

## Sessions – Terrorism – myfishbites.com

### Terrorism

This session is extremely detailed and complex. It's more of a resource than a normal session.

#### Intro

The main definition of terrorism by the Britannica is: *“the systematic use of violence to create a general climate of fear in a population and thereby to bring about a particular political objective.”* As Christians we are called to share God's love and light in the face of the varying types of terrorism. This may create conflict in itself. But followers of Jesus should and ultimately can't help but love everyone because God is love and God lives in our hearts!

If we read through parts of Psalm 37, we realise that there are evil people in this world and evil plans and these are many and varied – with religious beliefs and with none. In fact, most people who have caused evil throughout history have been and are without religious beliefs. But God is in control and evil people will 'soon' be gone. This is God's way of encouraging us that it is the good things that will last, that there will be an end to evil and suffering and that evil will be punished. But we shouldn't lose heart or worry. Instead we commit our way to God, trust in him and keep on doing what is right, putting God first.

We need to be there for people as spiritual nurses, doctors and paramedics – ready to answer the questions that a broken and hurting world is asking. Only Jesus has the answers and solutions!

#### Why is there terrorism?

**Firstly**, we live in a fallen world. A world that was perfectly created by God (Garden of Eden, Genesis 1-2), was corrupted when man and woman disobeyed God and went their own way in Genesis 3. So we live in a world of broken-ness, where people have been rejecting God and Jesus ever since.

**Secondly**, people use evil to get their own way. This is quite clear and has been from the beginning of time. In **Genesis 4.8** we read, *“Now Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let's go out to the field.” And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.”* So right from the very first family, there has been murder, jealousy and broken-ness.

**Isaiah 59. 6-7:** *...their deeds are evil deeds, and acts of violence are in their hands. Their feet rush into sin; they are swift to shed innocent blood. Their thoughts are evil thoughts; ruin and destruction mark their ways.*

**Thirdly**, some people (wrongly) blame the Israel – Palestinian conflict for Islamist terrorism. The Bible prophesied that Israel would return to the land God had given them and this happened in 1947. It is amazing that today, the nation of Israel is still central in world affairs. We must pray for wisdom in this area as the situation is very complex. God still has a purpose for Israel and also loves the Palestinian people. Israel is under constant threat (and always has been) from the entire Muslim and Arab world and has been since the state of Israel was re-born with constant wars and attacks on them. They

are the one democracy in the middle of extremism. No Arab nation truly wants a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine. The most amount of Muslims by far are killed by other Muslims (see for example the Sunni – Shi'a conflict). The main reason for Islamist terrorism is simply that the Islamists (like other kinds of terrorists) simply want their own way and no other way!

**Fourthly**, terrorism can work. When there were bombings in Madrid in 2004, the people and government changed and then withdrew their troops from Iraq. We have also seen in Northern Ireland that members of the IRA, or supporters at the least – got political positions in the peace process. There have also been great winners in the conflicts across the Middle East. We also know that some environmental groups have seen how extremist policies and anarchy can work and have copied these strategies.

**Fifthly**, there has been terrorist acts in the name of religion the world over. We only have to look around the globe and back into history to see this.

Not all terrorism is committed by those claiming to represent Islam. We have seen many other terrorist acts from separatist groups (IRA, ETA and others) in many countries. There have also been many acts in the name of religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism, across Asia especially. Even in the name of Christianity during some of the Crusades, various witch trials and religious trials of 'infidels'.

The Muslim community recognises that there are radicals within their community but rightly point out that there are (or have been) extremists in other religious and non-religious groups.

**Sixthly**, regarding Islamist terrorism, many people believe that things like the Iraq War, the invasion of Afghanistan or the situation in Syria has created a greater risk of terrorism and some Muslims feel these are attacks on Muslims. Every nation in the West (or even within moderate Islamic cultures) are at risk, simply because the radicals want to destroy anything that doesn't agree with them.

Some Muslims feel marginalised, many were against the Iraq war, against the invasion of Afghanistan, feel Muslims are being killed around the world and feel helpless. Many Muslims believe that there have been double standards in UK foreign policy. Islamophobia is a word that has quickly gained attention, meaning hatred towards Muslims. Whether we agree with this or not, how do we respond to this? It is also interesting to note that Christians are being killed and abused the world over in increasing numbers but we do not see Christians responding with terror.

**Seventh**, there are a number of right-wing extremist groups who believe in white supremacy or who believe that 'refugees' and 'immigrants' are the root of problems in some places. Like other terrorist groups, the extremists want to set groups against each other. These groups have committed terrorist attacks (such as the killing of Muslims in Mosques in New Zealand in March 2019 – and the killing of 69 young people on Utoya, Norway by a far-right extremist in July 2011, the deadliest attack in Norway since the Second World War. There have been other terrorist attacks associated with extremists on the far left, with eco-warriors, animal rights activists and nationalist groups.

**Finally**, some of the more extreme beliefs reveal that killing non-Muslims is OK, believe that deception is acceptable and even that killing anyone in the cause of their version of Islam is right. Parts of Islamic teachings are about domination and doing things to promote Islam. One former Muslim wrote that Islamist radicalisation is based on the teachings that teach violence, torture, enslavement and cruelty – and not on things like Islamophobia. Therefore it cannot be appeased. This is an ideology based on a narrow interpretation of an ancient form of Islam and wants Islamic law and a worldwide Islamic state. There is the belief that martyrdom will immediately cleanse them of their sin, lead them into heaven where they will have 72 virgins – for an excellent study visit – [The Guardian](#).

[Click for a page to find out a bit more on this topic from a Muslim perspective](#)

## Write down your thoughts about terrorism on paper

[Download a PDF here](#)

Write down your thoughts about terror and terrorism...

How does terrorism make you feel?

Do you feel more unsafe after terrorist incidents?

How does this affect your trust in God?

How can we respond positively to acts of terror?

How can we pray / love those who don't believe in God?

## A Challenge

Some people are becoming radicalised as young people and in our prisons. Maybe pray for our prison system and for idea in youth work that engage with young people.

**Question** → how do we engage with people, showing them Christianity is actually strong through Jesus and is relevant, even though it's not violent??

**One person's suggestions** → inclusion – equality – fairness – reaching out to them.

## True Stories

In one of her Bible notes, the famous preacher called Joyce Meyer speaks about a time where some Christian neighbours lived next to an old lady who had lost her husband. She shut herself in and wouldn't communicate. But this Christian family kept on loving her – knocking on the door, offering food, bringing food and gifts and eventually spending time. Over time, the old lady completely changed and started living again. All because she was loved.

I know of another situation where a neighbour was extremely aggressive and abusive, being very selfish. But a Christian family nearby persevered in lots of prayer, in staying

strong and especially the mother of the family always going past their house and waving, smiling, asking how they were. She didn't realise it, but her smiles and care was what led to a complete change in the situation, with the family becoming friends of sorts and the Christian family often giving lifts and a listening ear. Again, it was God's love that brought change from a situation of hate.

## How do we react to terrorism as Christians?

We follow the way and the teaching of Jesus. Sometimes this can be confusing as Jesus didn't tell us about every exact situation we face. But where he wasn't specific, the Bible gives us guidance about every area of life. Sometimes Christians disagree on what Jesus would do. That's OK as well – as long as we keep the unity!

### 1. Forgiveness – love your enemy

**Matthew 5.38-48:** *“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ (quoting Exodus 21.24). But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.*

*“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

**Matthew 26.51-54:** *With that, one of Jesus' companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.”Put your sword back in its place,” Jesus said to him, “for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?”*

**Luke 22.51:** *But Jesus answered, “No more of this!” And he touched the man's ear and healed him.*

**Even at the Cross,** we hear the words of Jesus, asking forgiveness for those who crucified him in **Luke 23.34:** *Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.*

**1 Corinthians 1.18:** *For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*

**Romans 12.9-21:** *Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.*

*Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.*

*Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord. On*

*the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

## **2. Prayer – share testimonies and stories to encourage**

Maybe this would be a good time to go round the room (or prime people before) to give stories and testimonies of God answering prayer.

**I heard a good story at my church** – about when a lady and her husband were climbing in Snowdonia. While trying to get down the hill fast to meet a friend, she tripped, grabbed her husband and they rolled down the hill out of control. This was made worse by the fact that the lady has a condition that makes her weak. She cried out to God to help them and suddenly received a massive burst of strength, completely stopping her and her husband falling. They sat up and looked down. They had finished 1 metre from a 60ft vertical drop.

Or if we are talking about prayer in war. There is a regiment of US troops that have been in Iraq. During their tour of duty, people committed to pray for them. Not a single one of them was killed during this period, unheard of. That's the power of prayer.

**Bible verses around prayer** – give out Bibles and then get people find verses about prayer and write them down. Then feed back.

## **3. Take the fight to the enemy.**

But remember this is not about blood or killing or about getting at people.

Remember that Ephesians teaches this in **Ephesians 6.12**: *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*

Jesus also said this in **Matthew 5.21-22** where we see an even stricter standard Jesus calls us to: "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.

However, there were times where Jesus went on the verbal attack..

**Matthew 23.27-28**: *"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.*

There was even a time where righteous Godly anger, led Jesus to take action..

**John 2.14-18**: *In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!"*

*His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me." (quoting Psalm 69.9)*

## **4. Evangelism.**

This is a broken and fallen world that needs Jesus. And Jesus chooses to use us more often than not !!

Challenge – how far are you going / prepared to go to share the Gospel. What can you do this week. Encourage people to do something, ask God for opportunities.

Feed back next week and hold each other to account !

## **The difference that Jesus makes**

The scary truth about one of the attackers of the soldier Lee Rigby (killed in 2013), Michael Adebolajo, is that his parents are Christians and he was raised as a Christian. However, it is reported that around aged 15 and 16 he began to experiment with alcohol, drugs and then became radicalised into Islam.

Does this mean everyone who drinks and takes drugs will become a terrorist?! Of course not, so let's clear that one up! Did his parents do anything wrong? Again, I don't imagine they did at all. The truth is that we are all responsible for our own decisions and that God will hold us to account for what we do and believe.

But in the tragic life of Michael, we see illustrated the amazing difference between true Christianity and the extremes of Islamist radicals...

Sometimes people who don't believe in God call all religious people 'fundamentalists' as an insult. If this means we believe the Bible, then we are fundamentalists. But if this means we are all terrorists, that is a deliberate lie used to abuse Christians.

The Bible makes it very clear that our battle is not with people. The battle is in prayer; it is in the unseen 'heavens' where the evil one wages war and controls, dominates people making them do evil things. We must pray as this is what changes things. We must love as this is also what changes things. We must never react in anger; never in hate as this is not from God. The fruit of God is love – joy – peace – living right etc.

## **God bringing good from evil**

Good always comes out of evil.

BBC online news told the story of a woman who felt compelled to pray, got off a train (which was subsequently attacked) and got on the bus downstairs (on the bus that was blown up). Her life was spared. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4669793.stm>

Churches in London supported people after terrorism and opened their doors. Of course, the amazing Salvation Army were there / are there too. To comfort, support and be a friendly face for those that need them. For a pic of the Sally Army go to [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in\\_pictures/4660563.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_pictures/4660563.stm) and navigate to slide 14 of 16.

We also know that many people were praying – <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4675881.stm>

After the 2 minute silence on Thurs July 14 2005 there was a series of incredible testimonies and pictures – from the BBC website – [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in\\_pictures/4682803.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_pictures/4682803.stm) – (see especially slide 2/9 and slide 3/9)

Peter Gould: "Here's a picture during today's two-minute silence at Northfields station on the Piccadilly Line in west London. There was a short service during which people sang The Lord's My Shepherd and Amazing Grace, and recited the Lord's Prayer."

Mike Wainwright: "The silence was impeccably observed by a huge crowd who stood in the road outside Aldgate tube station. The silence was followed by the singing of "Abide With Me" by the St Botolph's choir. It was very emotional.

## We know that God is with us so we do not need to fear

If we have personally accepted Jesus as being in charge and over our life.

Read out this passage from **Isaiah 41.11-15** and personalise it for you, your nation, your city:

*So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. All who rage against you will surely be ashamed and disgraced; those who oppose you will be as nothing and perish. Though you search for your enemies, you will not find them. Those who wage war against you will be as nothing at all. For I am the LORD, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you. Do not be afraid, O worm Jacob, O little Israel, for I myself will help you," declares the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. "See, I will make you into a threshing sledge, new and sharp, with many teeth. You will thresh the mountains and crush them, and reduce the hills to chaff.*

Now go to **Psalm 91** and read that, making it personal. You may want to do a Powerpoint presentation with these verses, with images behind, to help people meditate on the words. [Psalm 91 from Bible Gateway](#).

## We have a hope in Jesus

**Romans 5.1-5:** *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.*

**Romans 15:13:** *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

**1 Corinthians 15:18-20:** *Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.*

**Ephesians 4:4-5:** *There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called— one Lord, one faith, one baptism..*

**Colossians 1:27:** *To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*

**1 Thessalonians 5:8:** *But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.*

**1 Timothy 6:17:** *Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.*

## Time of Silence

Don't start with a time of silence and reflection but include this as part of your session. Play some music and encourage people to ask God to speak to them, help them, guide them, change them – so that we can be salt and light (Matthew 5.13-16). Pray for our nation (1 Timothy 2.1-3), that all terrorists would be revealed to the authorities (Psalm 129.5-6), that God would destroy the evil in them (Psalm 55.9a) and that their hearts would be changed (John 3.16). Pray for protection in the spiritual realms over the UK and your city / town (Ephesians 6). Pray for God's will to be done, his kingdom to come (Matthew 6.10).

## Video Clips

Unless you have a good video engineer, it may not be good to show clips of the terror. However, you may want to show clips from DVDs – such as the Incredibles – making the point that evil can be turned to good.

Or do a compilation of the Cross with emotional music to show that Jesus suffered the ultimate terror and pain – for us. Thank you Jesus.

## Is there terrorism in the Bible?

**Deuteronomy 7.1-2:** *When the LORD your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations—the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than you- and when the LORD your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy.*

**Deuteronomy 20:10-17:** *When you march up to attack a city, make its people an offer of peace. If they accept and open their gates, all the people in it shall be subject to forced labor and shall work for you. If they refuse to make peace and they engage you in battle, lay siege to that city. When the LORD your God delivers it into your hand, put to the sword all the men in it. As for the women, the children, the livestock and everything else in the city, you may take these as plunder for yourselves. And you may use the plunder the LORD your God gives you from your enemies. This is how you are to treat all the cities that are at a distance from you and do not belong to the nations nearby.*

*However, in the cities of the nations the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, do not leave alive anything that breathes. Completely destroy them—the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites—as the LORD your God has commanded you. Otherwise, they will teach you to*



*follow all the detestable things they do in worshiping their gods, and you will sin against the LORD your God.*

**So, is there terrorism committed by Godly people in the Bible? – NO !!**

Like anything, taken out of context it would appear that way. Remember that these incidents are Old Testament events and are therefore pre Jesus and his complete work on the Cross. This is before what we call the 'new covenant' – that we can be made right with God through accepting Jesus.

Cities and all the inhabitants were sometimes destroyed in the Old Testament, so that false gods were not worshipped and so Gentile women did not corrupt the men to worship false gods. So God had to have a strategy to deal with this, as harsh as it may seem to use today.

**We also read these words from Jesus in Matthew 5.30:** *And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.*

**And again in Matthew 18.9:** *And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.* So the principle we look at when we see the Old Testament passages, is about God trying to help his people keep themselves pure, keeping them from contamination. This is an action against sin and not against people directly. In the Old Testament, where there were laws, God had his people clear out nations who were evil – so that the area and sometimes even the people could be 'redeemed' (made right with God). God cannot look on sin. The New Testament equivalent is Jesus on the Cross. At the Cross, Jesus died for our sins so now we can be made right with God.

Jesus tells us to cut off sin – or whatever causes it – a body part. But he doesn't mean physically hack your arm off. This is a metaphor showing us the seriousness of sin – and telling us to completely cut it out of our lives. How do we do this? **James 4.7** has the answer: *Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.* So, we submit to God, then we are able to resist the devil, then he will flee from us.

## Terrorism and making the most of every day

Acts of terror show us that life is fragile and short. **Psalm 39.5** says: *You have made my days a mere handbreadth; the span of my years is as nothing before you. Each man's life is but a breath.*

So we are to make the most of life and live for Christ. We must also make the most of every opportunity that comes our way to share the Gospel in word, in love and in action.

**1 Ephesians 5:16:** *making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.*

**2 Colossians 4:5:** *Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.*

So we must be wise in how we live, in how we interact and relate to people. We must not forget about each other and our life of discipleship personally:

**Galatians 6.9-10:** *Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.*

## God allowing acts of terror?

God is not evil. Yet there are times where God seemingly allows evil, to achieve his purposes. Don't agree with me? Think about the murder and brutal abuse of Jesus on the Cross. Something we could point to as being evil. However, this was allowed by God, as part of God's plan.

**Take a corporate read through Isaiah 66 with your group...** This is a message of warning, of judgement – but also of hope and glory for God's people. Encourage yourself and do not fear.

Is terrorism God's judgement? No I don't think so, but it is a wake up call to all of us. Let us hear the laments of prophets such as Isaiah and take action, pray and love people in our nation. Let's commit to intercede before God for our nation. Only Jesus is the answer.