

immunity and proportionality. The principles for post-war conduct include showing mercy to the defeated and assisting them to rebuild. Justifiable national and international commitment of forces to armed conflicts depend on adherence to these principles.

www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/Social-Issues/Social-Statements/Peace.aspx

Learn more

ELCA resources

Living in a Time of Terrorism, message approved April 2004 by the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/Social-Issues/Messages/Terrorism.aspx

Windows for Understanding: Jewish-Muslim-Lutheran Relations, Scroll down at www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Office-of-the-Presiding-Bishop/Ecumenical-and-Inter-Religious-Relations/Inter-Religious-Relations.aspx.

Other resources

The Muslim American Public Opinion Survey www.muslimamericansurvey.org/

"Muslim Americans: No Signs of Growth in Alienation or Support for Extremism," Pew Forum on Public Life, August 2011

www.pewforum.org/Muslim/Muslim-Americans--No-Signs-of-Growth-in-Alienation-or-Support-for-Extremism.aspx

"Public Remains Conflicted Over Islam," Pew Forum, August 2010

www.pewforum.org/Muslim/Public-Remains-Conflicted-Over-Islam.aspx

Islamic Views Regarding Terrorism & Suicide, Muslim Public Affairs Council

www.mpac.org/programs/anti-terrorism-campaign/islamic-views-regarding-terrorism-and-suicidem.php

Islamic Perspectives on Peace and Violence

24 January 2002 | U.S. Institute for Peace Special Report No. 82

www.usip.org/publications/islamic-perspectives-peace-and-violence

"Martyrdom And Murder" The Economist, January 8, 2004

www.economist.com/node/2329785

Abou El Fadl, Khaled. *The Place of Tolerance in Islam*

Bayoumi, Mustafa. *How Does It Feel to be a Problem? Being Young and Arab in America*

Gopin, Marc. *Holy War, Holy Peace: How Religion Can Bring Peace to the Middle East*

Kimball, Charles. *When Religion Becomes Evil: Five Warning Signs*

_____. *When Religion Becomes Lethal: The Explosive Mix of Politics and Religion in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*

Maalouf, Amin. *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong*

Pape, Robert. *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*

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Disclaimer: The views expressed in the *Discover Islam* videos are those of the producers and may not necessarily reflect official positions of the Evangelical Lutheran in America or A Center of Christian-Muslim Engagement for Peace and Justice at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago.



Discover Islam DVD Series Study Guide



#5 Islam: a Faith Hijacked

Summary of DVD content

The terrorist attacks of September 2011 were an excruciatingly painful watershed event for the victims and their families and indeed for all people in the United States and throughout the whole world. American Muslims experienced a two-fold pain: first the sense of shock and vulnerability of having their country attacked by enemies and, for some, the loss of friends and relatives in the attacks. But Muslims also have had to face the negative fallout from attacks conducted in the name of a distorted understanding of their religious tradition. Several American Muslims describe the harassment they experienced in the wake of 9/11, such as hate mail and threats of "go back to where you came from." Such harassment was also directed against Arab-American Christians and Sikhs. Georgetown University scholar John Esposito points out that Christians and Jews can recognize extremists as not being representative of their own traditions, but often cannot do so for Muslims and Islam. Those who know and have experienced the positive values of Islam can recognize 9/11 as a hijacking of this third great monotheistic religion.

Muslim scholars and citizens talk about the reasons Islam condemns the kind of violence used by modern-day Muslim extremists — and observe that such extremism occurs in all religions and societies. The Ku Klux Klan is a valid example from the Christian tradition in America. Muslim leaders in the video ask non-Muslims to distinguish between the acts of extremists and the faith they claim.

Although popular media often use the related term "jihad" interchangeably with "holy war," "jihad" derives from the Arabic verb "jahada," which means "to exert an effort" or "to struggle." Jihad broadly means to work for peace and to rid oneself of evil, whether internal or external. One meaning can include military action in defense of Islam and/or Islamic territory. John Esposito explains that Judaism, Christianity and Islam all have the idea of sacred struggle. But the notion of "holy war" developed later in European Christianity. The term should be distinguished from "just war," an important tradition of Christian thought to which St. Augustine made decisive contributions. As is true in Christian just war teaching, Islam has guidelines for warfare, such as protection of civilians and natural resources. The guidelines are intended to prevent the kind of violence against the innocent that occurs in terrorist attacks.



Elaboration on key topics

1. The DVD opens with scenes of America's most lethal terrorist attacks in September 2001. Specialists do not agree on a single **definition of terrorism**, but this description from a 2004 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America message is helpful: "Terrorism may be understood as violence or the threat of violence directed toward civilians to create a climate of fear and uncertainty. State actors use terror to maintain their grip on power. Non-state actors use terror to disrupt a political, social, or economic order." [See "Living in a Time of Terrorism" below.]

Terrorism is a hijacking of Islam in several important ways. First, the core of Islam is about achieving peace and harmony with God and with the rest of creation. Although military force is permitted to protect the innocent and to defend Islam and Islamic territory, numerous Qur'an passages call Muslims to make peace with their enemies as soon as they incline toward peace. Second, the Qur'an explicitly condemns both suicide and violence against civilians. Third, even in warfare, Islamic tradition decrees that care must be taken not to harm civilians and the natural world.

2. One speaker describes the 9/11 terrorists as "imitating the nihilistic philosophies of other modern terrorist groups." Although the popular perception in our culture is that most contemporary terrorists are Muslim extremists, the reality is that there are numerous examples of terrorism perpetrated by people of many religions and cultures. Suicide missions by the Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka date back to 1987. Some other contemporary groups that have used terror tactics, even against civilian populations, are the Irish Republican Army, the Kurdish PKK, Peru's Shining Path, and Italy's Red Brigades. El Salvadoran death squads reportedly killed tens of thousands in the 1980s. **Even when people engage in terrorist acts in the name of God or a particular religion, their goals are more often more about political power or economic gain.**

3. **The attacks of September 2001 led to a temporary 1600 percent surge in harassment and hate crimes against Muslims in the United States** and even against others, such as Arab Christians and Sikhs, perceived to be part of a Muslim menace. [http://www.adl.org/Learn/hate_crimes_laws/HCSA_FBI.asp] Anti-Muslim and anti-Arab hate crimes then declined until a new upsurge in 2009 and beyond, when hate crimes were accompanied by increasing opposition to mosque construction in the U.S and intensified political rhetoric maligning Islam and Muslims. Sadly, as recently as March 2011 near Sacramento, two elderly Sikh men in traditional turbans were fatally shot — apparently mistaken for Muslims.

(Sikhism is monotheistic tradition with roots in the 15th century Punjab region of the Indian subcontinent.)

Polling data reveals anti-Muslim attitudes among some Americans, even if most do not act out against Muslims. In the 2010 Pew Research Center Poll of 1003 adults, the percentage with an unfavorable view was 38 percent, with 30 percent having a favorable view, and 32 percent offering no opinion. Also not surprising is that in the same poll 55 percent of Americans reported knowing little about Islam, and most did not know a single Muslim personally. [See sources for statistics below in Other Resources.]

Discussion questions

1. In the DVD Nihad Awad, executive director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, talks about the need to distinguish between the acts of extremists and their faith traditions. For example, a few Christians have murdered doctors who perform abortions in the name of their personal understandings of the Christian faith. But the news media do not refer to them as "Christian terrorists." "Muslims also deserve that distinction," says Awad. Do you think Awad is right? Discuss ways you and your fellow churchgoers might help overcome the tendency in the United States to paint all Muslims with the same brush.

2. The DVD gives a few examples of discrimination and hate crimes against Muslims in the United States, and more are presented in "Elaboration on key topics" above. Brainstorm specific ways you and your congregation might counter such occurrences in your own community.

3. Read the Qur'an texts listed below and the passages on Christian just war principles from "For Peace in God's World," a social statement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, adopted August 1995. List some guidelines for warfare that can be extracted from these sources. Discuss your impressions of biblical and Christian teachings about warfare and about when military action may be justified. What are some historical examples of U.S. military actions that meet the just war requirements? Which actions do you think have failed to meet them? Read the Holy Qur'an, Surahs 4.74, 8.59, 2.190, and 22.39 available online at www.quranbrowser.org/.

For Peace in God's World excerpt: We seek guidance from the principles of the "just/unjust war" tradition. While permitting recourse to war in exceptional circumstances, these principles intend to limit such occasions by setting forth conditions that must be met to render military action justifiable. We begin with a strong presumption against all war; support for and participation in a war to restore peace is a tragic concession to a sinful world. Any decision for war must be a mournful one. The principles for deciding about wars include right intention, justifiable cause, legitimate authority, last resort, declaration of war aims, proportionality, and reasonable chance of success. The principles for conducting war include noncombatant