



Seeking Peace

FACILITATOR GUIDE

Study Guide I: Faithful Priorities

Materials Required:

- *Faithful Priorities* study guide for each participant
- flip chart, easel and markers
- watch/clock for time keeping
- “American Pie” action guide for each participant (copies available from the WAND Field office: 404-524-5999)
- whole pumpkin pie and knife
- 8 paper plates, napkins, and forks

Room Arrangement: semi circle facing flip chart and facilitators

EXERCISE 1 – Group Introductions

Advance Preparation: Post Bible verses on large pieces of newsprint around the room.

Facilitator Tips: Content

- Biblical priorities include God’s concern for justice for the poor, the orphan, and the widow; the call to love God, our neighbor, ourselves, and even our enemies; and Jesus’ proclamation of liberty for the oppressed.
- These biblical texts were chosen because they reflect themes that are repeated throughout the books of the law, the psalms, the prophets, the gospels, and the letters in the Bible. Some of them define Jesus’ mission or sum up the whole of Biblical law.

EXERCISE 2 – Sabbath and Jubilee Principles

Facilitator Tips: Process

- The purpose of this exercise is to look at the Sabbath and Jubilee laws in the Bible and discuss the theological and ethical principles they provide when considering economic priorities in the world today.
- Facilitator should ask for three volunteers to read these excerpts from the Hebrew Scriptures.

Facilitator Tips: Content

- Sabbath year and Jubilee laws are mostly impractical as social policy, and scholars agree that the people of Israel were not in the regular practice of living out these laws.
- However, theologian Richard Lowery claims that they “provide a lens by which to focus theological reflection on the spiritual, ecological, and economic challenges that face us in this era of globalizing economy.”¹

EXERCISE 3 – Taking a Look at Our Nation’s Checkbook

Advance Preparation (optional): Encourage participants to bring their checkbooks

Facilitator Tips: Process and Content

- Give participants a few minutes to study the two pie graphs.
- Note that the top pie includes the total federal budget, both mandatory spending (slices A-H) and discretionary spending (slice I). Mandatory spending happens automatically and will not change unless the laws change that govern mandatory programs (Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, etc.). Interest payments on the debt are also mandatory. Discretionary spending involves flexibility (discretion). Congress decides about discretionary dollars each year through an appropriations process and can theoretically move the money around anywhere it chooses.
- You may want to use a personal checkbook to drive home the point that our checkbook tells a story, i.e. it reveals those things we consider important. This is true of individuals and of nations. You may read a few line items from your own checkbook and say something about why it was important for you to spend your money this way. In advance of this class, encourage participants to bring their checkbooks and invite them to talk about one line item from their check register.

¹ Richard H. Lowery, *Sabbath and Jubilee* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000), 3.

- Use the discussion questions to stimulate further group sharing.

EXERCISE 4 – Slice the Pie

Advance Preparation

- Select a pie from your local grocery. We recommend pumpkin for ease of slicing.
- Using a knife, draw the slices of the discretionary budget on the pumpkin pie.

Facilitator Tips:

- **Process:**
 1. Begin by serving the 8% education slice. As you serve, read the ingredients from the corresponding recipe card.
 2. Give this slice to a teacher in the group. Provide a fork and encourage him/her to eat the pie.
 3. Serve the other 7 non-defense discretionary slices, reading the ingredients of each and giving the slice to a participant whose interests relate to each spending area.
 4. After the 8 non-defense discretionary slices have been served, hold up the remaining 54% of the pie (the Pentagon slice) to show how much of the pie goes to the military. Note that, as large as this is, it does not include money for current wars, which are funded through extra spending requests called “supplemental appropriations.”
 5. Point out the ingredients of the Pentagon slice. Focus on the development and purchase of weapons (Procurement; R&D), an increasingly large percentage of the Pentagon budget.
 6. Invite comments and questions.
- **Content:** In March 2008, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued a report on the purchase of weapons by the Department of Defense: “Defense Acquisitions: Assessments of Selected Weapon Programs.” (<http://www.gao.gov/highlights/d08467sphigh.pdf>) The GAO report concluded that “DOD’s acquisition outcomes appear increasingly suboptimal.” Between Fiscal Year 2000 and Fiscal Year 2007, investment in new systems has more than doubled yet the return on investment has been disappointing. Programs have often failed to deliver promised capabilities while running well behind schedule and wildly over-budget.

Mini Session: How would you slice the pie differently?

Facilitator Tips: Process

- Ask participants to break up into pairs with someone they do not know well. They can move around the room to find a comfortable space for conversation.
- Ask each pair to choose a Partner A and a Partner B. Ask Partner A to raise their hands, and ask Partner A to listen first as Partner B shares. Tell the group that each partner will have the opportunity to speak for 2 minutes uninterrupted. Because this is a listening exercise, Partner A is asked to resist the urge to interrupt, ask questions, or redirect conversation.
- Direct participants to the Mini Session question printed in their study guides and ask Partner B to respond to the question for two minutes.
- Time the dialogue for 2 minutes, then ask for a moment of silence before inviting Partner A to answer the question while Partner B listens.

EXERCISE 5 – The Struggle for a New World

Facilitator Tips: Process and Content

- Study Guide 1 is presented in two parts: Exercises 1 and 2 look at biblical principles and Exercises 3 and 4 explore current issues. Exercise 5 attempts to bring the lesson together, looking at budget priorities through the lens of scripture and asking what this means in terms of Christian belief and action.
- Read the introduction aloud and invite a participant to read King’s words.
- Use the discussion questions to encourage sharing and explore avenues for action.
- Brainstorm a list of organizations working to shift budget priorities, including:
 - Women’s Action for New Directions – www.wand.org
 - National Priorities Project - www.nationalpriorities.org
 - Friends Committee on National Legislation – www.fcnl.org
 - Sojourners – www.sojo.net
 - Church Women United – www.churchwomen.org