

BIG IDEA

When we read certain stories in the Old Testament, it's hard not to wonder... Is God violent or peaceful?

SCRIPTURE

Deuteronomy 20:16-18, Joshua 11:11-12, Romans 7:14-19, Colossians 1:19-20

ICEBREAKER

Share a time when you lost your temper – either as a child or an adult.

OPENING THOUGHT

Violence in the Old Testament is tough for Christians to acknowledge. We don't always understand why these stories are here, but they are, and we must be honest about it. Acknowledging the problems we have with these stories can also show us just how much Yahweh's own values have become second nature to us – rejecting war, rejecting genocide, embracing love, embracing the value of all people as created by Yahweh – these are things we take for granted that previous generations could not.

BIBLE DISCUSSION

1. Read Deuteronomy 20:16-18 and Joshua 11:11-12, what stood out to you? What do you think or feel about these passages?
2. Read Romans 7:14-19, what is this saying about humanity's condition?
3. Read Colossians 1:15-23, how does this contrast with the previous scriptures?

LIFE APPLICATION

4. We read war passages and can immediately feel how far removed we are from that culture. The overblown language, the violence, and the sense that Yahweh approves – it's a lot for us to process. If this were the end of our picture of Yahweh, what picture would we have of Yahweh?
5. What ways can we look back at our history and see how we have grown to understand that God's love is more and more all-encompassing than we have previously imagined?
6. When we consider how the protective Yahweh is about who the Israelites are worshipping, it should cause us to ask ourselves, 'What idols in my life do I need to deal with?'
7. Are there things that need to be driven out in my life? What are those?
8. Ultimately, Yahweh prefers peace. Yahweh wants us to become people who are peace-makers and peace-keepers, people who show the world how to love. What ways can you bring peace this week?

CHALLENGE

Violence in the Old Testament will always be there. It's a hard topic because we can't sweep it away with easy platitudes, but it can still teach us about Yahweh's patience and work in history. We are not static beings, but on the move, just as our Yahweh is on the move. How can you join in Yahweh's encompassing movement this week?

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THESE TOPICS, HERE ARE A FEW RESOURCES WE RECOMMEND

The God I Don't Understand by Christopher Wright
God Behaving Badly by David Lamb.