

Name:



GCSE Religious Studies

Religion, Peace and Conflict

Workbook Lesson 1



Key Concepts in Religion, Peace and Conflict

Justice

Fairness; making right and fair a situation which has been unjust. Religion is meant to bring justice to the world, and to fight injustice where it is seen. Many wars are about, or include the abuse of, justice. So, many religious people feel duty-bound to fight against that. For example, Sikhs vow to fight against injustice.

Peace

This has to be the aim and goal of all people, as it means to live in harmony and without fear. Many religions talk about a time to come where there is peace. It may be the Kingdom of Heaven, paradise or enlightenment, but it is a goal for all to reach and work towards. Having peace on earth (no wars) is a step towards that.

Reconciliation

Most religious people will be involved in reconciliation after war. The Quakers are pacifists who try to bring sides together and help them resolve issues so they can live peacefully. If we do not bring the opposing sides together and get their issues resolved, how can we expect any peace to last?

Forgiveness

This is the belief that we should be able to move a relationship forward with someone who has done wrong to us, but accepting their apology and putting the wrong-doing behind us. It is a central teaching of Christianity and important in all religions.

Conflict

Before the actual fighting starts, there is conflict. Conflict is disagreement; armed conflict is the actual fighting. Religious people might have been involved in trying to resolve the original disagreements, but might also then get involved in the armed conflicts as often they feel they have no other option. For example, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German pastor, was involved in a plot to kill Hitler. Many religious people have died in battle.



Tasks:

1. What is justice?

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2. What do Sikhs vow to do?

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3. What is the main aim and goal of all people?

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4. What do many religions talk about?

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5. What do most religious people be involved in after war?

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6. What do the Quakers do?

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7. What is forgiveness?

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8. What is a central teaching of Christianity?

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9. What is conflict?

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10. What do many religious people get involve in?

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Religious beliefs, teachings and attitudes about the meaning and significance of justice

In terms of justice, there are two elements to justice:

1. To put right injustice; making right a situation which has been unjust
2. To carry out this fight in a just way

Christianity

Christians will fight for justice under the conditions of the just war theory, which is that war should be fought with justice too; the cause, weapons used, treatment of captured soldiers, should all be just. Whilst God desires peace, He also desires that humans should live in justice and freedom. However, some Christians believe that the conditions gained from war are never better than the injustice that started it. War does go against Jesus' teachings, but it is necessary for the greater good.



Religious beliefs, teachings and attitudes about the meaning and significance of forgiveness and reconciliation



Forgiveness and reconciliation are two of the most difficult challenges we have, both as individuals and nations, especially after a war or period of conflict. We hear much about the horrors of war, but what happens after it very rarely gets reported or seen. Nations very rarely apologise for their actions (as this would seem to say they were wrong to act in the first place) or forgive other nations, but reconciliation appears to just happen over time despite this.

However, on an individual basis there have been many stories of people coming to terms with war, their action and the actions of others by both seeking forgiveness and indeed giving it. This has then led to a kind of reconciliation. As a religious person of whatever faith, it is looked at as the right thing to do... to forgive.

Corrie Ten Boom



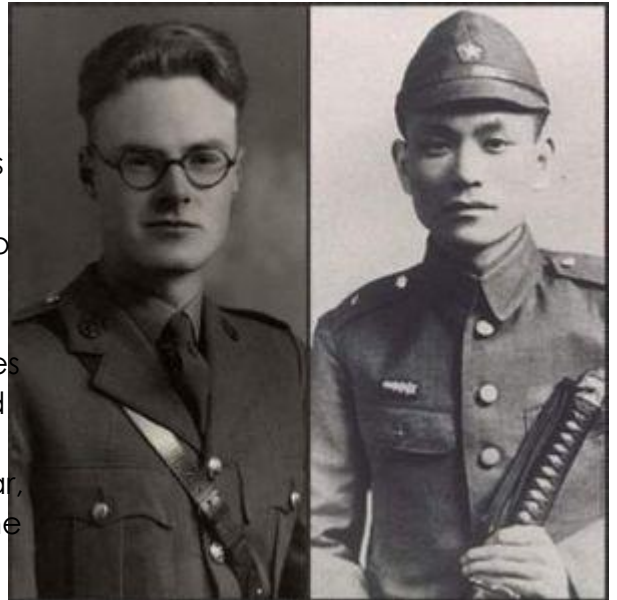
Corrie Ten Boom was a Dutch girl who helped save Jewish lives in Holland in the Second World War. She was caught with her father and sister, both of whom were killed by Nazis. She was for some reason released – an act of God, she claimed.

Later, when giving talks about the Holocaust, she met the SS man at church in Munich who had guarded them in Ravensbrook concentration camp. As he held out his hand to shake hers, all her memories flooded back. She kept her hand by her side, even though

she had preached many times that we should forgive those who hurt us. She recalled the treatment in the camps, her anger growing alongside a desire for revenge. Then, she felt that her emotional state was a sin and began to tell herself off because she believed Jesus had died for all, including this man. So she prayed for God to help her forgive him. She tried to smile and to raise her hand to shake his. However, she still could not engage with this man, so she prayed again for the help from Jesus. This time, she said, when their hands touched, it was as if a current was flowing from her to him and she felt love (agape) for this man who had formally been her cruel guard. Corrie interpreted this to mean that the rifts in the world are healed by God's love. She believed that through Jesus' command to his followers to love their enemies, the ability to love enemies also comes from Jesus.

Eric Lomax

Eric Lomax was a British soldier who was tortured by the Japanese whilst a prisoner during the Second World War, but who was able to forgive one of his tormentors. He was one of thousands of British soldiers who surrendered to the Japanese in Singapore in 1942. Many were relocated to Thailand and forced to build the Burma Railway, also known as the Death Railway. After his captors found a radio receiver he had made he was repeatedly tortured; multiple bones were broken and water was poured into his nose and mouth. One of his constant torturers stood out: Nagase Takashi, an interpreter. "At the end of the war, I would have been happy to murder him," Eric told the New York Times in 1995. Eric had



actually searched for the man and Eric's wife had written a letter to arrange a meeting between the two in Thailand. He learned that after the war Nagase had become an interpreter for the Allies and helped locate thousands of graves and mass burial sites along the Burma Railway.

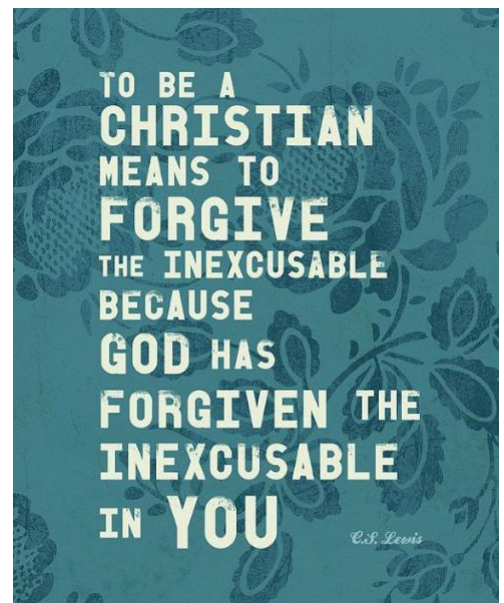
"When we met, Nagase greeted me with a formal bow," Eric said. "I took his hand and said in Japanese, 'Good morning, Mr. Nagase, how are you?' He was trembling and crying. He said over and over again: 'I am so sorry, so very sorry.' "

Eric had gone to the meeting with absolutely no sympathy for his former torturer, but was turned around by the complete humility Nagase showed. In the following days, they spent a lot of time together – talking and laughing – and they became good friends. That friendship remained until their deaths.

"I haven't forgiven Japan as a nation," Eric told The Times, "but I've forgiven one man because he's experienced such great personal regret."

When people forgive they start to heal and move on from their wartime suffering. All religions would commend these two individuals for what they were able to do. Whether it is religion inspired or simple human action, Corrie Ten

Boom and Eric Lomax set an example for others. Neither found it easy, but both had the strength to do it.



Tasks:

1. Explain the forgiveness and reconciliation of Corrie Ten Boom.

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2. Explain the forgiveness and reconciliation of Eric Lomax.

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