**Our response to war**

I am concerned about the state of the world at the moment. I wonder if you are too.

Open the papers or watch the TV news and there seems to be so much conflict happening and innocent people being displaced, injured or killed.

It seems that the world has become for many a very unsafe place.

So, I wondered what our Christian response should be to these world issues.

Jesus tells is that we “*will hear of wars and rumours of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places: 8 all this is but the beginning of the birth pangs*.” (Matthew 24:6-8)

It is good to know that amid the wars and rumours of war that make life in this world so uncertain, we have a quieting word from Jesus. Of all mankind, only Jesus’ followers need not be alarmed (Mt 24:6; Mk 13:7). We alone know that God is still in control.[[1]](#footnote-1)

We often hear that we live in unprecedented times, but sadly, our times are not unprecedented. Due to our technology, we are more aware of tragedy happening on the other side of the world, but war, privation, pestilence, and death are so common as to be timeless symbols of human affliction.

A group of academics and historians has compiled this startling information: Since 3600 B.C., the world has known only 292 years of peace! [[2]](#footnote-2)

There is nothing new under the sun, writes Ecclesiastes. And Jesus’ words say the same thing.

But this knowledge does not let us sit back and do nothing. I believe we need to respond.

Our first response may be that of Lament

Lament is a heartfelt expression of grief and sorrow. It allows us to voice our feelings honestly before God. Through the biblical examples of lamenting, we see that it is encouraged as an important aspect of our walk with faith. We can find solace in the scriptures that teach us to bring our raw emotions to God, knowing that He cares deeply for us.

The Bible gives us plenty of examples in the Psalms, in Lamentations, and elsewhere of crying out to the Lord, wailing before him, putting words to our grief and pain, asking boldly for God’s deliverance and mercy, and expressing our hopeful trust in him.

As an example - *“Oh, that my head were a spring of water and my eyes a fountain of tears! I would weep day and night for the slain of my people.”* – Jeremiah 9:1

Biblical lament is structured around three themes, those of naming suffering, petitioning for help and the expression of hope that change might happen.

Lament teaches us vulnerability and leads us to a deeper relationship with God. In our weakest moments, we can rely on God’s strength to carry us through the pain. Expressing our lament allows us to seek refuge in His promises and love. When we bring our lamentations to Him, we can expect His comfort and peace to replace our anxiety and fear. In this way, we should see lament as an opportunity for renewal and growth in faith. Trusting God during these moments strengthens our hearts and builds our resilience.[[3]](#footnote-3)

The practice was reintroduced into Baptist theology after the Christchurch earthquakes by the Christchurch churches.

Sharing our burdens with fellow believers can lighten the load we carry and allow us to experience God’s presence in a deeper way. As a community, we can come together in prayer, bringing our laments before God as one body.

In one of my favourite movies, The Fifth Element, the supreme being and 5th element Leeloo is getting up to date with what humanity has been up to in the 5000 years that she has not been on earth and she comes to the letter W in her learning.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9JVaXZ9Jl1g>

Lament – bringing us to tears for what is happening in the world today, but more than that, bringing those tears to God.

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The next step is to get on our knees and pray:

Prayer remains one of the most powerful weapons we have — a divine channel through which we seek God’s intervention, mercy, and healing.

*“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people”* (Ephesians 6:18).

Throughout Scripture, we see that God is not distant from the chaos of conflict. He is the Prince of Peace, the God of Justice, and the Defender of the oppressed. From ancient battles in the Old Testament to Jesus’ call to love and forgive, the Bible is filled with examples of God intervening in times of war and restoring what seemed forever lost. When we lift our voices in prayer, we align ourselves with His will and invite His peace into the earth.

We are encouraged to pray for wisdom for leaders, for the safety for the innocents caught up in these conflicts, and peace for affected communities. Prayer is a vital response to the chaos we are seeing, seeking divine intervention and guidance.

1 Timothy 2:1 *I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings should be made for everyone, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity.*

We can pray something like this: God of restoration, bring healing to nations ravaged by war. Restore broken cities, shattered communities, and wounded hearts. Pour out Your mercy on those who suffer loss and trauma. Help nations rebuild with justice, love, and hope. May peace flourish in places once stained by conflict.

We can pray scripture back to God. Scriptures like Jeremiah 30:17 “But I will restore you to health and heal your wounds,’ declares the Lord.”

And a special sort of prayer called Intercession

Intercessory prayer, sometimes called "standing in the gap," is essentially lifting up the needs and concerns of others to God. And it is an expression of agape, or selfless, love.

Intercession happens when we reach beyond ourselves and our needs in prayer. When we feel a burden for someone else, we can be encouraged to bring that to the Lord, stand on their behalf, and seek His Will for their lives.

Intercessory prayers include the same elements as regular prayer: a declaration of who God is, a submission to His authority, and praises for His goodness. Each of those show a respect and awe of The Lord, and set our hearts right.

Then, we can move into petition, asking our Father to work in someone else’s life. Sometimes we’ll have a clear idea of that particular need - other times we may just have a general sense of the circumstances. Either way, we can trust that the Holy Spirit will guide us in how to pray.

*“Rescue those being led away to death; hold back those staggering toward slaughter.” – Proverbs 24:11*

So, our initial response is lament, followed closely by prayer and intercession but there are two more things we can do

There is Empathy and Support:

in his life and ministry, Jesus demonstrated the same care for the vulnerable that characterises the heart of God.

He tells us to love our neighbour as ourselves. When Jesus was asked who the good neighbour in his parable was, he identified him as the Samaritan man. A man of a race despised as being crossbreeds and impure and foreign.

In times of conflict, we Christians are called to listen and empathize with those affected, regardless of their background. We can stand in solidarity with all communities during times of heightened tension, as well as advocating against bigotry and prejudice.

*“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.” – James 1:27*

*“He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” – Micah 6:8*

The fundamental principle of peace is the belief that each person is important. (Jean Vanier)[[4]](#footnote-4)

In a world that chooses violence, we are to take care to build peace and to be agents of reconciliation wherever possible.[[5]](#footnote-5)

And finally in my list: We need to Engage with Scripture:

We look, as always to Jesus. What would Jesus do?

Jesus practiced what he preached. He healed the servant of a Roman soldier (Matt. 8:5–13). He rebuked Simon Peter when he cut off the ear of one of the soldiers who came to arrest him in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:47–56). He disappointed his own disciple, Judas Iscariot, who hoped for a military victory overthrowing Rome and who then betrayed Jesus, resulting in his death on the cross. Jesus’ lifestyle witness was of forgiveness and healing, hospitality to strangers and enemies, and a willingness to die for what he believed rather than kill others to gain power. [[6]](#footnote-6) He is the prince of peace.

As we wrestle with the question of what it means to be a follower of Jesus in the twenty-first century and respond to the possibility and practice of war and conflict, we realise that there is no single response to the question.

One of the temptations in asking the question about how we are to respond to conflict is to try to harmonize Scripture to provide a single perspective as guidance on the complex issues of dealing with conflict and war. Or to cherry pick the passages of Scripture that agree with our own perspective and support our own position.

We are encouraged to reflect on biblical teachings regarding war and peace. While the Bible acknowledges the reality of war, it also emphasizes God's desire for justice and mercy.

Understanding these teachings can help us navigate our responses to contemporary conflicts...

There are many responses available to Christians and have been through the centuries, from fighting a just war to pacifism

There is no easy answer to the question about our Christian responses to war. It is complex and multifaceted, involving a balance between the call to peace and the recognition of the realities of a fallen world.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Personally I take the advice of Marva Dawn that the world would be a much better place if all those who follow Jesus listened in life to Jesus’ words about caring for the needy, about being peacemakers wherever we go, about loving God with all our hearts, souls, minds and strengths and thereby loving our neighbours as ourselves[[8]](#footnote-8)

We live in God's time and within God's history. The salvation of the world is God's task, not ours. Our task is to be faithful, peaceful people wherever we are. [[9]](#footnote-9)

I believe that we are urged to respond with love, prayer, and a commitment to justice, seeking to embody Christ's teachings in the face of conflict. As Max Lucado notes, despite the turmoil, Christians can find hope in Jesus, who promises to deliver us from these days.[[10]](#footnote-10)

In accordance with the spirit and teachings of Christ we should do all in our power to put an end to war, tyranny and conflict. The true remedy for these things is the gospel of our Lord. The supreme need of the world is the acceptance of His teachings in all the affairs of people and nations, and the practical application of His law of love.[[11]](#footnote-11)

So, I ask you to lament, to pray, to empathise and support those caught up in the conflicts and to examine for yourself what Scripture says to you about this topic.

PRAYER:

Dear Heavenly Father, we lift up the war-torn countries of our world to You. We pray for peace to replace the turmoil and violence that has plagued these nations. In Your infinite mercy, grant wisdom to leaders, comfort to the suffering, and healing to the wounded. Let Your peace, which surpasses all understanding, reign in these lands.

1. New International Encyclopaedia of Bible Words: based on the NIV and the NASB 31 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Today in the Word, June 19, 1992. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. https://explainingthebible.com/bible-verses-about-lament/ [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Stanley Hauerwas & Jean Vanier *Living gently in a violent world: the prophetic witness of weakness* 101 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Marva J. Dawn *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting* 115 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Miley Palmer “Christian Responses to War” https://www.igrc.org/files/tables/content/1000163/fields/files/f1b379de0e3248b79a3276269d7f0e82/christian+responses+to+war.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Palmer [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Marva Dawn *Joy in Divine Wisdom: practices of discernment from other cultures &Christian traditions* 40 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Hauerwas & Vanier 104 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. https://www.bing.com/search?q=christian+response+to+war&qs=SC&pq=chrsitian+response+to+wa&sc=12-24&cvid=0658959FF72E48F9B358970BF61B6F03&FORM=QBRE&sp=1&ghc=1&lq=0 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Foshee, H. B. *Broadman church manual* 52 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)