

# Suburban Legends

## “What the Bible Says About War”

Ecclesiastes 3:1-11 - September 30, 2007

### Overview of Our Study Together

SUBURBAN LEGENDS: A 14-Week Study of the Book of Ecclesiastes		
Date	Title	Text
Aug 26	Suburban Legends	Eccl 1:1-11
Sept 2	SL #1: My Kid Must Graduate in the Top Ten Percent	Eccl 1:12-18; 2:12-17
Sept 9	SL #2: More Sex Will Make Me Happier	Eccl 2:1-11
Sept 16	SL #3: A Better Job Will Make Me Happier	Eccl 2:17-26; 4:1-6,13-16
Sept 23	SL #4: More Time Will Make Me Happier	Eccl 3:1-15
Sept 30	Excursion: What the Bible Says About War	Eccl 3:1-11
Oct 7	SL #5: A Better Body Will Make Me Happier	Eccl 3:16-22; 11:9-12:8
Oct 14	Excursion: What the Bible Says About Loneliness	Eccl 4:7-12
Oct 21	SL #6: More Money Will Make Me Happier	Eccl 5:8-6:12
Oct 28	SL #7: More Control Will Make Me Happier	Eccl 8:2-13; 5:1-7
Nov 4	SL #8: Less Suffering Will Make Me Happier	Eccl 8:14-9:12
Nov 11	Suburban Truth: What Will Make Me Happier?	Eccl 12:9-14
Nov 18	Proverbs from Ecclesiastes – Part 1	Eccl 7:1-8:1
Nov 25	Proverbs from Ecclesiastes – Part 2	Eccl 9:13-11:8

### A Bedtime Bible Story with John David

- Ecclesiastes 3:1-11

### According to the Bible, Is There Ever a Time for War?

- The clear answer is “Yes” (Ecclesiastes 3:3,8).
- I think????? But, maybe it’s not so clear???
- **Matthew 5:9** – Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.”
- **Matthew 5:39** – Jesus said, “Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.”
- **Matthew 5:43-44** – You have heard that it was said, “Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.
- **John 13:34** – A new command I give you: Love one another.
- When Jesus brought the new covenant, did He usher in a new way of dealing with enemies and violence?

### Two Major Christian Views Regarding War

#### 1) Christian Pacifism.

- This view states that war and coercive force are NEVER permissible. War is to be rejected under any and all circumstances.
- **Matthew 26:52** - "Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword."

- **Micah 4:3** - They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.
- **Luke 6:27-29** - But I tell you who hear Me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. 29 If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic.
- **John 18:36** - Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, My servants would fight to prevent My arrest by the Jews. But now My kingdom is from another place."
- **Romans 12:17** - Do not repay anyone evil for evil.
- **Matthew 5:9** – Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.”
- **Matthew 5:17** - Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.
- **Romans 6:14** – You are not under law, but under grace.
- Some classical adherents to Pacifism: Anabaptists, Mennonites, Quakers, Amish, Myron Augsburg

#### 2) Christian Just War Theory

- This view states that there are certain situations that justify war. There are occasions in which, reluctantly, coercive force or war may need to be applied for the protection and preservation of a third party.
- **Ecclesiastes 3:3,8**
- All of the Old Testament examples of war
- **Romans 13:1-7** - Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. 2 Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. 3 For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. 4 For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. 5 Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. 6 This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. 7 Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor. (See also 1 Peter 2:13-17)
- **Luke 22:35-38** - Then Jesus asked them, "When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?" "Nothing," they answered. 36 He said to them, "But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one. 37 It is written: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors'; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in Me. Yes, what is written about Me is reaching its fulfillment." 38 The disciples said, "See, Lord, here are two swords." "That is enough," He replied.

- Augustine: “It is a biblical mandate for governments to defend peace and order and for individuals to love their enemies. War is not a matter of choice but of necessity, forced on us by the need to control violence in a fallen world.”
- Martin Luther: “The use of the sword is divinely entrusted to governments in order to repel injustice and keep peace. It can, therefore, be a work of love for the common good. But only defensive war is just.”
- John Calvin: “War is permitted for the defense of peace and justice. This is the function of civil authorities.”
- Harold Brown: “War is a great evil. However, in our fallen world it seems sometimes to be necessary to engage in the evil of war in the effort to prevent a still greater evil.”

### Is There a “Third Way”?

- A simplistic summary of the two major views

<i>Pacifism</i>	<i>Just War Theory</i>
Do nothing	Do something violent in return
Do not respond	Respond with equal or greater violence

- Was Jesus giving His followers a ““third way””? (Matthew 5:38-41)
  - Background: Roman occupation/taxation of Israel. Cruel and oppressive treatment of Jewish people by Roman soldiers. The Jewish people were looking for a Messiah to come and deliver them (war) from the Romans.
  - **v.38** – OT command to limit revenge (curb excessive revenge)
  - **v.39a** – *anti-histemi* = military term “to fight back” – Do not do back to them what they did to you; rather engage in creative, non-violent strategies that turn the tables.
  - **vv.39b** – Example #1 of how to respond
    - right hand = “clean” hand (symbol of strength and power)
    - left hand = “unclean” (bathroom hand; never use to touch another)
    - slap = what you do to a person who is beneath you (Roman to Jew)
    - hit = what you do to someone you consider an equal (Roman to Roman)
    - The message of turning the left cheek: “You and I are equals. You may not slap me, but you are welcome to hit me because we are equals.” Jesus was giving His followers a practical tool to turn violence upside down – to turn the tables.
    - This is NOT pacifism (do nothing). This is a creative, non-violent assertion of rights that says, “I confront the worldview that says you are better than me. We are equals in God’s eyes!”
  - **v.40** – Example #2 of how to respond
    - tunic = undergarment; cloak = outer garment
    - Roman occupation/taxation resulted in many Jews having to sell their land to Roman landlords who then turned around and hired the Jews to work their own land. Many Jews amassed great debts.
    - Jesus: “If they sue you for...” This would result in nakedness.
    - In the culture of that day, nakedness was the shame of the observer (not the naked person).

- Jesus was giving His followers a practical tool to turn the shame onto the rich Roman landlord and to give the landlord the opportunity to do the right thing. What kind of jerk would take the only remaining garment and leave you naked?!?
- This is not pacifism (do nothing). This is a creative, non-violent assertion of rights that says, “I am going to expose the injustice and inhumanity of this Roman domination of our economy. You will either treat me fairly or be shamed by my nakedness. You now have the opportunity to make the right decision.”

- **v.41** – Example #3 of how to respond
  - Roman soldier’s backpack weighed 50-80 pounds
  - Roman soldiers would often force Jewish people to carry their packs
  - But there were strict rules (with strict penalties) that limited this bullying: Roman soldiers could not require someone to carry their pack more than one mile.
  - Jesus: “If someone forces you....”
  - The Roman soldier would be scared of being caught by his commanding officer: “Please stop! Give me back my pack!”
  - Jesus was giving His followers a practical tool to turn the tables. The power was now in the oppressed person’s hands. It was a power that comes from generosity.
- Summary: All 3 of these examples are NOT pacifism (do nothing). In each case, Jesus told His disciples to DO SOMETHING (“Turn,” “Hand over,” “Go”). He told them to take action that is rooted in generosity (give your cloak, carry their pack a 2<sup>nd</sup> mile) not rooted in violence. These gestures exposed the injustice and inhumanity of the Roman oppression of Jewish people and gave the Romans an opportunity to do the right thing.
- Much of this background information taken from Rob Bell’s “A Brief History of Non-Violence” (tape)
- Examples of “The Third Way” from history
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jewish response to Caius Caesar and Petronius
  - 1950-60s – Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr.
  - 1989 – The “tank man” in Tiananmen Square
  - 33 AD – A Jewish carpenter from Nazareth
- Application – How can I apply “The Third Way” approach to my situations? How can I apply “The Third Way” approach to conflicts with my siblings? Spouse? Co-workers? Neighbors? \_\_\_\_\_

### Some Closing Thoughts

- Thoughts on the war in Iraq.
- Thoughts on the Second Coming of Christ (Revelation 19:11-21)(Exodus 15:3)

### Questions to Discuss with My Family, Friends, and Small Group

1. Is there someone in your extended family that has served in the military? That has participated in an actual war? What do you know about their situation/experience?
2. Discuss these sermon notes and Scriptures.
3. What are some creative ways to apply “The Third Way” to our lives?