

Ben's story study guide

Why I Enlisted

Ben's story
Iraq War veteran
Benjamin Peters
reflects on war,
peace and the call
to follow Jesus.
Taped at
Mennonite Church
USA Convention,
July 2015.

Opening exercise

Invite students to look through military recruitment brochures that you have picked up at a recruitment center, or go to several online recruitment sites. Ask students to describe the primary messages that are communicated, and note what is not being mentioned in the materials. Ask the students to talk about why people enlist in the military.

Recruitment sites: goarmy.com, marines.com, airforce.com, navy.com, spaceforce.com

View the video clip, "[Why I Enlisted](#)" (4:30)

Questions for reflection

- Ask students to discuss Ben Peters' reasons for enlisting. What do they admire, what do they question about Ben's reasons? Ask students to share whether they have ever acted on something that they heard about in the news.
- Ask students to share what (if anything) they have been taught about following Jesus and enlisting in the military. Who or what has been the primary influence on their perspective on this question? Note the differences and similarities in their responses.
- Invite both the young men and the young women to respond to Ben's comments about how men in particular are attracted to aggression and the mystique of violence. Is this part of "being a man?" How have students observed this? What other models of "manhood" have students observed?

Biblical reflection

Read about Jesus' invitation to follow him (Matthew 4:19 and 16:24). Invite the students to discuss how Jesus' invitation compares to the invitation of military recruiters.

Other resources

"Behind the Camouflage: A Primer on Military Enlistment for Youth Pastors, Mentors and Counselors," by Titus Peachey. See: [Military Recruitment \(mcc.org\)](http://MilitaryRecruitment(mcc.org))

[Quaker House](#)

"Alternatives to enlistment." See: centeronconscience.org/alternatives-to-enlistment

Project Yano: Youth and Non-military Opportunities See: projectyano.org

Through All the Plain, by Benjamin John Peters, Cascade Books, 2014



mcc.org/bens-story