

The Bible Tells Me So

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

Week 2 January 16, 2022

“Violence and God in the Bible”



OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, you have to know how confusing it is for us to read passages about violence prescribed to you. But how grateful we are that Jesus came to show us, your people, that you call us to love our enemies, to pray for those who persecute us; to do good to those that harm us. And Lord, thank you for taking upon yourself the violence of the world on the cross and there you prayed “Father forgive them for they know not what they do.” Thank you for showing us the light of Christ. And help us to live and walk in that light and to read all scripture in light of the word made flesh; Jesus Christ. It’s in his name we pray. Amen.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Exodus 32:27-28 (NIV)

²⁷ Then he said to them, “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: ‘Each man strap a sword to his side. Go back and forth through the camp from one end to the other, each killing his brother and friend and neighbor.’” ²⁸ The Levites did as Moses commanded, and that day about three thousand of the people died.

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INTRODUCTION

Our Atheist and Agnostic friends love to point out how violent God is in the Bible. And there are some disturbing passages that we can't overlook. So how do we make sense of the violence found in the Old Testament, particularly the times where God commands the killing of entire cities? These stand in stark contrast to Jesus' teaching that we are to love our enemies.

There is no easy explanation to the violence prescribed to God in the Bible. However, we need to remember that all scripture should be measured with the words of Jesus. Jesus was God's unmitigated Word. One explanation for the violence of God in the Old Testament is that it reflects more about the understanding of the people at that time than God's self-revelation to us.

QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe the Bible to someone who was not familiar with it?
2. Have you or someone you know ever left the Christian faith because of passages that prescribe violence to God?
3. Read Exodus 32:27-28 on page 1. How do you reconcile this type of passage with the God Jesus reveals in the Gospels?
4. During the sermon, Pastor Eric said this about understanding the violence prescribed to God in the Old Testament “It reflects more about the understanding of the people at that time than God's self-revelation to us.” Do you agree or disagree? Why?
5. Do you see the Bible as being dictated word for word from God or could there be a human component of Scripture? If there is a human component to scripture does that lessen your view of the Bible?

FINAL APPLICATION

This week read some Old Testament passages from the Asbury devotional in light of the teachings of Jesus.