger, and pain. Community provides people who can listen, support, pray, and remain present. Accountability helps prevent withdrawal, destructive coping, bitterness, and isolation from becoming the new normal. The study emphasizes that God is not intimidated by a warrior's doubts, wounds, questions, or struggles.

Leadership Emphasis – Healing is often a process, and one of the most important steps is refusing to walk through that process alone.

Follow-up Question – "What would intentional care for your soul actually look like in your life right now?"

9. What other questions would you like to discuss?

Leader Direction – Use this final question to open the floor for anything the group wrestled with that wasn't explicitly covered. Give participants permission to bring up difficult scenarios, specific combat/service memories, or lingering theological tensions. Don't feel pressured to have an immediate answer for every hard question—it is okay to say, "I don't know, but let's wrestle with that together."

Direction of Thought – Unexpressed questions often turn into unresolved doubts or emotional isolation. Allowing open-ended discussion lets the group focus on what is most pressing on their hearts and minds. It transitions the study from a structured curriculum into real-world, peer-to-peer soul care.

Leadership Emphasis – Great leaders don't need to have every answer. They just need to create a safe space where hard questions can be asked out loud.

Follow-up Question – "Is there a specific real-world scenario, moral dilemma, or scripture passage related to this topic that you've been wrestling with recently?"

CLOSING CHALLENGE GUIDANCE FOR LEADERS

The study asks participants to identify one trusted person they could call if they were struggling spiritually, emotionally, or morally. Give the group a moment to think about an actual name. They do not have to say the person's name publicly. If someone realizes they do not have a trusted person, encourage them to begin building that relationship now rather than waiting for a crisis.

Do not let this become a vague commitment to “reach out sometime.” The practical challenge is to strengthen a relationship before it is urgently needed. Participants who already have that person should consider contacting them this week. Leaders can model this by emphasizing that preparation for future challenges includes relational and spiritual preparation, not merely tactical preparation.

CLOSING REFLECTION

Return to the study's core truths:

- Justice matters.
- Mercy matters.
- Trauma is real.
- Moral injury is real.
- Healing is possible.
- You do not have to carry your burdens alone.

Invite participants to consider where they may be strong outwardly but isolated inwardly, and what one step toward honesty, healing, or spiritual growth they can take this week.

CLOSING ENCOURAGEMENT

Remind the group – A warrior does not lose strength by retaining compassion. Grief does not erase courage. Needing help does not cancel a calling. The goal is not simply to survive darkness; it is to confront evil without allowing evil, bitterness, guilt, or despair to take possession of the soul.

RECOMMENDED CLOSING PRAYER

“Lord, give us the wisdom to hold justice and mercy together. Give us courage to confront evil without surrendering compassion. For those carrying trauma, grief, guilt, regret, or wounds they have never spoken about, remind them that You are close to the brokenhearted. Give us trusted people who will help carry our burdens, and give us the humility to let them. Protect our hearts from bitterness, isolation, and despair. Teach us to care for our souls, to live at peace whenever possible, and to reflect Your character even in a fallen world. In Jesus' Name, Amen.”

THE WARRIOR'S SOUL

SESSION 5 LEADER GUIDE

TITLE: CRUSADES AND HOLY WARRIORS

LEADER GUIDE PURPOSE

This guide is designed to help facilitators lead a thoughtful, biblical conversation about what makes a warrior truly holy. The session challenges the idea that attaching God's name to a cause automatically makes the cause righteous, and it rejects the idea that violence, sacrifice, or military service can earn God's favor or salvation. The discussion ultimately moves from the battlefield to the heart: before sin becomes an outward action, it often begins inwardly through pride, anger, jealousy, resentment, bitterness, or selfish ambition. The goal is to help participants examine not only what they do, but who they are becoming.

LEADER REMINDERS BEFORE DISCUSSION

1. Keep the Discussion Focused on the Heart.

The word “crusade” can quickly pull a group into debates about history, politics, religion, or particular wars. Those conversations may have value, but they are not the primary purpose of this session. The study uses the subject to ask a deeper question: What happens when people assume that their cause, anger, or actions must be righteous simply because they believe God is on their side? Keep bringing the group back to motives, character, and the condition of the heart.

2. Do Not Equate the Warrior Calling with Salvation.

The study is explicit that military service, sacrifice, violence, or dying for a religious cause cannot earn forgiveness or eternal life. Salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ alone. Honor the calling of those who protect others without allowing courage, service, or sacrifice to become a substitute for the Gospel.

3. Make Room for Conviction Without Shame.

This session asks participants to examine anger, bitterness, jealousy, resentment, pride, and other internal struggles. Leaders should not use those subjects to embarrass people or force confession. Create an environment where conviction can lead to repentance and growth rather than defensiveness or humiliation. The purpose of heart examination is transformation, not condemnation.

SESSION OVERVIEW FOR LEADERS

This session begins by examining the idea of crusades and holy warriors. Throughout history, people have sometimes attached God's name to violence, conquest, or political ambition and assumed that religious language made their cause righteous. The study challenges that assumption. A warrior is not made holy because he fights for something he calls holy. Holiness begins with the character, motives, and heart of the person.

The session then moves to Cain and Abel in Genesis 4. Before Cain killed Abel, God warned him that sin was crouching at the door and desired to have him. The act of murder did not appear out of nowhere. Something was already happening inside Cain. Jesus reinforces that principle in Matthew 5 by teaching that murder must be traced deeper than the external act to anger and the condition of the heart. James 1 describes the same progression: desire is conceived, gives birth to sin, and sin ultimately produces death.

Participants should leave understanding that:

- Sin often starts small.
- Character matters.
- Anger grows when it is ignored.
- Holiness begins in the heart.
- Leadership flows from character.
- The battle within may be the most important battle a warrior ever fights.

The closing challenge is not simply to behave better, but to invite God to search the heart and expose anything that does not reflect His character.

KEY LEADERSHIP EMPHASIS

“Win the battle within before trying to win the battle around you.” Return to this statement throughout the discussion. Warriors are trained to identify external threats, but strong leaders also learn to identify internal threats. Unchecked pride, resentment, jealousy, bitterness, anger, and selfish ambition can eventually distort judgment, damage relationships, compromise leadership, and shape actions. A holy warrior is not someone who never feels anger or temptation; it is someone who refuses to let sin become the ruling power of the heart.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS WITH LEADER GUIDANCE

1. Before we dive in, does anyone have a specific takeaway, challenge, or thought they'd like to share from their personal reflection questions?

Leader Direction – Use this question to bridge the gap between their individual study and the group discussion. It gives participants permission to share what God was doing in their hearts during the week. Read the room—if appropriate, allow a few moments of silence for people to gather their thoughts, but do not force anyone to share if they aren't ready.

Direction of Thought – Personal reflection is where head knowledge becomes heart transformation. Sharing these insights builds camaraderie and trust within the squad.

Leadership Emphasis – Good leaders create safe spaces for others to process out loud. Listening to someone else's honest reflection can often spark growth for the entire group.

Follow-up Question – "Was there a specific reflection question this week that you found particularly difficult to answer or that challenged your initial perspective?"

2. Why do you think Jesus focused so much on the condition of the heart?

Leader Direction – Help the group move beyond behavior management. Jesus does not merely ask whether someone has committed the final outward act. In Matthew 5:21-22, He traces murder back toward anger and the heart. Encourage participants

to think about why God cares about motives, attitudes, desires, and internal character in addition to visible actions.

Direction of Thought – Actions eventually reveal what has been allowed to grow internally. A person can appear disciplined outwardly while pride, hatred, resentment, jealousy, or revenge is gaining influence underneath the surface. Jesus goes after the root because changing only the visible behavior leaves the deeper problem untouched. Holiness is not merely avoiding certain actions; it is allowing God to transform the kind of person we are becoming.

Leadership Emphasis – Leaders should not only ask, “Did I do the right thing?” They should also ask, “What is happening in me while I am doing it?” Character is formed internally before it is displayed publicly.

Follow-up Question – “What can be happening in a person's heart long before anyone else notices a problem?”

3. How can anger become dangerous if left unchecked?

Leader Direction – Do not treat all anger as identical. Participants may rightly point out that anger can be a response to injustice, betrayal, danger, or wrongdoing. The question is what happens when anger is fed, rehearsed, justified, or allowed to become bitterness and resentment. Connect this to Cain's warning in Genesis 4:7 and the study's description of murder as a process.

Direction of Thought – Anger can narrow perspective, intensify assumptions, dehumanize other people, justify retaliation, and make destructive choices seem reasonable. When anger is continually rehearsed, it can move from an emotion we experience to a lens through which we interpret people and events. Scripture's warning is not simply “never feel angry,” but do not allow anger and sinful desire to take control of the heart.

Important Clarification – Avoid implying that a person is guilty of murder simply because they have experienced anger. The study's point is that Jesus exposes the same sinful root and warns us not to ignore the progression. The presence of anger should lead to examination, wisdom, self-control, and, where needed, repentance before it grows into something more destructive.

Leadership Emphasis – A warrior who can control a weapon but cannot govern his own anger is still vulnerable. Self-control is a form of strength.

Follow-up Question – “What usually happens when we keep replaying an offense instead of dealing with it?”

4. What warning signs indicate that sin may be gaining influence in someone's life?

Leader Direction – Let the group identify practical warning signs rather than giving them all immediately. They may mention increasing secrecy, rationalizing behavior, isolation, defensiveness, loss of empathy, recurring fantasies of revenge, constant irritation, jealousy, contempt, blaming others, compromised boundaries, or becoming comfortable with things that once troubled the conscience.

Direction of Thought – James 1:14–15 describes sin as a progression. It usually does not arrive fully grown. Desire pulls, entices, conceives, grows, and produces consequences. Genesis 4:7 gives a similar warning: sin is crouching at the door and desires to have Cain. The wise response is to notice the early signs rather than waiting until behavior becomes catastrophic.

Leadership Emphasis – Strong leaders pay attention to drift. Small compromises, repeated resentments, and hidden attitudes matter because direction eventually becomes destination.

Follow-up Question – “Which warning signs are easiest to see in somebody else but hardest to recognize in ourselves?”

5. Why is character more important than reputation?

Leader Direction – Invite the group to distinguish between who a person is and what other people think that person is. Warriors and leaders can become highly aware of image, credibility, rank, performance, competence, and how they are perceived. The study calls participants beneath reputation to character.

Direction of Thought – Reputation can be managed; character eventually reveals itself. Reputation depends on what people know about us. Character describes who we are when no one is watching, when we are under pressure, when we are angry, when we have power, and when doing the right thing costs us something. Proverbs 4:23 says everything we do flows from the heart because the internal life eventually shapes the external life.

Leadership Emphasis – Leadership influence may be built on competence, but lasting trust is built on character. A strong reputation without strong character is fragile.

Follow-up Question – “What situations tend to reveal a person's character most clearly?”

6. What practical steps help us guard our hearts?

Leader Direction – Push this question toward concrete habits. Proverbs 4:23 tells us to guard the heart, and Psalm 139:23–24 gives participants a model of inviting God to search it. Encourage answers such as prayer, Scripture, honest self-examination, confession, accountability, trusted community, dealing with offenses quickly, controlling what we repeatedly consume, asking for forgiveness, and paying attention to recurring thoughts and reactions.

Direction of Thought – Guarding the heart is not the same as becoming emotionally closed or suspicious. It means intentionally protecting the inner life from influences and patterns that pull us away from God's character. It also means allowing trusted people and God's Word to challenge us when we cannot see our own blind spots.

Leadership Emphasis – Spiritual maturity is rarely accidental. Warriors prepare for physical threats through training and repetition; guarding the heart also requires intentional habits practiced before a crisis arrives.

Follow-up Question – “Which habit helps you notice what is happening in your heart before it begins controlling your actions?”

7. Jeff uses the tactical example of choosing a 'Soft Knock' instead of a 'Hard Knock' to retrieve a target without unnecessarily creating more hatred. How does the condition of a leader's heart dictate the tactics they choose? Where can you intentionally de-escalate a conflict in your own life or profession rather than 'blowing the door down'?

Leader Direction – This question bridges the gap between tactical execution and spiritual health. Help the group avoid turning this into a debate over standard operating procedures (SOPs) or when a hard knock is legally justified. The point

isn't that a "hard knock" is never necessary; the point is that a healthy leader doesn't prefer destruction when a peaceful resolution is possible.

Direction of Thought – A leader motivated by pride, anger, or a desire to punish will naturally default to maximum force, they want to "blow the door down" because it satisfies their ego or asserts dominance. A leader whose heart is grounded in justice and compassion will choose tactics that accomplish the mission while preserving human dignity and minimizing collateral damage. A leader's tactics will always eventually reveal the condition of their heart.

Leadership Emphasis – True strength is having the capacity for overwhelming force, but the character to use restraint.

Follow-up Question – "What is an internal warning sign for you that you are wanting to 'blow the door down' out of pride, anger, or frustration, rather than actual necessity?"

8. How can we confront evil without allowing evil to take root within us?

Leader Direction – This is the culminating question of the session. Warriors, first responders, leaders, and protectors may be required to confront wrongdoing, danger, injustice, or evil. The study does not call them to passivity. It asks how they can oppose evil without becoming controlled by hatred, pride, vengeance, cruelty, or contempt in the process.

Direction of Thought – The distinction is between confronting what is wrong and allowing what is wrong to reshape us. A person can act courageously and decisively while still guarding motives, recognizing human dignity, refusing personal revenge, submitting to moral boundaries, and examining the heart before God. The deeper victory is not merely stopping an external threat; it is refusing to let the encounter turn us into someone governed by the same darkness we oppose.

Important Clarification – Do not confuse forgiveness, compassion, or guarding the heart with refusing to establish consequences or restrain evil. The study's focus is internal character. A person may need to act firmly while still refusing hatred and vengeance as the governing motives of that action.

Leadership Emphasis – The holy warrior is not defined simply by what he is willing to fight against, but by what he refuses to become while fighting it.

Follow-up Question – “What keeps justified action from turning into personal vengeance?”

9. What other questions would you like to discuss?

Leader Direction – Use this final question to open the floor for anything the group wrestled with that wasn't explicitly covered. Give participants permission to bring up difficult scenarios, specific combat/service memories, or lingering theological tensions. Don't feel pressured to have an immediate answer for every hard question—it is okay to say, "I don't know, but let's wrestle with that together."

Direction of Thought – Unexpressed questions often turn into unresolved doubts or emotional isolation. Allowing open-ended discussion lets the group focus on what is most pressing on their hearts and minds. It transitions the study from a structured curriculum into real-world, peer-to-peer soul care.

Leadership Emphasis – Great leaders don't need to have every answer. They just need to create a safe space where hard questions can be asked out loud.

Follow-up Question – "Is there a specific real-world scenario, moral dilemma, or scripture passage related to this topic that you've been wrestling with recently?"

CLOSING CHALLENGE GUIDANCE FOR LEADERS

The study asks participants to pray Psalm 139:23-24: “Search me, God, and know my heart ... See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” Give participants a quiet moment to consider one attitude, motive, habit, resentment, or recurring reaction that may need God's attention. They do not need to disclose it publicly.

Encourage specificity. “I need to be better” is difficult to act on. “I have been replaying this offense,” “I am becoming bitter toward this person,” “pride is shaping how I lead,” or “I have been justifying something I know is wrong” gives a person something concrete to surrender. The goal is not self-condemnation. It is honesty before God and willingness to respond when He exposes something that needs to change.

CLOSING REFLECTION

Return to the study's core truths: Sin starts small. Character matters. Anger grows if ignored. Holiness begins in the heart. Leadership flows from character. The battle within matters most. Ask participants to consider not merely whether their external conduct looks acceptable, but what kind of person their repeated thoughts, attitudes, habits, and reactions are forming them to become.

CLOSING ENCOURAGEMENT

Remind the group: A holy warrior is not someone who claims God is on his side while ignoring the condition of his own heart. Holiness is formed through surrender, repentance, character, and the ongoing work of God in us. The strongest warrior is willing to confront the enemy outside while also allowing God to confront the pride, anger, bitterness, jealousy, resentment, and selfishness inside.

RECOMMENDED CLOSING PRAYER

“Lord, search us and know our hearts. Show us anything in us that does not reflect Your character. Expose anger before it becomes bitterness, pride before it becomes destruction, resentment before it controls us, and sin before it grows. Give us courage to confront evil without allowing evil to take root within us. Teach us to guard our hearts, lead with character, repent quickly, and become more like Jesus. Help us win the battle within so that the way we lead, serve, protect, and live honors You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.”

THE WARRIOR'S SOUL

SESSION 6 LEADER GUIDE

TITLE: SWORDS AND PLOWSHARES

LEADER GUIDE PURPOSE

This guide is designed to help facilitators guide the final conversation in a healthy, biblical, emotionally safe, and Gospel-centered direction. This session is not meant to minimize the warrior's calling or pretend evil does not require restraint. It is designed to help participants understand the limits of human power and the ultimate hope found in Jesus Christ. Warriors can restrain evil, but only Christ can redeem people and ultimately defeat sin and death.

LEADER REMINDERS BEFORE DISCUSSION

1. Keep the Gospel Central.

This is the final session, and the study intentionally moves toward Jesus Christ, the cross, the resurrection, forgiveness, and eternal life. Do not allow the discussion to become only philosophical, political, or military. The goal is to help participants see that humanity's deepest problem cannot be solved by force, policy, technology, or human effort.

2. Do Not Diminish the Warrior Calling.

The point of this session is not that protectors, governments, laws, or military force are unnecessary. The study clearly affirms that God uses protectors to restrain evil and preserve human flourishing. The distinction is this: human force can restrain evil, but it cannot redeem the human heart.

3. Create Space for Personal Response.

Some participants may have strong faith. Others may be skeptical, spiritually curious, carrying guilt or regret, or unsure what they believe about eternity. Do not pressure people into a public response. Ask clear questions, make the Gospel understandable, and create room for honest reflection and conversation.

SESSION OVERVIEW FOR LEADERS

This final session answers the question that has been building throughout the series: How does all of this end? Participants have considered the sanctity of life, God's authority, the warrior's role in restraining evil, the condition of the human heart, and the importance of preparing the soul for conflict. Session 6 shifts from temporary restraint to ultimate victory.

The biblical picture of swords becoming plowshares points to a future where war ends and peace reigns. Scripture teaches that this future will not be produced by military strength or human progress. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus accomplished what no weapon could: He defeated sin, conquered death, and made reconciliation with God possible.

Participants should leave understanding that:

- Evil will not win.
- Death does not have the final word.
- Forgiveness is available.
- Grace is greater than sin.
- Ultimate peace is found in the victory of Christ.

KEY LEADERSHIP EMPHASIS

“Warriors can restrain evil, but only Christ can redeem people.” Be intentional with this statement and return to it throughout the discussion. It brings together the tension of the entire series. Warriors have a real and honorable role in confronting and restraining evil, but no warrior is asked to carry the weight of saving the world. Human strength has limits. The Gospel announces that Jesus has done what human strength never could: He dealt with the problem beneath every war, every act of violence, and every broken human system – the sinful human heart.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS WITH LEADER GUIDANCE

1. Before we dive in, does anyone have a specific takeaway, challenge, or thought they'd like to share from their personal reflection questions?

Leader Direction – Use this question to bridge the gap between their individual study and the group discussion. It gives participants permission to share what God was doing in their hearts during the week. Read the room—if appropriate, allow a few moments of silence for people to gather their thoughts, but do not force anyone to share if they aren't ready.

Direction of Thought – Personal reflection is where head knowledge becomes heart transformation. Sharing these insights builds camaraderie and trust within the squad.

Leadership Emphasis – Good leaders create safe spaces for others to process out loud. Listening to someone else's honest reflection can often spark growth for the entire group.

Follow-up Question – "Was there a specific reflection question this week that you found particularly difficult to answer or that challenged your initial perspective?"

2. Why can't human effort ultimately solve humanity's problem with evil?

Leader Direction – This question gets to the core distinction between restraining evil and redeeming the human heart. Participants may naturally talk about military power, government, laws, education, technology, or leadership. Affirm the good those things can do while helping the group recognize their limits.

Direction of Thought – Human systems can punish wrongdoing, deter aggression, establish order, and protect innocent people. But they cannot remove pride, hatred, greed, selfishness, vengeance, or sin from the heart. The problem of evil is not only outside of us; it also exists within humanity. This is why lasting peace cannot finally come from stronger weapons or better systems alone. The Gospel claims that the deepest human problem requires spiritual redemption.

Leadership Emphasis – Wise warriors understand both the responsibility and the limits of human power.

Follow-up Question – “Where have you seen human power accomplish something good but still fail to change the human heart?”

3. How does the cross accomplish what weapons never can?

Leader Direction – Keep this answer focused on the Gospel. The cross is not simply an example of sacrifice. According to the study, through Christ's death and resurrection Jesus defeated sin, conquered death, and provided reconciliation between God and humanity.

Direction of Thought – Weapons can stop an aggressor, but they cannot forgive sin. Force can end a battle, but it cannot reconcile a person to God. At the cross, Jesus willingly gave His life for sinners. Romans 5:8 emphasizes that God's love was demonstrated while we were still sinners. The cross addresses guilt, shame, separation from God, and the brokenness of the human heart in a way no human institution can.

Important Clarification – Do not frame this as a choice between the cross and the legitimate work of protectors. The study teaches both: warriors may be used to restrain evil in the present, while Christ alone provides redemption and eternal hope.

Leadership Emphasis – The greatest victory in the Christian story was not won by taking a life, but by Christ giving His life and rising again.

Follow-up Question – “Why do you think forgiveness can accomplish something that force cannot?”

4. What does it mean that Jesus defeated death?

Leader Direction – This question allows the group to talk about resurrection and eternity. For warriors, first responders, and veterans, death may not be an abstract subject. Some may have lost friends, witnessed death, or confronted their own mortality. Lead with confidence while remaining sensitive to grief.

Direction of Thought – The resurrection means death is not the final word. First Corinthians 15:54 describes death being swallowed up in victory. Christian hope is not merely that people can become better or that society can improve. It is that Jesus rose bodily from the dead and that those who belong to Him have hope

beyond the grave. This changes how believers face fear, loss, sacrifice, and their own mortality.

Leadership Emphasis – Christian courage is not pretending death is insignificant. It is believing death does not get the final victory.

Follow-up Question – “How would confidence in resurrection change the way a person faces danger, loss, or death?”

5. Why is forgiveness such a central part of the Gospel?

Leader Direction – This question may become deeply personal. Some participants may carry guilt, shame, regret, or memories connected to things they have done, failed to do, or experienced. Avoid forcing disclosure. Keep the focus on the availability of God's grace.

Direction of Thought – The Gospel says forgiveness is not earned by performance, rank, sacrifice, service, or trying to outweigh bad actions with good ones. Redemption is God's work through Jesus Christ. The study reminds participants that God's grace is greater than accomplishments and greater than mistakes. This matters especially for people whose identity has been built around performance or who believe some part of their past places them beyond forgiveness.

Important Clarification – Forgiveness does not mean pretending sin, failure, or harm was unimportant. Grace takes sin seriously enough that Christ went to the cross, while also declaring that sin does not have to be the final word over a person's life.

Leadership Emphasis – A warrior's greatest failure does not have to define them, and their greatest victory cannot save them.

Follow-up Question – “Why is receiving grace sometimes harder than trying to earn it?”

6. How can someone be both a warrior and a person after God's own heart?

Leader Direction – This question connects the final session back to the identity of the warrior. The study includes David as an example of a warrior whose life also showed the limits and weight of violence. First Chronicles 22:8 records that David

had shed much blood and fought many wars, and therefore would not build the temple. The point is not to condemn all warriors, but to recognize that violence carries weight and that devotion to God must remain greater than devotion to warfare.

Direction of Thought – A warrior after God's heart understands that strength is a stewardship, not an identity. They value human life, act with restraint, submit to God's authority, remain humble, seek forgiveness, and refuse to make violence their source of meaning. Their profession may shape their responsibilities, but it should not become the foundation of who they are. The study calls cadets, active military, first responders, veterans, and retirees to root their identity ultimately in Christ.

Leadership Emphasis – A warrior can be strong, courageous, and capable without allowing the sword to become their identity.

Follow-up Question – “What is the difference between being a warrior as a calling and making ‘warrior’ your ultimate identity?”

7. King David was a fierce warrior, but his hands were made unclean by his own moral failure and the murder of Uriah. Yet, he found complete forgiveness and is called a 'man after God's own heart.' How does David's life give hope to warriors today who carry deep guilt, shame, or regret?

Leader Direction – Use this question to directly address the weight of moral injury and past sins. Some participants may secretly feel that their actions, whether in combat, leadership, or their personal lives, have permanently disqualified them from God's love. Guide the group to focus on the absolute nature of God's grace, that no matter their past mistakes they can experience the reality of His forgiveness.

Direction of Thought – David's story shatters the lie that we must have a spotless record to be loved by God. David abused his power, committed adultery, and arranged a murder to cover his tracks. Yet, when confronted, he didn't make excuses; he repented (as seen in Psalm 51), and God's response was complete restoration. For warriors carrying the heavy burden of regret, over things done or left undone, David is proof that forgiveness is not based on the lightness of our sin, but on the weight of God's mercy.

Leadership Emphasis – No warrior's past is so dark that it places them outside the reach of God's grace. In Christ, your failures do not have to be your final identity.

Follow-up Question – "Why is it often harder for us to forgive ourselves than it is to believe that God has forgiven us?"

8. What hope does the promise of “swords into plowshares” give you today?

Leader Direction – End the discussion looking forward. Isaiah 2:4 and Micah 4:3 picture a future in which nations no longer take up the sword against one another and no longer train for war. This is the destination the series has been moving toward.

Direction of Thought – The promise of swords into plowshares means war is not eternal. Violence is not ultimate. Evil does not win. The tools of conflict are transformed into tools of cultivation and life. For people who spend their careers preparing for conflict, this is a powerful reminder that God's final kingdom is defined by peace, restoration, and life rather than endless war.

Leadership Emphasis – The Christian hope is not that humanity eventually becomes strong enough to save itself. It is that Christ's victory is complete and God's peace is coming.

Follow-up Question – “What changes in the way you live today if you really believe evil will not win and peace is coming?”

9. What other questions would you like to discuss?

Leader Direction – Use this final question to open the floor for anything the group wrestled with that wasn't explicitly covered. Give participants permission to bring up difficult scenarios, specific combat/service memories, or lingering theological tensions. Don't feel pressured to have an immediate answer for every hard question—it is okay to say, "I don't know, but let's wrestle with that together."

Direction of Thought – Unexpressed questions often turn into unresolved doubts or emotional isolation. Allowing open-ended discussion lets the group focus on what is most pressing on their hearts and minds. It transitions the study from a structured curriculum into real-world, peer-to-peer soul care.

Leadership Emphasis – Great leaders don't need to have every answer. They just need to create a safe space where hard questions can be asked out loud.

Follow-up Question – "Is there a specific real-world scenario, moral dilemma, or scripture passage related to this topic that you've been wrestling with recently?"

GOSPEL RESPONSE GUIDANCE FOR LEADERS

The Session 6 study guide asks participants directly whether they have personally trusted Christ as Savior and Lord. If the conversation opens naturally, explain the Gospel simply: humanity is separated from God by sin; Jesus Christ died for sinners and rose from the dead; forgiveness and eternal life are available through Him; and Jesus calls people to trust Him as Savior and Lord. John 14:6 is intentionally included in the study because Christian hope is ultimately centered in Christ, not simply in general spirituality or personal improvement.

If someone wants to respond, give them room to ask questions and talk privately if needed. Do not manipulate emotion or pressure a decision. The goal is a clear, sincere response to Christ. If your organization or ministry has a follow-up process, make sure participants know who they can contact and what their next step should be.

CLOSING REFLECTION

After the discussion, return to the central question from the study: "Where have I placed my ultimate hope?" Invite participants to think about whether their hope rests primarily in strength, competence, government, military power, career, morality, or Jesus Christ. Then remind them of the study's final truths:

- God is sovereign.
- Evil will not win.
- Jesus defeated death.
- Forgiveness is available.
- Grace is greater than sin.
- Peace is coming.

CLOSING ENCOURAGEMENT

Remind the group: Warriors may spend their lives confronting evil, but they were never meant to carry the burden of saving the world. Christ has already secured the ultimate victory.

RECOMMENDED CLOSING PRAYER

“Lord, thank You that evil will not have the final word. Thank You for the men and women who protect others and restrain evil, and remind us that our ultimate hope is not in our own strength. Thank You for Jesus, for the cross, for forgiveness, and for the victory of the resurrection. Help us live with courage, humility, grace, and confidence in You. For those carrying guilt, shame, grief, or fear, draw them to Your mercy and Truth. Teach us to place our identity and our hope in Christ. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.”