

Ben's story study guide

The Impact of War

Opening exercise

Go to Wikipedia.org and print out a picture of U.S. soldiers in Fallujah, Iraq (See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Battle_of_Fallujah). Invite the students to view the photo for several minutes, close their eyes and imagine themselves exposed to danger in that setting for days on end. After a time of silence, invite them to reflect on how that exposure might make them feel in the immediate setting, and how it might affect them long-term.

View the video, "The Impact of War" (5:44)

Questions for reflection

- Invite students to react to the video. What do they wonder about? What they want to remember?
- Invite students to reflect on whether they have ever doubted God... and why. What is there about war that would lead people, including soldiers like Ben, to doubt God?
- Invite students to say what they know about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Using the resources listed below, explain PTSD more fully. Note that PTSD is not a sign of weakness. It is a normal, human response to trauma.
- Invite students to consider this question: Is the PTSD experienced by soldiers their individual problem, or is it a burden that we all share? Explain.

Biblical reflection

Read Psalm 38:5-11. Note that it was shared with a therapist by a Vietnam War veteran who said that the Psalm describes how he feels. Read Numbers 31:19, noting that even in the Old Testament, there was an acknowledgement of the need to heal from the trauma of war.

Other resources

"The trauma of war and our collective responsibility."

See: <http://pjsn.org/vets/Documents/SSLesson3TraumaofWar.pdf>

"About trauma" (from "Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience," by David Baldwin).

See: emu.edu/cjp/star/toolkit/about-trauma.pdf

Soul Repair Center See: brite.edu/academics/programs/soul-repair

"Helping those in the hell of PTSD," by Eileen Ahearn. See:

themennonite.org/feature/helping-hell-ptsd

"Returning Veterans. Returning hope." Sunday school curriculum, lessons 3 and 4. See:

<http://mcc.org/media/resources/1719>

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

Ben's story

Iraq War veteran Benjamin Peters reflects on war, peace and the call to follow Jesus.

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