

## Violence and the Mission of God

**Sermon:** Dr. Justin Tan, **Discussion Guide:** Bree Mills

1. What is your innate response to conflict, violence or talk of war? Many of us approach these issues differently, and it can be helpful to understand our own positions before we come to scripture. What feelings or reactions do these words evoke?
2. How have you dealt with the violence we have seen in the book of Joshua so far in this series? Does it cause you to question? Do you accept it? What other scripture has been part of your reflection and processing. Share with the group your own processing around this issue up to this point.

### War, Evil and the Saving Mission of God (Joshua 9-12)

3. What do you understand from Dr Justin Tan's explanation of *Herem*, the action that is devoted to obliteration? Exodus 22:20 uses the same word translated as 'destroyed' in the NIV. How does Exodus 22:20 add to our understanding of this concept? What does the story of Noah add to our understanding of this concept? Why did God use the flood? What was his aim and promise to His people?
4. Joshua is following God's command to destroy all evil in Deut 20:16-18. What does this verse help us to see or understand around why God commanded this?
5. How do we understand sin and evil in our world today? Some treat it too lightly, and pay little attention to their sin and need for repentance, others move into self flagellation. What view do you think God wants us to have of evil and sin in us and in our world?
6. The rhetoric of war is something Dr Tan spoke about. He explained the use of hyperbole in these types of texts, and seeing total destruction as total victory, and not necessarily mean the complete destruction of all people and property. He also suggested that War is not just about a battle between two parties, but a battle between two ideals, and even between God and idols or good and evil. How does our view of war and language influence the way we read this text? Are there similar examples of the use of hyperbole that we see in our culture today that might help us to understand this? What might this help us see about who Joshua is really fighting as he takes the promised land?
7. "Although violence is inevitable, it cannot be always justified" Dr Tan. When Joshua is taking the promised land he demonstrates that violence is not always the first resort. How do you see Joshua make peace in Joshua 9 with the Gibeonites?
8. Dr. Tan suggested that violence is always used to bring about the ultimate aim of peace. This side of heaven, evil will always be with us and we cannot completely eradicate it. Joshua was seeking to eradicate evil and bring peace for God's people in the promised land. How do we see violence bringing peace through the life of Jesus? What is the role of sacrifice in this process?

## **Evil and the Mission of God Today**

9. As people of God we are asked to suppress evil in our world wherever we find it. God has promised that he will fully eradicate evil one day and there will be no more war, tears, crying, pain (Rev 21). How might we suppress evil with love? How might sacrifice suppress violence in our world?
10. How can we be a people who seek God's mission and God's peace simultaneously in the world? What does this mean for how we confront sin in our communities? Do we ignore it in the name of 'peace'? Do we act in the name of God's mission to bring all things under his rule? How do we model the ways of Jesus as we live in a world where sin is yet to be fully eradicated?

*What is one thing you want to take away from today's discussion? What is one thing you want to change in the way you think or live this week? Pray for one another as a group that you might not only hear what God is saying to you, but that you would respond in obedience.*

*Perhaps set a challenge for your group to read Joshua 9-12 this week in the light of this discussion and ask God to help you to understand his heart as you read these passages.*