

6

Religion, peace and conflict

6.1

Introduction to religion, peace and conflict

Research activity

Listen to 'The Grave' by Don McLean or find and read the lyrics. Write down your thoughts about what you have heard or read.

Right from the beginnings of human life, people have attempted to gain territory or settle disputes through fighting. Even as you read these words, somewhere in the world people are being killed as part of a **war**. While all countries have laws against murder, the rules of war are different – in war, killing is considered to be acceptable.



▲ This war scene from Assyria was made around 2700 years ago

While the Christian Church may speak out against killing, and the teachings of Jesus do not support it, many Christians have been prepared to fight for their country or their faith. But there are also many Christians who disagree with war and try to prevent it from happening. For example, Quakers will never take part in a war, regardless of the reasons for it.

There are four key concepts that you need to understand about Christian beliefs towards war: peace, justice, forgiveness and reconciliation.

■ Peace

One definition of **peace** is the absence of war. The intention of those fighting in a war is to create peace once the war is over. But this is often difficult to achieve, as the instability and resentment left after a war often leads to fighting breaking out again.

Peace can also be thought of as a feeling of happiness, wellbeing and tranquility. This may come through religious faith, especially in prayer

Objectives

- Understand war as a way of resolving differences.
- Explain the key concepts of peace, justice, forgiveness and reconciliation.

Key terms

- **war**: fighting between nations to resolve issues between them
- **peace**: an absence of conflict, which leads to happiness and harmony
- **justice**: bringing about what is right and fair, according to the law or making up for a wrong that has been committed
- **forgiveness**: showing grace and mercy and pardoning someone for what they have done wrong
- **reconciliation**: a sacrament in the Catholic Church; also, when individuals or groups restore friendly relations after conflict or disagreement

Discussion activity

Do you think Christians should be involved in fighting wars or should they try to find alternative ways of solving disputes?

★ Study tip

The four concepts are linked. When writing about one of them, it is likely that you may need to refer to at least one other.