

MISSING PEACE:

Women of Faith and the Failure of War

Discussion/Study Guide

Part One

1. What was your overall response to this video? What struck you most?
2. What was your impression of the women in the video? Which one(s) impressed you the most?
3. In the opening of the film George W. Bush is quoted as saying, ***“Events aren’t moved by blind chance and chance but by the hand of a just and faithful God . . .”***
 - What do you think about this statement?
 - Is your concept of God different from this?
 - What do you think moves events?
4. What is your reaction to Bush’s statement, ***“Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists”***?
 - Whom are you “with”?
 - Do you think that declaring war on terrorism is the only option?
 - What would you do about the terrorists if you were in charge?
5. Susannah Heschel asks, ***“Isn’t there obviously a choice other than war . . . the path of peacemaking and diplomacy?”***
 - Is she naive? Is war-making an inevitable part of human nature?
 - Is world peace actually achievable? Why? Why not?
 - If we cannot reason with terrorists, and they are intent on harming us, is violence the only practical alternative?
6. When Azza Karam talks about the sanctions imposed on Iraq, she says that the US felt it was working for a *“greater good.”* Former Secretary of State Madeline Albright was asked if the sanctions were worth the cost, given that they were (according to a UNICEF survey released in August 1999) responsible for the deaths of roughly half a million children. Albright answered, ***“It was a difficult decision but, yes, I think it was worth it.”***
 - Does the *“greater good”* of preventing Saddam from developing weapons of mass destruction justify the sanctions?
 - Does the real threat of weapons of mass destruction justify a policy that kills children?
 - Is this a case where the end justifies the means?
 - What would you have done if you were in charge?
7. Both Azza and Hyun Kyung say that violence will never stop violence.
 - If it is true that violence will not stop violence, then why is it our primary strategy?
 - How do you, in your own relationships, handle the urge to retaliate or to inflict pain on someone who has harmed you?

8. When Melodye Feldman was pushed into a puddle and called “dirty Jew,” she said to her parents, ***“If they knew me, I think that they would like me.”***
 - What does she mean by this?
 - Do you think it’s true?
 - How do you make peace with people you don’t like?
9. Katherine and Melodye bring teenagers together from areas of war and conflict
 - Do you think their program can make a lasting difference? Why? Why not?
10. At the end of *Part One*, Susannah Heschel asks, ***“What does it mean to be a person of faith in the light of the atrocities, genocides, murders that have happened? . . . Is it absurd to be religious at this point?”***
 - Do you think it’s absurd to be religious at this point?
 - Since religion is the apparent cause of so much hatred, conflict and war, what real use is it?
 - Does your own faith help you to create peace in your relationships? How?

Part Two

11. According to Melodye and Susannah, Jews who sympathize with the plight of the Palestinians are considered traitors by many of their fellow Jews.
 - Where do you stand on this issue?
 - How do you think the conflict can be resolved?
 - Is there something that you can do to help?
12. Abraham Joshua Heschel said that religion had become insipid in America. He made that statement in the late 1950s, before the emergence of the “religious right,” a group which could not be considered insipid.
 - Why is the religious right so powerful?
 - Why is its influence growing?
 - Why is there no “religious left”?
 - Are you concerned about this imbalance of religious influence? If so, what can you do about it?
13. Susannah says, ***“It’s so easy to love the world and so much harder to love your spouse, children, parents on a daily level.”***
 - Do you think there is an essential connection between “peace at home” and “peace in the world”?
 - Is individual inner peace a prerequisite for world peace?
 - Have you achieved (or are you growing in) inner peace? If so, how have you achieved it?
14. Melody explains that for Jews there are 613 Mitzvot, or 613 ways of being in the world.
 - What was your reaction to her description of Mitzvot?
 - Do you have something comparable in your religious practice or in your life?
 - If so, what does it mean to you? How does it affect your life?
15. Nurah and Azza claim that the negative stereotypes about Islam are widespread.
 - Do you share some of the stereotypes that were mentioned?
 - Did Nurah and Azza say anything to change your mind or question your attitudes?

16. Azza says that one thing radical Islam has to teach us is that ***“there must be a reason why there is so much antagonism.”***

- Why do you think there is so much antagonism coming from radical Islam?
- What would you do (if you were a world leader) to diffuse the antagonism and the deep anger?

17. Susannah asks, ***“How can I talk to someone with whom I totally disagree, whose actions I hold in contempt, or who holds me in contempt?”*** These questions would seem to be the key to making peace in the world, both locally and globally.

- Have you tried to talk with someone with whom you are in total disagreement?
- What usually happens?
- Have you found strategies to do this successfully? What are they? What have been the results?

18. Nurah says, ***“There is something intrinsic in any faith tradition that brings about a peace in the recognition of the divinity of the other.”***

- What does she mean by *“the divinity of the other”*? Do you agree with her?
- How does that recognition bring about peace?

19. Melodye says that it’s not so important to define God as it is to do godly works in the world.

- Is it important for you to define who God is? Who is God to you?
- Do you think that you do “godly works” in the world?
- If so, what effect do those works have on you? On others?

20. Hyun Kyung says that ethical monotheism (Christianity, Judaism, Islam) gives us a good moral standard for justice, while Buddhism says, ***“let go, let go, let go.”*** She goes on to say that claiming justice, but also letting go of our pain, hatred, and the injustice done to us, will help to make peace in the world, personally and structurally.

- What does she mean by this?
- How does this balance (of requiring that justice be done and letting go of that requirement) work out in your personal life?
- Could it work with our enemies? How?

Learn More and Take Action:

If you would like to know more about the issues presented in this film, there are scores of websites that will inform you, answer your questions, and make it easy for you to TAKE ACTION. Here are a few organizations to get you started.

Alliance for Nuclear Accountability: <http://ananuclear.org/>

Buddhist Peace Fellowship: <http://www.bpf.org/>

Center for Nonviolent Communication: <http://www.cnvc.org>

Council on American Islamic Relations: <http://www.cair-net.org/>

Department of Peace Campaign: <http://www.dopcampaing.org>

Fellowship of Reconciliation: <http://www.forusa.org/>

Jewish Peace: <http://www.jewishpeacefellowship.org/>

Muslim Peace Fellowship: <http://www.mpfweb.org/>

Suggested Reading:

There are many practices, ancient and modern, that can help us to be more compassionate and less judgmental in our response to others. The following three books are a sample of what is available.

Being Peace. Thich Nhat Hanh. Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 1996.

Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life. Marshall B. Rosenberg, Ph.D. Encinitas, CA: Puddle Dancer Press, 2003.

Peace Is the Way: Writings on Nonviolence from the Fellowship of Reconciliation. Edited by Walter Wink. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000.