



Dear Pastors, Youth Advisors, Lay Leaders:

Military recruiters are regularly engaging our youth, listening to their dreams, promising them a life of job opportunities and honor. Youth hear this call and respond – a life of commitment, courage, and conviction sounds wonderful! Job training and college money make it an even better deal.

We would like to enlist YOU to engage your youth and invite them to the rewards of following Jesus, the Prince of Peace. This life based on God's promises, this life of agape love for God, self, neighbor and enemy, requires courage and conviction of the highest order. It offers adventure, opportunity, and promise. But we have to encourage young people in this path. *If we do not encourage young people to engage problems of violence and injustice out of the heritage of Christian love and nonviolence, who will?* We are the ones who need to accompany our young folk to achieve lives of honor and success without joining the military.

We also have a responsibility to reach out to our communities. On Earth Peace, a peace education program based in the Church of the Brethren, supports a growing network of volunteer community organizers who provide education about the rights of young people, protect the privacy of young people and their families from recruiters, and helping identify alternative life paths for young people who feel the military is the only way to go.

Would you join with us? Here are some specific ways to help:

- 1) **In an upcoming youth group meeting, focus on the topic of Jesus' teaching on enemies, and the themes of military participation and recruitment.** On the back of this sheet, we've provided a set of questions you may find helpful. Let us know how it goes!
- 2) Work with your youth to understand conscientious objection to war, using resources from the Brethren Witness/Washington Office. Visit
- 3) Military recruiters are famous for not being clear about the requirements involved or the fact that their promises don't have to be kept by the armed forces. **Join our network to get help starting a truth-in-recruiting program for your high school or community**, involving your youth in reaching out to their peers about military participation. We offer spiritual and practical support, resources, and connections to a national movement!



YOUTH GROUP SESSION: FAITH, MILITARY RECRUITMENT, AND WAR

- *Ask*, Have you seen or interacted with military recruiters in your high school or community? What have you said to them? What have they said to you?
- For this activity, you as the leader will stand in the middle of the room and invite youth to stand! Youth will *position themselves somewhere in the room* with relation to the statement you make. (If someone COMPLETELY agrees, they would join you right in the middle. If they are not sure but it seems appealing, they might choose to be in the middle and facing toward the center. If they are in complete disagreement, they might be in a corner or on their way out of the room.) Try a dry run with, “I like candy,” just to get the feel of it. Now use the following statements, allowing folks to move for each: “There are many Christians serving in the military.” “Jesus’ teachings mean we cannot participate in the military.” “If Jesus were alive today, he would be a U.S. Marine.”
- Follow-up questions: For each prompt, interview folks around the room. What are all the different perspectives within our group related to participating in the military? Invite different members to share their views based on where they are standing and the pose they took. How does each person connect their perspective to their faith?
- *Ask*, What does Jesus say, teach, and do about enemies, sinners, and those who are unclean? (Bible references: Matthew 5: 38-47; John 8: 2-11; John 4: 1-30; Luke 13: 10-17; Mark 2: 15-17, Mark 3: 1-6.) Ask youth to review these stories and passages in small groups, then return to the large group.
- *Ask*, What do these passages show about Jesus? How do you feel about them? How does this teach us to treat the unclean, the sinner, and the enemy in our own day?
- *Ask*, Who are our society’s enemies, or congregation’s “enemies,” or your personal enemies? How does Jesus’ teaching show that we ought to interact with them? What could be the possible impact of this teaching for your life – if you took it for real? In what way do you struggle as you think about living this out?
- *Ask*, In light of all this, how would you like to respond to military recruiters in the future? Would you consider starting a peace club in school that would help provide your classmates with information about what it really means to join the military, and other options for employment and an exciting future? Are there other ways you can think to respond?
- *Close with prayer*