

**SCRIPTURE**

Deuteronomy 20:16-18, Joshua 11:11-12, Romans 7:14-19, Colossians 1:19-20

**ICEBREAKER & OPENING THOUGHT**

Use this time to break the ice in your group and get people talking. The goal of these questions is to allow for a safe place for people to share and to start thinking about today's topic.

**BIBLE DISCUSSION**

These passages aren't easy to get through, but so important to look at and acknowledge. We don't always understand why these stories are here, but they are, and we must be honest about it. Acknowledging the problems we have with these stories can also show us just how much Yahweh's own values have become second nature to us – rejecting war, rejecting genocide, embracing love, embracing the value of all people as created by Yahweh – these are things we take for granted that previous generations could not.

**LIFE APPLICATION**

Some ways to think about the violence in the Old Testament is to look at the cultural practices and norms of that time and compare Israel's actions to those. When we do that, we see that this type of war, language, and attitude was common or even worse in other nations.

When the Bible uses language like, "they utterly destroyed them," or "they left no survivors," we need to recognize that this is typical war "trash talk" from the ancient world.

This is how any decisive victory was described. It is like someone recapping a victory by their favorite sports team saying, "They slaughtered them!" or "They crushed them!" This is strong language to communicate a decisive victory – not a literal account of how many people died.

Yet Yahweh has always been ahead of us, pushing us to consider more and more people as fully human – even when we don't want to. At times, we might consider that the Old Testament represents Yahweh moving people closer and closer to the standards we see Jesus enacting in the New Testament – love all people, even your enemies, etc....

But this work isn't over. We can see this in our recent history too. For centuries, half the US didn't consider enslaved African and their descendants to be fully human and used the Bible to justify this. And this is now a practice Christians find repellant. How might this be happening today?

Idols aren't just wood or metal objects in our lives. Encourage your group to think about how work, family, hobbies, success, money, etc...can all become idols when they replace Yahweh's place in our lives as the most important.

**CHALLENGE**

Violence in the Old Testament will always be there. It's a hard topic because we can't sweep it away with easy platitudes, but it can still teach us about Yahweh's patience and work in history. We are not static beings, but on the move, just as our Yahweh is on the move. How can you join in Yahweh's encompassing movement this week?

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THESE TOPICS, HERE ARE A FEW RESOURCES WE RECOMMEND**

*The God I Don't Understand* by Christopher Wright

*God Behaving Badly* by David Lamb.