

THE WARRIOR'S SOUL

SESSION 1 STUDY GUIDE

TITLE: THE ETHICS OF KILLING



Scan to Watch: Use your phone's camera to scan the QR code and watch The Warrior's Soul. This links directly to Episode 1, simply click through to the next episode when your group is ready for the next session.

SESSION OVERVIEW

This session wrestles with one of the hardest realities a warrior, first responder, or protector can face: What happens to the soul when it takes a life?

The theological foundation for this entire series is this: human life is sacred because every person is created in the image of God. From the very beginning of creation, humanity was designed to be a reflection of God. Because of that, every human being carries immeasurable worth and ultimate purpose.

The session explains that death was never part of God's original design. However, death entered the world through sin, bringing separation, suffering, violence, and brokenness into human experience. And because human life is sacred, the taking of life is never to be taken lightly or with joy—even in situations where force may be justified.

This session confronts the difficult tension many faithful warriors carry:

- Can someone love God and still serve in combat?
- Is all killing murder?
- How can God be loving while also executing justice?
- What happens to the human soul after the taking of another life?
- How do warriors confront evil without losing humanity?

This session does not glorify war, violence, or the taking of life. Instead, it offers an honest and biblical examination of the emotional, spiritual, and moral weight carried by those who stand between evil and the innocent. Participants are challenged to think deeply about justice, human dignity, moral responsibility, and the lasting impact violence can leave on the soul.

Ultimately, this session reminds warriors that while force may sometimes be necessary in a fallen world, preserving the soul is just as important as completing the mission.

THE BIG IDEA

Human life is sacred because every person bears the image of God.

God alone possesses ultimate authority over life and death, and while evil exists in the world, He sometimes calls warriors to defend the innocent and restrain evil.

KEY SCRIPTURES

Genesis 1:26 - Humanity Bears God's Image - "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...'"

Genesis 2:17 - Death Entered Through Sin - "...for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

Exodus 20:13 - Murder vs. Killing - "You shall not murder."

Exodus 15:3 - God as Warrior - "The LORD is a warrior; the LORD is his name."

Psalms 24:8 - God as Warrior - "The LORD, mighty in battle!"

KEY TERMS

Imago Dei - Latin for "Image of God." The belief that humans uniquely reflect God's nature and possess dignity, value, moral responsibility, and an eternal soul. Here's why this term is important to know: if every life matters to God, then taking life should never become casual, celebrated, or emotionally numb.

Moral Injury - The deep internal wound that occurs when someone violates their conscience, witnesses evil, fails to prevent tragedy, or carries the burden of taking life. Here's why this term is important to know: Moral injury is different from PTSD, although PTSD is often the result of the fear and trauma associated with a moral injury.

LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLE

"Protectors must never lose their humanity while confronting evil." One of the greatest dangers in military service, law enforcement, or emergency response is emotional hardening. Strong warriors fight evil without becoming consumed by it.

APPLICATION

For Future Warriors. Before you ever lead others in combat or crisis, this session will help settle your values, establish your moral framework, and create a foundation for you to know who you are before the chaos of battle arrives.

For Active Military and First Responders. One day you may face a moment where your hesitation costs lives and your actions carry with them emotional consequences. This session reminds us that even justified force can leave scars, that suppressing emotion is not healing, and that your soul needs care too.

For Veterans and Retirees. Many people who have ever had to pull a weapon or use destructive force carry guilt, confusion, anger, numbness, and spiritual questions from their experience. This session reminds you that wrestling with these realities does not make you weak, that grief over death is evidence of your humanity, and that God sees both your wounds and your intentions.

PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Identity & Humanity

1. What does it mean to you personally that every human bears the image of God?
2. Have you ever struggled to see value in certain people? Why?
3. How does the "Imago Dei" change the way you view enemies, criminals, or difficult people?

Faith & Profession

4. Have you ever felt tension between your faith and your profession?
5. What fears do you carry about serving in combat or crisis situations?
6. What kind of person do you hope to become under pressure?

Combat, Justice & Morality

7. What is the difference between killing and murder?
8. Why is that distinction important?
9. Can force ever be both tragic and necessary at the same time?

Spiritual Reflection

10. How can God be both loving and just?
11. Why do you think violence affects the human soul so deeply?
12. What do you think healthy spiritual healing looks like after trauma or combat?

GROUP DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Use these questions in squad discussions, small groups, classrooms, or peer mentorship:

1. Before we dive in, does anyone have a specific takeaway, challenge, or thought they'd like to share from their personal reflection questions?
2. Why do warriors sometimes struggle spiritually after combat?
3. Why is celebrating death dangerous for the human soul?
4. How can leaders prevent emotional hardening inside their teams?
5. What are practical ways to care for the soul in high-stress professions?
6. Why do you think modern culture either glorifies violence or ignores its consequences?
7. What other questions would you like to discuss?

WHAT TO REMEMBER

- Every life matters.
- Evil is real.
- Justice matters.
- Warriors may be necessary.
- Death is never casual.
- Your soul matters too.

CLOSING CHALLENGE

Before the next session, spend time reflecting on this question:

"How do I confront evil without losing my humanity?" Write down your fears, convictions, and questions that come up as you reflect on that thought.

THE WARRIOR'S SOUL

SESSION 2 STUDY GUIDE

TITLE: GOD, GOVERNMENT, AND GUNS



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SESSION OVERVIEW

One of the most difficult realities for warriors to understand is the relationship between God's authority and human authority.

Scripture teaches that God alone possesses ultimate authority over life and death. Every human being is created in the image of God and possesses immeasurable worth and dignity. Yet Scripture also teaches that God has delegated limited authority to governments to restrain evil, protect the innocent, and establish order within society.

This creates a tension many warriors, first responders, and protectors eventually face:

- How can a follower of Jesus carry a weapon?
- How can someone created in God's image be tasked with using force against another image bearer?
- When is force justified?
- Can authority be abused?
- What responsibility comes with carrying the sword?
- What happens to the soul when a person is entrusted with power over others?

This session examines God's design for government and the warrior's role within that design. Participants will explore the biblical concept of delegated authority and learn that the power to use force was never intended to glorify violence, but to restrain evil and create the conditions necessary for human flourishing.

This session reminds warriors that authority is never ownership. The authority to protect others is ultimately God's authority entrusted to human hands. Because of that,

every warrior must learn to carry power with humility, responsibility, and accountability.

Ultimately, this session teaches that the question is not simply whether a warrior has authority to act. The deeper question is whether that authority is being exercised under God's authority.

THE BIG IDEA

God alone possesses ultimate authority over life and death.

To restrain evil and protect the innocent, God delegates limited authority to governments. Warriors serve as stewards of that authority and must exercise it with humility, justice, and accountability before God.

KEY SCRIPTURES

Genesis 9:6 - Delegated Authority - "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image."

Romans 13:1-5 - Government as God's Servant - "For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad... for he does not bear the sword in vain."

1 Peter 2:13-14 - Authority and Order - "Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution..."

Micah 6:8 - Justice and Humility - "What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

KEY TERMS

Delegated Authority - Authority entrusted by a higher authority for a specific purpose. Here's why this term is important to know: The government does not possess ultimate authority. It exercises authority that ultimately belongs to God.

Lex Talionis – Latin for "law of retaliation" or "law of retribution." Here's why this term is important to know: This principle was designed to limit violence, not promote it. Justice was intended to be proportional rather than excessive.

Stewardship – The responsibility to manage something that belongs to another. Here's why this term is important to know: Warriors are not owners of authority. They are stewards of authority entrusted to them by God through lawful institutions.

The Sword – It represents authority, power, and the ability to enforce justice. Here's why this term is important to know: It is the tool by which a warrior executes the taking of a life.

LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLE

"Power without humility eventually becomes abuse." The greatest danger for a warrior is not merely failing to use force when necessary. It is forgetting that authority is a gift entrusted by God rather than a possession to be controlled for personal gain. Strong leaders understand that accountability protects both the mission and the soul.

APPLICATION

For Future Warriors. Before receiving authority over others, establish a biblical understanding of authority. Learn early that leadership is stewardship. Rank may give responsibility, but character determines how authority is exercised.

For Active Military and First Responders. Every day requires decisions that affect other people. This session serves as a reminder that leadership is not about control. It is about serving others through responsible stewardship of authority, influence, and power.

For Veterans and Retirees. Many veterans carry questions about decisions made under authority or orders given by leaders. This session reminds us that God understands the complexity of responsibility and calls us to place ultimate trust in His justice rather than our own understanding.

PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Authority and Responsibility

1. How do you personally respond to positions of authority?
2. What is the difference between authority and power?
3. Have you ever witnessed authority being used well? Poorly?

Faith and Leadership

4. How does understanding authority as delegated by God change your view of leadership?
5. Do you naturally trust authority or resist it? Why?
6. How can humility strengthen a leader rather than weaken them?

Justice and Human Flourishing

7. Why does God establish governments?
8. What role should warriors play in protecting innocent people?
9. Why is restraining evil necessary for human flourishing?

Spiritual Reflection

10. What dangers arise when people forget that authority ultimately belongs to God?
11. How can warriors protect their souls from pride, anger, or abuse of power?
12. What does it look like to exercise authority in a way that honors God?

GROUP DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Use these questions in squad discussions, small groups, classrooms, or peer mentorship:

1. Before we dive in, does anyone have a specific takeaway, challenge, or thought they'd like to share from their personal reflection questions?
2. Why do people often struggle with authority?

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?
4. What responsibilities come with carrying the sword?
5. How can warriors remain humble while holding positions of significant responsibility?
6. What are practical ways leaders can protect themselves from abusing authority?
7. What happens when a government does evil, or a commander gives an unlawful/unjust order?
8. What other questions would you like to discuss

WHAT TO REMEMBER

- Authority belongs to God.
- The government is God's servant.
- The sword exists to restrain evil.
- Power requires accountability.
- Humility protects the soul.
- Leadership is stewardship.

CLOSING CHALLENGE

Before the next session, reflect on this question: "If God entrusted me with authority, am I carrying it like an owner or a steward?" Write down areas where pride, control, or self-reliance may be competing with humility and trust in God.

THE WARRIOR'S SOUL

SESSION 3 STUDY GUIDE

TITLE: JUST WAR AND JIHAD



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SESSION OVERVIEW

This session moves from discussing who possesses authority to examining how authority is exercised in the real world. For warriors, first responders, and protectors, this is where theology becomes personal. It is one thing to discuss governments, weapons, and authority in theory. It is another thing to wrestle with the decisions made in moments of conflict and their impact on the human soul.

Throughout history, people have attempted to develop frameworks for answering difficult questions about war, violence, and moral responsibility. One of the most influential is Just War Theory, which was first articulated by Augustine and later refined by Thomas Aquinas. Just War Theory seeks to answer two important questions: When is war morally permissible? And how should war be conducted once it begins?

The theory provides guidance for the decision to enter war, the conduct of warriors during war, and the responsibilities that follow after war. It seeks to promote justice, restrain evil, and limit unnecessary suffering. Yet while Just War Theory can help guide ethical decision-making, it cannot fully address the deeper question every warrior must eventually face: What does God think about my actions?

This session challenges participants to move beyond merely asking, "Is it legal?", "Is it authorized?", "Is it permitted?", and "Is it justified?" Instead, ask: "Is it right before God?", "Does this reflect God's character?", "What's happening to my soul as I make these decisions?", and "How do I remain faithful to God in the middle of conflict?"

The session explains three major categories within Just War Theory:

- Justice of War (Jus ad Bellum) refers to the conditions that should exist before a nation enters war. These principles include just cause, legitimate authority, right intention, last resort, and a reasonable probability of success.
- Justice in War (Jus in Bello) refers to how warriors conduct themselves during combat. These principles emphasize protecting noncombatants, using proportional force, and treating prisoners humanely.
- Justice After War (Jus Post Bellum) focuses on what happens after conflict ends. It emphasizes reconciliation, rebuilding, accountability, and the pursuit of a just peace.

The session also introduces the concepts of greater jihad and lesser jihad. While these ideas originate within Islamic tradition and are not rooted in biblical revelation, they illustrate an important reality recognized by people throughout history: human beings experience an internal struggle between good and evil.

Scripture teaches this reality as well. Peter writes: "Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul." (1 Peter 2:11)

The Bible teaches that one of the greatest battles a person will ever face is not on a battlefield, but within the human heart. Every believer experiences a continual struggle against sin, selfishness, pride, fear, anger, and temptation.

Jeff argues that warriors spend years preparing their bodies for combat but often neglect preparation of the soul. Just as physical training develops strength and endurance, spiritual disciplines prepare believers for the moral and spiritual challenges they will face.

Prayer, Scripture, worship, Christian community, and accountability serve as spiritual repetitions that strengthen the soul before the crisis arrives. When pressure comes, people rarely become someone new. Instead, they reveal who they have already become.

The same principle applies far beyond combat. Whether facing challenges in the military, the workplace, the classroom, the community, or the family, spiritual preparation determines how we respond when life becomes difficult.

Ultimately, this session reminds participants that while ethical frameworks can provide guidance, God's Word remains the final authority. The goal is not merely to survive the battle but to preserve the soul while remaining faithful to Christ.

THE BIG IDEA

Warriors must prepare their souls before the battle, because what ultimately matters is not merely what is permissible, but what is right before God.

KEY SCRIPTURES

1 Peter 2:11 - The War Within - "Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul."

Romans 12:2 - Renewing the Mind - "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

Proverbs 4:23 - Guarding the Heart - "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."

Psalms 119:11 - Preparing Before the Battle - "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."

James 1:5 - Seeking Wisdom - "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you."

Micah 6:8 - What God Requires - "He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

KEY TERMS

Just War Theory - A framework developed by Christian thinkers such as Augustine and Aquinas that seeks to determine when war is morally justified and how it should be conducted. Here's why this term is important to know: It provides a historical and moral framework for evaluating the use of force.

Jus ad Bellum - "Justice of War." The principles that determine whether entering a war is morally justified. Here's why this term is important to know: It forces leaders to evaluate their true motives before entering a conflict.

Jus in Bello – "Justice in War." The moral principles that govern conduct during conflict. Here's why this term is important to know: It reminds warriors that even in the chaos of battle, humanity and restraint must be maintained.

Jus post Bellum – "Justice after War." The moral principles that govern conduct after conflict. Here's why this term is important to know: It emphasizes that the ultimate goal of conflict is a just and lasting peace.

Moral Discernment – The process of seeking God's wisdom to determine what is right before acting. Here's why this term is important to know: Technical competence is not enough; warriors need God's wisdom to navigate ethical gray areas.

Spiritual Readiness – The intentional preparation of the soul through prayer, Scripture, worship, accountability, and Christian community. Here's why this term is important to know: A warrior's soul must be prepared long before the crisis arrives.

LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLE

Prepare your soul before the battle arrives. The strongest leaders understand that character is not formed during moments of crisis—it is revealed during moments of crisis.

APPLICATION

For Future Warriors. Before you ever carry significant responsibility, establish a foundation of biblical conviction and spiritual discipline.

For Active Military and First Responders. Your profession often places you in situations where there are no easy answers. Technical competence is not enough. The health of your soul matters.

For Veterans and Retirees. Many veterans continue wrestling with decisions, memories, and experiences long after their service ends. God cares not only about what happened during your service, but also about the condition of your heart today.

PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Identity & Character

1. What kind of person are you becoming when no one is watching?
2. What spiritual habits are currently shaping your character?
3. If a crisis came tomorrow, what would it reveal about the condition of your soul?

Wisdom & Decision Making

4. Do you typically seek God's wisdom before making difficult decisions or after the consequences arrive?
5. What area of your life currently requires God's guidance and discernment?
6. Why is wisdom more valuable than simply knowing what is permissible?

Spiritual Readiness

7. How are you currently preparing your soul for future challenges?
8. What spiritual disciplines have been most helpful in strengthening your relationship with God?
9. What disciplines have you neglected that need renewed attention?

Faith & Service

10. How can your relationship with Christ better influence your leadership, work, family, and daily responsibilities?
11. Who helps hold you accountable and encourages your spiritual growth?

GROUP DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Use these questions in squad discussions, small groups, classrooms, or peer mentorship:

1. Before we dive in, does anyone have a specific takeaway, challenge, or thought they'd like to share from their personal reflection questions?
2. What do you think is the greatest threat to a warrior's soul?

3. Why is it possible to win a battle, accomplish the mission, and still lose something important within yourself?
4. How can someone distinguish between what is merely permissible and what is truly right before God?
5. What habits help prepare a person spiritually before they face difficult decisions, suffering, temptation, or conflict?
6. What role do Christian community and accountability play in protecting a person's soul?
7. If pressure exposed your heart today, what would it reveal about the person you are becoming?
8. What other questions would you like to discuss?

WHAT TO REMEMBER

- Character matters.
- Wisdom matters.
- Preparation matters.
- The battle within is real.
- Spiritual readiness is essential.
- Your soul is worth protecting.

CLOSING CHALLENGE

This week, evaluate your spiritual readiness with the same seriousness that a warrior evaluates physical readiness.

Ask yourself: "If pressure exposed my heart today, what would it reveal?" Then identify one spiritual discipline you will intentionally strengthen before the next session.

THE WARRIOR'S SOUL

SESSION 4 STUDY GUIDE

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



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SESSION OVERVIEW

One of the most difficult tensions a warrior, first responder, or protector will ever face is the tension between mercy and justice.

Jesus taught His followers to love their enemies, turn the other cheek, and pray for those who persecute them. Yet Scripture also teaches that evil must be restrained, the innocent must be protected, and governing authorities do not bear the sword in vain.

This tension has existed throughout Christian history. Some believers have concluded that all participation in violence is incompatible with following Jesus. Others have concluded that God uses warriors, law enforcement officers, and protectors as instruments to restrain evil in a fallen world.

This session explores the difficult space between those positions. Participants will wrestle with questions such as: "Can a Christian serve in combat?", "Can someone follow Jesus and still use force?", "How do we reconcile the loving Savior of Matthew 5 with the Warrior King of Revelation 19?", "What happens to the soul after violence, trauma, and loss?", and "How do we return home with honor rather than becoming consumed by bitterness, guilt, or despair?"

The session examines the reality that violence leaves a mark on the human soul. Even when force is legally justified, emotionally necessary, or morally required, human beings often carry wounds that continue long after the conflict has ended.

The session also distinguishes between PTSD and moral injury. PTSD is often a normal human response to abnormal circumstances. It reflects the mind and body's response

to trauma. Moral injury, however, involves deeper spiritual questions about guilt, responsibility, regret, shame, and the meaning of what was experienced.

Participants are challenged to recognize that grief, sadness, and emotional struggle do not necessarily indicate weakness. In many cases, they reveal that a person's conscience is still alive and their humanity remains intact.

Ultimately, this session reminds participants that while warriors may be called to confront evil, they must also care for their souls. God never intended anyone to carry life's burdens alone. Healing often begins through honesty, community, accountability, and dependence upon Christ.

THE BIG IDEA

Warriors must learn to hold both justice and mercy together, preparing their souls for the realities of a fallen world while pursuing healing when wounds occur.

KEY SCRIPTURES

Matthew 5:38-39 - Turn the Other Cheek - "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also."

Revelation 19:11 - The Warrior King - "I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war."

Romans 12:18 - Living at Peace - "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."

Galatians 6:2 - Carrying Burdens - "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."

Psalms 34:18 - God's Presence in Suffering - "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."

KEY TERMS

Conscientious Objector – A person who refuses military service or the bearing of arms based upon deeply held moral or religious convictions. Here's why this term is important to know: Christians have historically held different convictions regarding participation in warfare and violence.

PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) – A psychological and physiological response to traumatic experiences. Here's why this term is important to know: PTSD is not weakness. It is often evidence that a person experienced events that exceeded normal human capacity to process.

Moral Injury – A deep spiritual wound caused by participating in, witnessing, or failing to prevent actions that violate one's conscience or moral beliefs. Something happens to your soul when you take a life because each life has inherent value before God. Here's why this term is important to know: Moral injury often creates questions that cannot be solved by time alone. It requires spiritual healing.

Justice – Acting rightly by protecting the innocent, restraining evil, and pursuing what is morally right. Here's why this term is important to know: It is the biblical foundation for why the use of force is sometimes necessary.

Mercy – Compassion extended toward those who deserve judgment or punishment. Here's why this term is important to know: Mercy reflects God's heart toward broken people.

LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLE

"Strong warriors confront evil without surrendering compassion." The goal is not merely to survive difficult experiences. The goal is to remain human, maintain integrity, and reflect God's character even when facing darkness.

APPLICATION

For Future Warriors. Before entering positions of responsibility, establish convictions about justice, mercy, leadership, and human dignity. The decisions you make under pressure will often reflect the values you developed beforehand.

For Active Military and First Responders. You may encounter situations that challenge your understanding of justice, suffering, and human nature. This session reminds you that seeking help is not weakness and that caring for your soul is part of your responsibility.

For Veterans and Retirees. Many veterans continue processing experiences long after their service ends. This session reminds you that God is not intimidated by your questions, doubts, wounds, or struggles. Healing often begins when we stop pretending we are unaffected.

PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Faith and Conflict

1. How do you personally reconcile Jesus' command to turn the other cheek with the need to restrain evil?
2. Have you ever struggled to understand how justice and mercy can exist together?
3. What aspect of Christ's character do you most naturally identify with—His compassion or His justice?

Trauma and Healing

4. Have you experienced an event that continues to affect you emotionally, mentally, or spiritually?
5. What emotions do you find most difficult to process after painful experiences?
6. How do you typically respond when you are hurting?

Community and Support

7. Who are the trusted people in your life that you can speak honestly with?
8. Why do many warriors struggle to ask for help?
9. What would it look like to become more intentional about caring for your soul?

Spiritual Growth

10. What does healing look like from a biblical perspective?
11. How can God use difficult experiences to deepen your faith?

12. What step could you take this week toward greater honesty, healing, or spiritual growth?

GROUP DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Use these questions in squad discussions, small groups, classrooms, or peer mentorship:

1. Before we dive in, does anyone have a specific takeaway, challenge, or thought they'd like to share from their personal reflection questions?
2. Why do you think many warriors struggle to discuss emotional and spiritual wounds?
3. How do you reconcile the Jesus who turns the other cheek with the Jesus who returns as a Warrior King?
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?
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?
6. What are some healthy ways people can process trauma, grief, or moral injury?
7. Why is isolation often one of the greatest dangers after combat or crisis?
8. What role should faith, community, and accountability play in healing?
9. What other questions would you like to discuss?

WHAT TO REMEMBER

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

CLOSING CHALLENGE

Before the next session, identify one trusted person you could call if you were struggling spiritually, emotionally, or morally. If you already have that person, reach out this week and strengthen that relationship.

Preparing for future challenges often begins with building healthy relationships before you need them.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCE

Because Christians hold varying convictions on the topic of pacifism and military service, a helpful resource to humbly explore differing biblical perspectives is *War, Peace, and Violence: Four Christian Views* by Paul Copan.

THE WARRIOR'S SOUL

SESSION 5 STUDY GUIDE

TITLE: CRUSADES AND HOLY WARRIORS



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SESSION OVERVIEW

Throughout history, people have attempted to justify violence by attaching God's name to their cause. Some have claimed divine approval for wars, conquests, and actions that ultimately reflected more of man's ambitions than God's character.

This session challenges participants to think carefully about what makes a warrior truly "holy."

Jeff argues that the word "crusade" should be approached with caution because it often carries the false idea that violence itself can earn God's favor or secure eternal salvation. Throughout church history, some have believed that fighting or dying in a religious cause could somehow guarantee forgiveness or a place in heaven. Scripture teaches otherwise. Salvation has never been earned through military service, sacrifice, or violence. Salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ alone.

The session introduces the concept of Holy War not as a justification for violence, but as a framework for examining whether our attitudes, actions, and motivations align with God's character.

This discussion moves beyond battlefields and governments and into the human heart. Jeff argues that murder is not merely an action. It is a process. Long before Cain killed Abel, hatred had already taken root in his heart. Long before violence occurs externally, sin often begins internally through pride, anger, jealousy, resentment, bitterness, and selfish ambition.

Jesus reinforced this principle in the Sermon on the Mount. He taught that murder begins long before a weapon is used. It begins in the attitudes and intentions of the heart.

This session reminds participants that the greatest threat to a warrior is not simply external evil. The greatest threat is allowing sin to gain a foothold within the soul. Ultimately, the question is not simply whether a warrior's actions are justified. The deeper question is: "What kind of person am I becoming?"

THE BIG IDEA

The greatest battle is not against external enemies but against the sin that seeks to take root within the human heart.

KEY SCRIPTURES

Genesis 4:7 - Sin Crouching at the Door - "If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it."

Matthew 5:21-22 - Murder Begins in the Heart - "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment."

James 1:14-15 - The Progression of Sin - "...each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death."

Psalms 139:23-24 - Heart Examination - "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Proverbs 4:23 - Guarding the Heart - "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."

KEY TERMS

Crusade - Historically, a military campaign fought for religious purposes and often associated with promises of spiritual reward. Here's why this term is important to know: Christianity does not teach that violence earns salvation or forgiveness.

Holy War - A conflict examined through the lens of God's purposes, justice, and character, derived from John Bunyan's 1682 allegory about the battle for "Mansoul." Here's why this term is important to know: The ultimate question is not whether we claim God is on our side, but whether our actions reflect His character.

Holy Warrior - A warrior whose heart, motives, and actions seek to honor God. Here's why this term is important to know: Holiness begins with character before it ever influences conduct.

Murder as a Process - The biblical understanding that hatred, bitterness, and anger often precede acts of violence. Here's why this term is important to know: Sin usually begins internally before it manifests externally.

Sanctification - The ongoing process by which God transforms believers into the image of Christ. Here's why this term is important to know: The Christian life is a continual battle against sin and toward holiness.

LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLE

"Win the battle within before trying to win the battle around you." Strong leaders understand that unchecked pride, anger, and bitterness are often more dangerous than external threats.

APPLICATION

For Future Warriors. Leadership begins long before rank is earned. Learn to identify pride, anger, selfishness, and insecurity before they become destructive habits.

For Active Military and First Responders. High-pressure environments can magnify what already exists in the heart. This session serves as a reminder that emotional discipline and spiritual maturity are essential leadership qualities.

For Veterans and Retirees. Many battles continue long after service ends. This session invites you to examine whether unresolved anger, bitterness, or wounds have taken root and to invite God into those areas.

PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Heart Examination

1. What emotions most frequently compete for control of your heart?
2. Where do you currently see anger, bitterness, jealousy, or resentment trying to take root?
3. What areas of your life require surrender to God?

Spiritual Growth

4. What does holiness look like in your daily life?
5. How have you seen God transform your character over time?
6. What habits help you guard your heart?

Leadership and Influence

7. How does your internal life affect the people you lead?
8. What kind of example are you setting for those around you?
9. What character traits would you like God to strengthen?

Faith and Obedience

10. How do you respond when God reveals sin in your life?
11. What is one area where God may be calling you to repentance and growth?

GROUP DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Use these questions in squad discussions, small groups, classrooms, or peer mentorship:

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

2. Why do you think Jesus focused so much on the condition of the heart?
3. How can anger become dangerous if left unchecked?
4. What warning signs indicate that sin may be gaining influence in someone's life?
5. Why is character more important than reputation?
6. What practical steps help us guard our hearts?
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'?
8. How can we confront evil without allowing evil to take root within us?
9. What other questions would you like to discuss?

WHAT TO REMEMBER

- Sin starts small.
- Character matters.
- Anger grows if ignored.
- Holiness begins in the heart.
- Leadership flows from character.
- The battle within matters most.

CLOSING CHALLENGE

This week, ask God to reveal any area of your heart that needs attention.

Spend time in prayer and reflection using Psalm 139:23-24, asking God to expose attitudes, motives, or habits that do not reflect His character.

THE WARRIOR'S SOUL

SESSION 6 STUDY GUIDE

TITLE: SWORDS AND PLOWSHARES



Scan to Watch: Use your phone's camera to scan the QR code and watch The Warrior's Soul. This links directly to Episode 1, simply click through to the next episode when your group is ready for the next session.

SESSION OVERVIEW

Every warrior eventually asks the same question: How does all of this end? How does evil finally lose? How does humanity escape the endless cycle of violence, hatred, suffering, and death?

This final session provides the answer. Throughout this series, if you have followed this journey, you have examined 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.

Now the focus shifts to God's ultimate solution. The Bible promises a future day when swords will be transformed into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks. War will cease. Violence will end. Peace will reign.

Yet Scripture also teaches that humanity cannot achieve this future through military strength, political power, technology, or human effort. Warriors can restrain evil. Governments can punish evil. Laws can limit evil. But the biblical reality is this: only Jesus can defeat evil.

The session explores the biblical truth that Christ's death and resurrection accomplished what no weapon ever could. Through the cross, Jesus defeated sin, conquered death, and provided reconciliation between God and humanity.

To be clear, this does not diminish the importance of warriors. God continues to use protectors to restrain evil and preserve human flourishing. However, no amount of force can redeem the human heart. Only Christ can do that.

This session concludes by presenting the hope of the Gospel and reminding participants that forgiveness, redemption, and eternal life are available through Jesus Christ. Ultimately, the warrior's greatest hope is not found in victory on a battlefield but in the victory Christ secured on the cross.

THE BIG IDEA

Human violence can restrain evil, but only Jesus Christ can defeat evil. The cross is God's ultimate victory over sin, death, and the brokenness of the human heart.

KEY SCRIPTURES

Isaiah 2:4 (and Micah 4:3) - Swords into Plowshares - "He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore."

Matthew 26:52 - Jesus and Peter - "Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword."

1 Chronicles 22:8 - David the Warrior - "But this word of the Lord came to me: 'You have shed much blood and have fought many wars. You are not to build a house for my Name, because you have shed much blood on the earth in my sight.'"

Romans 5:8 - Christ Died for Us - "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

John 14:6 - The Only Way - Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

1 Corinthians 15:54 - Victory Over Death - "When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory.'"

KEY TERMS

Swords into Plowshares – A biblical picture of God's future kingdom where war ends and peace reigns. Here's why this term is important to know: It reminds us that peace is God's ultimate destination for humanity.

Christus Victor – The doctrine that Jesus defeated sin, Satan, and death through His death and resurrection. Here's why this term is important to know: Jesus Christ's victory is the foundation of Christian hope.

Redemption – God's act of rescuing and restoring sinful people through Jesus Christ. Here's why this term is important to know: Every believer's hope rests in God's redeeming work.

Resurrection – Jesus' victory over death through His bodily resurrection. Here's why this term is important to know: Because Christ lives, believers have hope beyond the grave.

Eternal Life – A restored relationship with God that begins now and continues forever. Here's why this term is important to know: Eternal life is the ultimate promise of the Gospel.

LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLE

"Warriors can restrain evil, but only Christ can redeem people." Wise leaders understand the limits of human power and place their ultimate hope in God.

APPLICATION

For Future Warriors. As you prepare for future service, remember that your identity is not found in rank, accomplishment, or performance. Your ultimate identity is found in Christ.

For Active Military and First Responders. You may spend your life confronting evil, but remember that God never intended you to carry the weight of saving the world. Only Christ can do that.

For Veterans and Retirees. Your greatest victories and greatest failures do not define you. God's grace is greater than your accomplishments and greater than your mistakes.

PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Faith and Eternity

1. Where have you placed your ultimate hope?
2. What gives you confidence about eternity?
3. How does Christ's victory over death affect the way you view life today?

Forgiveness and Grace

4. Do you believe God can forgive every sin?
5. Are there areas of guilt, shame, or regret that you continue to carry?
6. What does it mean to receive God's grace rather than trying to earn it?

Identity and Purpose

7. What role has your profession played in shaping your identity?
8. How can you better root your identity in Christ?
9. What would change if you truly believed you were fully forgiven and fully loved by God?

Spiritual Response

10. Have you personally trusted Christ as Savior and Lord?
11. What step of faith is God calling you to take?

GROUP DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Use these questions in squad discussions, small groups, classrooms, or peer mentorship:

1. Before we dive in, does anyone have a specific takeaway, challenge, or thought they'd like to share from their personal reflection questions?
2. Why can't human effort ultimately solve humanity's problem with evil?
3. How does the cross accomplish what weapons never can?

4. What does it mean that Jesus defeated death?
5. Why is forgiveness such a central part of the Gospel?
6. How can someone be both a warrior and a person after God's own heart?
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?
8. What hope does the promise of "swords into plowshares" give you today?
9. What other questions would you like to discuss?

WHAT TO REMEMBER

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

HOW TO RECEIVE CHRIST'S VICTORY

If you want to understand more about what this decision actually means, turn to Appendix: The Message of the Gospel.

If you are ready to trust Christ today, you can pray this right now:

"Lord Jesus, I need you. Thank you for dying on the cross for my sins. I open the door of my life and receive You as my Savior and Lord. Thank You for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. Take control of the throne of my life. Make me the kind of person You want me to be. Amen."

CLOSING CHALLENGE

Take time this week to reflect on the entire Warrior's Soul journey.

Ask yourself: "Where have I placed my ultimate hope?"

If you made that decision today, tell your small group facilitator before you leave so they can help you take your next steps in your relationship with Jesus.



Please consider taking two minutes to give us your feedback. Your responses will help us improve the series and better serve warriors carrying these questions. As a thank you, we will send you a free eBook.

APPENDIX: THE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL

Throughout this study, we have addressed the deepest questions facing those who serve: How do we deal with evil, trauma, guilt, and the condition of our own souls?

In Session 6, Jeff addresses the ultimate question: "What can give final deliverance from sinful hearts that produce evil actions in our world?"

"God's love can do what no weapon can do: end war and death because it ends hate in the human heart. Man cannot achieve this; only God can.

There is forgiveness, and King David is proof. There is a God who loves you enough that He was willing to sentence His Son, Jesus—the only sinless man—to a suicide mission and a death on the cross to pay for something He never did and a crime He didn't commit, so that you and I could receive the righteousness of God. At the cross, God places on His shoulders every wicked thought, not just wicked things that we have ever done, and wipes them off the books completely."

Four Principles to Understand Your Relationship with God

1. God loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life.

"God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." — John 3:16

"Jesus said, 'I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly.'" — John 10:10

2. We have all sinned, and our sin separates us from God. It is not just our external actions, but the condition of our hearts that separates us from Him.

We Are Sinful: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." — Romans 3:23

We Are Separated: "For the wages of sin is death..." — Romans 6:23 (Spiritual separation from God).

3. Jesus Christ is God's only provision for our sin. Through Him, you can experience God's love, forgiveness, and plan for your life.

He Died in Our Place: "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." — Romans 5:8

He Rose From the Dead: "Christ died for our sins... He was buried... He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures..." — 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

He Is the Only Way: "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.'" — John 14:6

4. We must individually receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Salvation is not earned through military service, moral effort, or good deeds. It is received through faith.

We Receive Christ Through Faith: "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast." — Ephesians 2:8-9

We Receive Christ by Personal Invitation: "Jesus says, 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him...'" — Revelation 3:20

Taking the Step of Faith

Receiving Christ involves turning to God from self-will and trusting Christ to forgive your sins and guide your life. It is an act of the will, rooted in faith.

If you are ready to make that decision today, flip back to the How to Receive Christ's Victory section on the previous page to pray the prayer of surrender, and be sure to let your facilitator or small group leader know!