

Why We Fight Discussion

1. Why We Fight is the most interesting documentary I have ever seen. What did you think of the film? Did you find its presentation to be balanced and fair?
2. When the filmmaker, Eugene Jarecki, asked people across the nation why we fight, the first answer out of their mouths was “freedom.” If you were asked that question would you answer the same way? Has your answer changed in light of this film? Is freedom worth fighting for? Are we fighting for freedom?
3. What do you think of the journey of Walter Sekzer who lost his son on 9-11 and had his dead son's name placed on a bomb dropped in Iraq? Would you have felt the same way had you lost a relative on 9-11?
4. The focus of *Why We Fight* is the military-industrial complex that President Eisenhower explained in his farewell address to the nation in 1960. Have you ever heard of this term before? Do you agree that this “complex” is a real issue in America today? How influential do you think defense contractors and corporations are on Washington?
5. If war in America is the result of a system that we in some way contribute to, should we be working to change it? If so, how can we help change the system and help our society become less militarized?
6. Conservative Republicans are seen as staunch supporters of defense spending and are at times painted as war-mongers. The Christian community is often strongly linked to the Republican Party. Why is that? Should it be that way? What are the dangers of religious movements becoming closely associated with political parties?

Wrap-Up

There are many opinions about war among the followers of Jesus. While Jesus' words about “turning the other cheek” and “loving your neighbor as yourself” seem to endorse pacifism, this is hard to harmonize with the violence in Israel's history and Jesus' command to his followers to buy a sword because of the dangerous times.¹ This complex issue caused church fathers Augustine and Aquinas to develop the Just War Theory. This theory contends that war is just under certain unique conditions. These conditions include having a just cause and waging war only as a last resort. It is important for each of us to thoughtfully consider if and when war is appropriate. Instead of picking one verse that speaks to the issue, the entire movement of Scripture is relevant. If we are to be involved in the movement of God we must consider this vital issue and exercise our influence on the direction of society.

In the ancient world societies were ruled by kings and emperors. In a letter Paul tells the followers of Jesus in Rome to “be subject to the governing authorities” and “whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling about what God has instituted.”² When Paul penned those words he had no idea that there would come a time when the people governed would have a voice in the direction of their nation. This is the opportunity we have in America today. All of us have some responsibility for the state of the U.S. and the rise of the military-industrial complex. While we can't effect change overnight, we are called to be agents of change in the world. In the same letter Paul encouraged those he wrote to “overcome evil with good.”³ Following Jesus is not about being Republican or Democrat but rather about joining the movement of God that works toward redemption, peace and good in our lives and the world. While there are times it is hard to clearly see what is good and right, the life of Jesus and guidance found in the Bible provide significant wisdom. Maybe we can join the movement of overcoming evil with good by thinking deeply about war and working to transform our society.

1 Matthew 5:39, Matthew 22:39, Luke 22:36

2 Romans 13:1 and 13:1-2

3 Romans 12:21