

SESSION 6

Purpose: By the end of this session, participants will be able (1) to explain how nuclear weapons have complicated traditional Christian moral thinking about peace and war; (2) to discuss the rationale and the dangers of deterrence; and (3) to discuss some moral and religious issues at stake in the concept and policy of deterrence.

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Materials Needed: copies of the *Foundation Document*; envelopes, scenario cards, and playing cards for the simulation game; and newsprint and marker.

1 After everyone has arrived, explain that the group will begin to explore the risks of nuclear weapons policy by playing a simple simulation game.

To carry out this homemade simulation, before the session prepare three, four, or five envelopes, depending on how many sides you plan on dividing the group into. Label the envelopes with A, B, C, and so on. In each envelope, place a scenario card and between three and seven cards from an ordinary bridge or pinochle deck of playing cards. Include at least one face card in two of the envelopes, and make sure at least one envelope has *no* face cards. These playing cards represent military strength points, with face cards (including aces and jokers) representing nuclear weapons. The higher the card, from deuce up through ace and joker, the more military strength is represented.

Each scenario card should say something like the following: "You are the leaders of Nation A. The world has never known such difficult times as right now. You have it on the best authority of your spy agency that Nation B, whom your nation has always distrusted, has more military strength than you and is contemplating trying to conquer at least one other nation, if not the entire world. It is up to you to provide for the welfare and security of your nation. You have the following options: (1) You may try to negotiate a partial or total disarmament with Nation B or any other nation, never knowing whether you can trust any other nation to follow through. (2) You may try to negotiate a military alliance with one or more other nations, which might keep you safe or cause Nation B or another nation to feel threatened enough to go to war against you. (3) You may build more arms by asking the game leader for up to four more military strength cards, which might keep you

safe or cause Nation B or another nation to feel threatened enough to go to war against you. (4) You may declare war at any time in alliance with any other nation against any other nation or nations, not knowing whether you will win or even survive."

Divide the group into three, four, or five sides, representing nations. Label the nations as A, B, C, and so on. Hand out the envelopes with scenario and strength cards. Explain the significance of their military strength cards. Ask them to read their scenario cards, and to keep their scenario and strength cards secret unless they feel that it is in their best interests to reveal the cards to another nation. Allow the sides to play the game for a reasonable amount of time. If a war does erupt, have the two sides play as many of their military strength cards at one time as they wish, explaining that (1) whichever side plays the most strength points wins the war; (2) if only one side plays a nuclear weapon, it "wins"; and (3) if both sides play nuclear weapons cards, they both lose.

At the end of the simulation, allow ample time for discussion. Lead the participants towards noting the elements of bluffing and fear involved in the peace through strength option. Note also the difficulties in being able to trust other nations in the negotiation of disarmament treaties. Comment, too, on the danger of a build-up of military force failing to deter a war, especially a nuclear war, from happening.¹

2 Ask the participants how they felt about the choices facing them during the simulation game. Did anyone think about those choices in moral terms? Based on their experience of the game and of what they have learned in previous sessions, how do they see the moral options when nuclear weapons are added to the mix of conventional weaponry? How well do the three classical positions fit the nuclear situation? Jot down the ideas of the group members on a large sheet of newsprint. Then compare those ideas with the sevenfold spectrum of ethical judgments identified in the *Foundation Document* (pages 39-46). Go over each position in the spectrum for clarification. Then ask your group members which position is closest to their own. Which position(s) can claim support from Scripture? Which position(s) appeals most to our self-interests?

3 Remind the group that in the *Foundation*

Document, the bishops refer to the *idolatry of deterrence*. Ask: Why do you suppose they use *religious* language to talk about a *policy* matter? (Possible answer: An idol is a false god, something in which we place our trust and loyalty that is unworthy of that trust and loyalty. The bishops contend that the policy of deterrence has weak spots; it does not deserve to be above criticism. Deterrence is given more reverence than it deserves.) Ask the group: What are the main weak spots in the policy of deterrence, according to the bishops' statement? (Possible answers: Security cannot be achieved merely by military spending; security entails all the things that make for social and environmental well-being. Even militarily, no nation today can be certain that it is invulnerable. So nations are mutually safe or no nation is safe. Further, deterrence as a policy seems to aid and encourage the escalation of the arms race. Where is the security in that? Also, the bishops point to a "fundamental flaw": deterrence depends on the enemy being coolly rational and, at the same time being terrified by the prospect of imminent death.)

Follow up by asking whether group members agree with the bishops' judgment. Ask if someone can explain what is meant by an *ethic of reciprocity*. (A rejection of deterrence as an acceptable stance; a deliberate movement, *in agreed stages*, to eliminate nuclear weapons. No nuclear nation can disarm immediately or unilaterally.) The bishops contend

that an ethic of reciprocity is more promising as a way to a safer world than either trusting in deterrence indefinitely or looking for a technological fix (such as the proposed SDI). What do the group members think?

4 Before closing, invite group members to state aloud any insights or questions that have come to their attention. Then close with a prayer of your own choosing, or the following:

"Lord, we have confidence in your care and concern, and we ask you to bless peacemakers even as the world favors and blesses warriors. Help us to be strong, . . . strong enough to love you above all, to depend and trust in you above all. We want to be number one, Lord, but not in the capacity to destroy: number one in the capacity to love, to heal, and to reconcile. We want to be powerful, Lord, not to threaten the world with destruction, but to show forth the power of your love and concern. We want to be ready and alert, Lord, ready for you when you come in glory. Help us to be channels of your peace. We look to you for life and peace."² Amen.

¹From *Christian Youth, National Defense, and Peacemaking (Broadly Graded Elective)*, Summer 1986; page 37. Copyright © 1986 by Graded Press. Used by permission.

²From "My People, I Am Your Security" (Sojourners Peace Ministry, 1982); pages 42-43.