

क्षमा तथा मिलाप सेवा

Forgiveness and
Reconciliation

Repentance

Forgiveness

पश्चात्ताप

मिलाप

Reconciliation

TRAUMA

क्षमा

आघात

Discussion Materials Included



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Introduction

Welcome to the discussion materials. We have written this not only with Nepal in mind but similar countries where there has been a recent history of conflict.

In this discussion, we will cover all six main themes of the DVD. You can use the questions and actions individually but you will find it more worthwhile if you invite others to join.

The topics are:

1. War and violence
2. Role of the Church in building peace
3. Repentance
4. Forgiveness
5. Reconciliation
6. Trauma and healing

Please read the introductions to each section and select from the discussion questions those which are most suitable for you/your group. You will also be invited to consider an action/activity you can take that builds peace in your family or community.

1. War and Violence: From 1996 to 2006, Nepal experienced 10 years of civil war between the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN-M) and government forces. During these years, almost 13, 000 people perished in the conflict and an estimated 100,000 to 150,000 people were believed to be internally displaced. Human rights violations – torture, beatings, abductions and murders - were committed by both sides with many families still unaware of the fate of their missing relatives.

Apart from the direct suffering caused by deaths and injuries, the conflict worsened the level of the country's poverty by disrupting its economy and development programmes particularly in remote and rural areas. Tourism, Nepal's biggest source of foreign exchange, declined dramatically. Money which could have been spent on basic services, such as health and education, was diverted to the army and the police. Aid agencies, which had been strongly active since 1990-post democracy, were then forced to close or suspend development programmes. Infrastructure, painstakingly developed over the previous years, was either destroyed or allowed to fall into disrepair. The industry was devastated by enforced work stoppages (bandhs), by demands for "donations" and by direct attacks. Workers lost jobs and day labourers were unable to find work, thus making it increasingly difficult to make ends meet. Education and social services ground to a halt as schools became the target of "recruiters" for the insurgency, and professionals and government officials were afraid to venture beyond urban cities.

The violence also tore apart traditional social and religious structures that supported families and communities. Trust was destroyed, and families and communities ripped asunder. To avoid the conflict and its accompanying economic decline, many young people left the country in search of jobs and educational opportunities elsewhere. The close ties that Nepalis felt to their extended families and village communities were slowly being broken as people living in towns and cities were unable to return to their homes for long-traditional social occasions.

Although the armed conflict ended on the 21st of November 2006 with the signing of a Comprehensive Peace Agreement, peacebuilding, as we can see now, will require many more years of work. Minority groups have learned that violence will inevitably gain results so bandhs and sectoral conflicts are just a 'normal day.'

The electorally-victorious CPN-Maoist party (April 2008) struggle to lead a fractious coalition government and create a stable democratic nation.

Our discussion questions will raise issues about violence which is not connected to war, especially violence against women and children. In Nepal as in most conflicts, the effects of war and other violence is more keenly felt by people who are poor as well as women and children.

1. From the description above, what would have been some of the impacts of the conflict on poor village families? Would wealthier families have been somewhat protected from its full impact and how?
2. Do you think this is mainly true in situations of violent conflict? Give examples to support your answer.
3. Consider how the conflict may have affected relationships within families.
4. Some people think war at times is necessary. What do you think?
5. Often women have a different approach when dealing with conflict. Do you agree? How can these different strengths be used to bring change in a community?
6. On the DVD, Bal Kumari Gurung (UMN) says: "The wounds resulting from our 10-year-long conflict remain to be healed." What "wounds" might there be in your community, with or without war?
7. Someone has said that "building peace is too important to be left to politicians alone." What do you think ordinary people can do to build peace and bring healing and hope to their communities?

ACTION: Plan a simple activity in your community that supports peacebuilding.

2. The Role of the Church in Building Peace: The Church in Nepal, although growing strongly all over the country, is still a tiny minority in this predominantly Hindu nation – Protestants account for only around 0.5% of the population while others suggest a Christian population at around 1.89%.

1. In the DVD, Bal Kumari says: “The Nepali Christian Community also has a role to play in the peace process.” What do you think?
2. Some Christians believe that war is always wrong and some governments, even in times of emergency, allow those people other duties. What are some of the reasons why these people do not like fighting in wars?
3. List some of the things you think the Christian community can do to support the peace process. Now place them in priority order as you see it and compare your list with others in your group.
4. Read in the Christian Scriptures of Matthew 5:1-12. What wars or conflicts do you think Jesus had in mind when He spoke about His followers being peacemakers?
5. Some people say that the Church in Nepal has so many disputes that it cannot act in a peaceful way until it is a more peaceful and united community. What do you think?
6. As the Christian faith was spreading not long after the death and resurrection of Jesus, there was a major disagreement in the church. Read about it in the Christian Scriptures of Acts 15:1-30. Can you identify the steps they took to resolve the conflict?
7. Are there ways that the Christian church could cooperate with other faith groups to support peace?

ACTION: If you belong to a church and have a broken/strained relationship with someone, how will you go about repairing it?

3. Repentance: The English word 'repentance' means not only showing you are sorry for what you have done but taking action that repairs as much of the damage as possible.

On the peace DVD, attendant Nepali church leaders wrote confessions on slips of paper and nailed them to a cross as an act of repentance. The visiting minister, Emmanuel Kopwe from African Enterprise, said that, “Confession of sins releases the power of healing and brings God into the equation.”

1. Nepali Christians in the DVD repented as a group. What do you think they might have been repenting of? Why is repentance an important first step to healing?
2. Who do you think was responsible for the 10-year war in Nepal?
3. In the Christian scriptures, please read 1 John 1:8-10. In what way is everyone responsible for what happened?
4. Do you think that one or two people can repent on behalf of other people and on behalf of a country?

5. In what way are other faith groups taught to repent? How do people repent of wrongs in your community?

ACTION: Like the church leaders in the DVD, take a piece of paper and write some things that you would want to repent for. If there is a wooden cross available, nail the paper to the cross. Quietly ask God for forgiveness for things you have done wrong and the strength for you to be a different person. Now simply burn the paper as a symbol of the certainty of God's forgiveness.

4. Forgiveness: In the DVD, Joe Campbell from UMN believes that the act of forgiveness is "the power of God's grace welling up inside of us that allows us to forgive."

There's something absolutely critical about understanding the relationship between forgiveness and being forgiven. Jesus said, "If you forgive others when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins." (Matthew 5:14-15)

It could not be any more simpler, really!

Many Nepalis have a lot to forgive. They have suffered from exploitation by rich landowners, neglect by their elected leaders, and violence from both Maoists and government forces during the civil war. They have lost land, crops, jobs, educational opportunities and in many cases, family members. Their communities have been shattered and many lives deeply scarred.

How might Nepali Christians show a way forward for such a deeply wounded nation? How important is forgiveness in the Nepali situation? And what would it look like in practice, not just in words?

1. Forgiveness is much more than saying sorry. And many people have proved that it is more than a one-time experience. Some people also say that when we forgive someone it is also for our own good. What do you think?
2. If you are meeting in a group try this exercise: Invite people to stand up if they have ever forgiven someone. Now sit down. Invite people to stand if they have ever been forgiven by someone. Now sit down. Discuss how difficult it is to forgive someone, and then, how it felt to be forgiven?
3. Why do you think we find it so difficult to forgive someone? What are the barriers that stop us from forgiving others?
4. What is the difference between forgiveness and just excusing people's failures?
5. Do you think that forgiveness takes the memory of the hurtful event away? How then can we deal with these painful memories?
6. Do you think Christians should be better in the whole area of forgiveness?

ACTION: Is there someone who has wronged you and that you need to forgive? If so, plan the action now, phone them, write a letter or email or best of all, meet them to talk things through.

5. Reconciliation: “Our God is a God of reconciliation. He reconciles us to himself in Jesus Christ,” as said by Divya Khanal from ATEN.

Also, David McConkey from UMN holds a similar view when he says that, “It is important that churches first experience forgiveness and reconciliation. Only then can they take it to their community.”

In recent years we have seen the clear beginnings of reconciliation in South Africa and in Northern Ireland. After the ending of long, brutal civil wars, both still have a long way to go to achieve true peace and reconciliation.

1. Read together in the Christian Scriptures of Acts 9:1-19. Paul was an enemy of God. But God did not let the demand for justice govern His actions. Instead he showed love by offering reconciliation to Paul, his enemy.
2. In verses 20-25, what are some of the changes in Paul’s life?
3. What do you think 'reconciliation' means for the modern world today?
4. Who are the people that need to be reconciled in Nepal or in your own country?
5. How can reconciliation between enemies happen in our communities today?

ACTION: Sometimes in families things have happened or were said many years ago that have caused hurt and anger leaving families split. If this is true for your family or a family you know, what action will you take that would help towards healing and reconciliation?

6. Trauma and Healing: As Janet Campbell from UMN states in the DVD, “Trauma is a breaking of trust, a spilling out of all that was dear, a hurt deeper than a mere physical wound.”

Trauma may come from exposure to a range of different events that include witnessing incidents in war, being physically or sexually abused, and experiencing sudden disability through accident or illness. Children are especially vulnerable because experiencing trauma in their earlier years can have devastating impacts in later life.

1. What experiences have caused trauma to people that you know of?
2. Make a list of the effects a hurtful experience might have on a person.
3. What is the practical help that people with hurtful experiences might need?
4. Sometimes people in trauma cannot speak about what has happened or understand what is happening inside them. What do you think are the best ways of helping in this situation?

