

About These Lessons

This unit of four lessons was designed for groups who wish to study the work of Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) within the context of the biblical witness. Accordingly, each lesson is tied to a passage from the Book of Acts. Participants will study both the first century church described in Acts and the history of Christian Peacemaker Teams. They will then evaluate the connections between the two.

The structure of the lessons follows the model of the Good Ground series, curriculum developed by the Mennonite Churches and the Church of the Brethren. Each lesson contains three parts:

Part I: Preparation

In this section, you will find the Bible passage, a key verse, a summary of the text and the issues it raises and some background study on both Acts and Christian Peacemaker Teams. You and the others should read this section before beginning the session.

Part II: Session

The Session begins with everyday life (Focus), moves into an examination of what the Bible says (Engage the Text) and then to life applications (Respond). The "Respond" section will also help members of the group think about the work of CPT and ways that it could develop in the future.

Part III: Leader Guidelines

These lessons do not require a leader, but if your sessions normally do have someone who leads, these suggestions for advance preparation may help make the session come alive. Bibliographical information is available under "Resources."

About the Writer

Kathleen Kern joined CPT in 1993 at the first training for members of the newly initiated Christian Peacemaker Corps – a team of people available full-time to enter situations of violent crisis. Full-time Corps members form the heart of CPT's violence-reduction projects around the world. Kern has served with CPT in Haiti, Palestine, Mexico, Colombia, Pierre (South Dakota), Oneida (New York) and Washington, DC. She earned an MA in Biblical Studies from Colgate Rochester Divinity School and has authored two books, *We are the Pharisees* (Herald Press, 1995) and *When it Hurts to Live* (Faith & Life Press, 1994).

About Christian Peacemaker Teams

Christian Peacemaker Teams is a faith-based initiative of active peacemaking, rooted in Anabaptist tradition (Brethren, Mennonite, Quaker), supported by congregations and groups from a growing number of Catholic and Protestant denominations.

A speech by Ron Sider at the 1984 Mennonite World Conference held in Strasbourg, France was the catalyst that led to the formation of CPT in 1986. CPT's first short-term peacemaker delegation went to Iraq in 1990 and by 1993, with the development of the Christian Peacemaker Corps, CPT placed a full-time team in Haiti.

Portions of Ron Sider's speech, *God's People Reconciling*, and CPT's mission statement are provided here as background material to this study series.

God's People Reconciling (excerpts)

"I believe the Lord of history wants to use the small family of Anabaptists scattered across the globe to help shape history in the next two decades. But to do that, we must not only abandon mistaken ideas and embrace the full biblical concept of shalom. One more thing is needed. We must take up our cross and follow him to Golgotha. We must prepare to die by the thousands.

Those who have believed in peace through the sword have not hesitated to die. Proudly, courageously, they gave their lives. Again and again, they sacrificed bright futures to the tragic illusion that one more righteous crusade would bring peace in their time. For their loved ones, for justice, and for peace, they have laid down their lives by the millions.

Why do we pacifists think that our way – Jesus’s way – to peace will be less costly? Unless we...are ready to start to die by the thousands in dramatic, vigorous new exploits for peace and justice, we should sadly confess that we really never meant what we said.

...

Unless comfortable North American and European Christians are prepared to risk injury and death in nonviolent opposition to the injustice our societies foster...we dare never whisper another word about pacifism to our sisters and brothers in desperate lands. Unless we are ready to die developing new nonviolent attempts to reduce international conflict, we should confess that we never really meant the cross was an alternative to the sword...Making peace is as costly as waging war.

...

What would happen if we in the Christian church developed a new nonviolent peacekeeping force of 100,000 persons ready to move into violent conflicts and stand peacefully between warring parties?...Frequently, we would get killed by the thousands. But everyone assumes that for the sake of peace it is moral and just for soldiers to get killed by the hundreds of thousands, even millions. Do we not have as much courage and faith as soldiers?

Again and again, I believe praying, Spirit-filled nonviolent-peacekeeping forces would by God’s special grace be able to end the violence and nurture justice. Again and again, we would discover that love for enemies is not utopian madness or destructive masochism, but rather God’s alternative to the centuries of escalating violence that now threatens the entire planet. But the cross – death by the thousands by those who believe in Jesus – is the only way to convince our violent world of the truth of Christ’s alternative.

CPT Mission Statement

The CPT Mandate as printed in the organization’s brochure is as follows:

1. We believe the mandate to proclaim the Gospel of repentance, salvation and reconciliation includes a strengthened Biblical peace witness.
2. We believe that faithfulness to what Jesus taught and modeled calls us to more active peacemaking.
3. We believe a renewed commitment to the gospel of peace calls us to new forms of public witness which may include nonviolent direct action.
4. We believe the establishment of Christian Peacemaker Teams is an important new dimension for our ongoing peace and justice ministries.

“To be authentic, such peacemaking should be rooted in and supported by congregations and church-wide agencies. We will begin”