

The Christian Woman and

# War & Justice

## “A Time for War...”

Tears came to my eyes as I heard my African sister in Christ describe part of her family’s experience during the civil conflict of spring 2011 in Abidjan, Cote d’Ivoire, West Africa. Their neighborhood was one of the hardest hit for several weeks. Many were the hours they lay flat on the floor during bombardments, praying and wondering if their home would be the next to collapse. At times, her young daughter begged her, “Mama, let me back in your stomach where it is safe.”



Photo: Sean Warren

Men were shot indiscriminately on the street, so she was the family member who walked to market early in the morning for daily food, as did many other women. On the walks she quoted Scripture to give herself strength, and shared with other terrified women the peace she felt by trusting Christ as Savior. Piles of corpses, covered with enormous flies, littered the city streets and filled the air with the stench of rotting flesh. The Lord in His mercy spared her family, and later when her husband’s job led them to move to a new town, He used them effectively to minister to many people traumatized by events of the war.

**Key Verses:** *"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1). "A time to love, and a time of war, and a time of peace" (Ecclesiastes 3:8).*

## **OUR JUST LORD**

One thing that can help us accept the reality and necessity of war in our fallen world is to remind ourselves of the nature of God. All the attributes of the Lord operate perfectly in Him at all times. God would not be God if He did not judge sin. The only reason we as believers experience the loving grace of God instead of His wrath is because Jesus took the wrath and penalty for all our sins upon Himself when He died on Calvary.

**Read Genesis 6:1-8.** What was the condition of mankind's heart and thoughts at that time? How did God respond?

Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Why do you think that was? Look at Genesis 6:22.

How might you help a non-Christian understand the love and justice of God?

At other times, the Lord gave clear instructions for the Israelites to destroy cities or peoples they encountered by war.

**Read Deuteronomy 25:17-19.** What did Amalek do when the children of Israel were passing his way as they fled from Egypt? (verse 18)

What was Amalek's attitude toward God?

In the story of the taking of Jericho, God clearly instructed Joshua to destroy the city. Review the details in [Joshua 2:1-20](#).

What conclusion did Rahab reach about the God of the Israelites? What was she willing to risk as a result? (verses 11-14)

As God's chosen people, was Judah "safe" from ever experiencing the wrath of God? (verses 9-11)

Look at [Revelation 19:11-21](#). Who is seated on the white horse and what two things does He do in righteousness? (verse 11)

Who are following Him on white horses? (verse 14)

What is the purpose of the sharp sword coming from His mouth? (verse 15)

Justice will be righteously administered to the wicked; the enemy and his followers are forever defeated and thrown into the lake of fire. War is over, and the Prince of Peace rules.

## A “JUST” WAR?

A typical response of Christians is the belief that war is terrible and undesirable, but at times necessary. Below are reasons considered relevant in deciding whether a war is just or not.

1. Just cause (reason for war morally right, like defending a nation, Revelation 19:11).
2. Made by competent authority (actual leadership of a nation, Romans 13:1).
3. Comparative justice (actions of enemy morally wrong; motive of own nation morally right, Romans 13:3).
4. Right intention (protect justice and righteousness, not to steal resources or eliminate a hated people group, Proverbs 21:2).
5. Last resort (have tried every other means to resolve conflict, Matthew 5:9; Romans 12:18).
6. Probability of success, (Luke 14:31).

“In order for a war to be just, three things are necessary. First, the authority of the Sovereign. Secondly, a just cause. Thirdly, a rightful intention.” Thomas Aquinas

Consider these facts from Scripture that support the idea that the Lord is not opposed to just war or warriors who defend their country.

1. David—a “man after God’s own heart”—was a brilliant warrior. **Read Psalm 18:31-50.** What military ability did David attribute to the Lord in verse 34?

In verses 37-42, did David take a pacifist view toward his enemies? List some phrases that demonstrate his actions toward them.

To whom did David give credit for his victory in verses 46-48?

2. Moses, too, received many direct instructions concerning warfare. **Read Numbers 31:1-12.** These verses record one of the last tasks the Lord gave Moses before his death. What was the Lord's direct command to Moses?

3. God called Gideon to lead Israel to rescue them from the oppression of the Midianites. Gideon was doubtful, but what did the Lord say to him in **Judges 6:14-16**?

How did the battle cry in **Judges 7:18** reveal for whom the battle was to be fought?

4. Our study of godly warriors involved in just wars would not be complete without looking at the only recorded woman who accompanied Israel into battle, the female judge Deborah! **Read her story in Judges 4:4-14.** What strange request did Barak make of Deborah in verse 8?

According to Deborah, in verse 9, who would get the credit for the Israelites' victory?

5. Verses 17-22 describe the assassination of the leader of the enemy forces. Jael, another woman, is responsible for Sisera's gruesome death. Does she seem overwrought by her actions, or rather matter-of-fact when she leads Barak to his dead enemy? According to verse 23, Jael was an instrument God used to subdue the enemy.

Clearly, the Lord promised and provided victory in these just causes so His people could live in peace. Throughout history His hand has brought victory to the righteous on many occasions.

## **OUR JUST RESPONSE**

Does our Lord's just character and His support of just causes give us the right to personal revenge when someone wrongs us?

### **Personal vengeance—yes or no?**

There is a marked difference between a nation's duty to uphold justice and defend her people and the response Jesus expects from us as individuals when we are wronged.

**Read Romans 12:14-21.** How are you supposed to live, according to verse 18?

Vengeance for wrong-doing will be carried out, but who should do it? (verse 19)

The Lord expects us to treat our enemies in what way? (verse 20)

Write out **1 Peter 2:23-24**, which beautifully describes how Jesus responded to His enemies, and ask Him for strength by the Holy Spirit to respond in similar ways.

## **The Role of Government Authority**

Should I do nothing if my daughter is raped or a business partner empties our joint bank account and hits the beaches in Hawaii? Romans 12 and Matthew 5 tell us not to respond in kind—you murdered my son, I'll murder yours. They do not mean that we will never use government court systems or church discipline efforts to prevent further abuse or right wrongs.

**Meditate on Romans 13:1-7.** How should a citizen keeping the law view the civil authorities, as seen in verse 3?

How does Paul describe a civil authority in verse 4 and 5? Whose servant is he?

What is the ruler's role, according to verse 5?

Some people seem to think of the Lord Jesus as a pacifist who disapproved of government, weapons, and the military. A couple of interesting verses in the gospels give us some hints otherwise.

**Look at Luke 3:14.** Jesus did not tell them that their profession was wicked and they should abandon it. What advice did He give them?

Jesus had an interesting discussion about swords with his disciples in **Luke 22:35-38**. As His time was fulfilled to die on Calvary, things were going to be difficult for them. What did He recommend they sell and buy in verse 36?

"It is theoretically and practically impossible to build any community from love and justice. If only one of these two is focused upon, an inevitable extremism and perversion follow."  
(Ravi Zacharias)

What do we discover the disciples already had in verse 38, and did Jesus seem surprised that they were in possession of the weapons?

## Mercy and Justice in Action

Clara Barton and Florence Nightingale championed the care of soldiers of both warring sides, and influenced the creation of organizations like the Red Cross. Amy Carmichael spent her life rescuing girls from prostitution in India; Gladys Aylward poured her heart into the orphans of China; Mary Slessor rescued twins left to die in the jungles of Africa. This kind of treatment, mercy, and generosity finds its source in the compassion of God and forgiveness in Jesus Christ.

Many current organizations address issues of justice and mercy. Mothers Against Drunk Driving seeks to prevent the ravage of alcohol abuse; Hope Clinics and Concerned Women of America protect the unborn and give options to women considering abortions; World Vision provides for the uncared children of the world; International Justice Mission “rescues victims of violence, sexual exploitation, slavery and oppression;” The Salvation Army and rescue missions reach out to the homeless; The Voice of the Martyrs informs and serves the plight of the persecuted Church; Prison Fellowship ministers to those in jail.

Every Christian woman can share Christ’s mercy by helping different causes or in her church and neighborhood. No one can do everything, but everyone can do something.

Ask the Lord to guide your actions, not from a sense of guilt but from a heart that loves justice and mercy. Let’s finish our study by looking at Jesus’ words in [Matthew 25:34-40](#). The King commends the righteous for what various acts of mercy in these verses?

When the righteous were meeting these different needs, to whom and for whom were they really doing it? Does this help you when you have opportunity to show compassion to someone who is not easy to love?

The full version of War and Justice is available from [www.wnac.org](http://www.wnac.org) under *Treasure: Program Helps* section.

**Meet the Writer:** Debbie Anderson and her husband Verlin served 16 years with FWBIM. They now serve as Community Health Evangelism missionaries with Christian Health Service Corps.