

Adam Hamilton

**Facing Issues
That Divide**

Leader Guide
by Randy Horick

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**Facing Issues That Divide:
Leader Guide**

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To the Leader

Welcome to *Facing Issues That Divide*, a study designed to help individuals and groups deal with some of the political and social controversies that divide Christians today, disrupting the lives of churches, communities, and even families.

Disagreements over key issues are as old as the church itself. In his Letter to the Galatians, Paul reminds us of his fundamental disagreement with Peter over whether Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians could eat together in fellowship. Paul concludes that in spite of their disagreement, “whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith” (Galatians 6:10).

The policy issues addressed in this study—immigration, Islamic extremism, health care, and guns—are not easy to resolve. Pastor and author Adam Hamilton makes clear from the beginning that he does not propose specific policies to “solve” the problems in the areas covered by this study. Nor does he believe that one party or one viewpoint has all the answers.

Instead, this study was created to help Christians “think about how the Scriptures and our faith might connect to these issues, and to invite you to approach these issues in such a way that you listen to and are open to hearing the views of others”—to practice politics, in other words, in such a way that we keep faith.

Using This Guide with Your Group

This study includes five sessions:

1. Practicing Politics, Keeping Faith
2. Immigrants and the Bible
3. A Christian Response to Islamic Extremism
4. Christianity and Health Care
5. Christianity and Guns

The unique format of this series offers you three primary materials for each session:

- a blog post by Adam Hamilton with an overview of the subject,
- a video (viewable online) of Hamilton’s sermon on the topic, and
- this PDF Leader Guide that will help you facilitate the sessions.

Using Your Time Effectively

The largest single component of each lesson is Adam Hamilton’s sermon. The sermons are central to approaching an informed and productive discussion of the topic, and they should be seen by all participants in the group.

The sermons run between 40 and 48 minutes in length. Watching each video and discussing the issues it raises require between 75 and 90 minutes to ensure that your session is meaningful for the group.

Therefore, how you organize your class sessions will need to center around the length of time you have available to meet.

Many Sunday school classes meet for one hour or less. Other groups meet during the week, when participants may have more time.

If your session can last 90 minutes (or longer):

Watch the video as a group. Then use the questions in this Leader Guide to facilitate a discussion on the topic and on the Scriptures that Hamilton uses for his sermon texts. Each session also includes one or more optional activities if you have more time. This 90-minute format is ideal, since it enables your group to cover the issue meaningfully in one session. If you do not have a 90-minute block of time on Sunday morning, you may choose to gather on Sunday evening or a weeknight, either at the church or in someone's home.

If your session is one hour or less:

- You may wish to extend this study to ten sessions rather than only five. In this case, your group can watch the sermon video in one session, then discuss it in the following session.
- Alternatively, you can provide participants with Hamilton's blog post on each week's topic. The blog includes a link to the sermon video. Have your participants watch the sermon individually, prior to your group session. Then, use the hour when you are together to discuss the content.

Preparing for the Session

- Pray for the leading of the Holy Spirit as you prepare for the study. Pray for discernment for yourself and for each member of the study group.
- Review the sermon video, the Scripture texts, and the discussion questions. Identify which questions you plan to cover. If your session will last for an hour or longer, consider which if any optional activities you may include. However, be prepared to adjust the discussion as group members interact and questions arise.
- Prepare the room where the group will meet. To facilitate the discussion, group members should be seated around a table or in a circle so they can see one another. If the group will be viewing the sermon video during the session, make arrangements for video display or projection.
- Have a supply of Bibles handy if you plan to read and discuss the accompanying Scripture texts.
- Reread the ground rules for the discussion and hints on facilitating a productive discussion. You may wish to review these ground rules again with the group after viewing the video and before the discussion begins.

Helpful Hints for the Discussion

- Foster a climate of openness, encouraging group members to participate as they feel comfortable.
- For some participants, examining these controversial issues may pose a real challenge. Some may have had difficult personal experiences with these issues. Some may have very strong opinions on the subject—and on what Christians should believe about the subject—while others may shy away from the discussion because of an orientation that religion and political issues should not mix. Be sensitive to all these feelings. Watch carefully for signs of discomfort or uncertainty in those who are silent, and encourage these persons to express their views honestly.
- If no one responds right away to your questions, don't be afraid of silence. Count silently to ten, then say something like, "Would anyone like to go first?" If no one speaks, venture an answer yourself and invite comments.
- Encourage multiple answers and viewpoints to a question before moving on.
- To help give a discussion greater depth, probe further if someone provides an opinion without offering a reason behind it. Ask, "Why do you believe that?" or "Can you say more about that?"
- Monitor your own contributions. If you are doing most of the talking, back off so that you do not train the group to listen rather than speak up.
- Remember that you do not have all the answers. Your job is to keep the discussion going and encourage participation.

Establishing Ground Rules

Especially when dealing with controversial issues, it is important to set some basic ground rules for discussions. You should plan on reviewing these rules together after viewing the first video. As the leader, it is your job to keep the conversation within these guidelines so that each person's perspective is heard and valued.

1. Do not insist (or expect) that everyone will agree, either with your personal opinion or with the opinion of the majority. Do not seek to push everyone toward a consensus view of the issue; that's not the purpose of this study. The purpose, rather, is to consider the various, sincerely held opinions on these issues and why so many Christians take differing views on them.
2. Never call into question the Christian faith or patriotism of anyone in the group who does not agree with you or others.
3. Listen respectfully. Don't interrupt while someone else is talking. After the speaker finishes, allow a couple of seconds of silence before the next person starts to talk. This space allows a moment for everyone to consider the words of each speaker.
4. No raised voices. Firmly held views are welcome; shouting is not.

Session 1

Practicing Politics, Keeping Faith

Session 1 focuses on the divisiveness in our country today and on how Christians, by “keeping faith,” can model a constructive way of living together even when we disagree.

Preparing for the Session

- Review Adam Hamilton’s blog post and sermon video.
- If participants are to view the sermon video prior to the session, e-mail the blog post to each of them that includes the link to the sermon.
- Using this Leader Guide, review “Key Points from Adam Hamilton’s Sermon” and “About the Content Expert” (below).
- Read through the discussion questions, activities, and optional activities. Identify which items you plan to cover. However, be prepared to adjust your plan as group members interact and questions arise.
- Pray for the leading of the Holy Spirit as you prepare for the study. Pray for discernment for yourself and for each member of the study group.

Key Points from Adam Hamilton’s Sermon

1. Many of us approach talking about political issues in church with trepidation. Because these are divisive issues, we don’t want our pastors telling us that God takes a particular side.
2. Neither political party is “God’s party,” and neither has all of the answers.
3. Increasing polarization is becoming one of the greatest threats to our nation.
4. The problem is not just in Washington. It is pervasive.
5. We are so polarized that, when someone articulates a view opposite of our own, we sometimes assume the worst and even impute evil motives to them.
6. Social media, talk radio, and twenty-four-hour news stations have exacerbated the problem.
7. The problem isn’t the sharing of opinions; it is the assumption that we have all the answers.
8. The Golden Rule should apply to political discussions as it does to all other aspects of our lives.
9. The word *religion* comes from Latin roots that mean “to connect together.” We need to practice a religion based on love and mutual respect that keeps the faith and connects people together.

We’ve forgotten how to have thoughtful, respectful discussions and dialogue. We share our thoughts on social media without thinking about how our messages might affect others. Rather than winning others over, we push them away.

—from Adam Hamilton’s blog

About the Content Expert

In each video, Adam Hamilton interviews one or more people whose professional experience gives them added perspective on the controversial issue he is discussing. Below is some brief background on a person whom Hamilton interviewed for this sermon.

Mark Gerzon, founder and president of Mediators Foundation, is an experienced facilitator in high-conflict zones. He has worked with numerous organizations around the world, from the US Congress to multinational corporations and the United Nations. Concerned about increasing polarization in American communities, he has spent much of the past two decades in a variety of efforts aimed at deepening dialogue across the political spectrum. These efforts include Mark's role as head facilitator for bipartisan retreats for members of Congress.

During the Session

Open with Prayer

Lord, we yearn for deeper understanding of your will for us and how to apply it to the issues that divide so many people in our society. Open our hearts and minds today, and free us from ways of thinking that may hinder us from hearing your Word. Amen.

Watch the Sermon Video

Prepare the group to watch the video:

- Remind everyone that this video of Adam Hamilton's sermon will lay the foundation for discussing several specific issues in the sessions to come.
- Ask the participants to watch especially for what Hamilton says about the origins of the word *religion*—and consider what practices we might follow today to be true to the original spirit of the word when it comes to addressing controversial issues.

After the Sermon Video

Discuss:

- How comfortable are you with discussions of politics in church? Why? Describe a time when such a discussion made you uncomfortable. What was discomfoting about it?
- Do you agree with Hamilton's view that polarization is a growing threat to our nation? If so, in what ways does it pose a threat?
- Where do you see polarization played out in your community? in your neighborhood? in your family?
- If you believe that polarization has grown worse, what factors do you believe have contributed to the problem?
- Hamilton says that people today sometimes assume the worst about those who disagree with them politically and even impute evil motives to them. Have you seen this phenomenon? Where? When have you been the victim of it? How did it make you feel? When have you been guilty of it yourself?

- If you refuse to believe the worst about those who disagree with you politically, how do you view and in some cases counter the influence of social media and talk radio?
- Where do you see signs of hope? How can you help build on them?
- Is there room for the Golden Rule in our politics today? If you believe strongly that the ways in which a particular political issue is resolved could be vital to our nation's future, and that your position on that issue is correct, shouldn't you fight as hard as you can for it?
- Hamilton touches on the origin of the word *religion*. How can we practice our faith in a way that "connects together"? How might that affect the way you live?

Explore the Word

As part of your session, you may wish to spend a few minutes examining the Scripture passages that Adam Hamilton used in his sermon. Even if you do not plan to bring these Scriptures into your discussion, read and think about them as you prepare for this lesson.

[Then Jesus said,] "In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets." (Matthew 7:12)

As you reflect on this passage:

Just as he did in other teachings in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus reinterprets well-known commands. What we call the Golden Rule had previously been formulated in the negative: do *not* do to others what you would *not* wish done to you. Here, Jesus casts the command in the positive, in a way that calls upon his listeners not just to avoid doing wrong but actively to work toward the well-being of others. And he reminds them that this teaching is not something radically new, but that it reflects the Law of Moses and the prophets who spoke for God.

Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. (Ephesians 4:29-32)

As you reflect on this passage:

In Ephesians 4, as in 1 Corinthians 12, Paul compares the Christian community to a collection of differing parts of a human body that are "knit together" with Christ as the head. With this in mind, the behavior of believers toward one another affects not only their individual relationships but the well-being of the entire body. Therefore, Paul says, when disagreeing with others, don't shy away from telling the truth; do so in a loving way that helps build up the body rather than damage it.

Know this, my dear brothers and sisters: everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to grow angry. This is because an angry person doesn't produce God's righteousness. (James 1:19-20 CEB)

As you reflect on this passage:

In these verses and the larger passage, James addresses Christian believers with a reminder that the Gospel has been “planted” in them (v. 21), and that their words and actions reflect their own witness. In the extended passage, he admonishes Christians to “be doers of the word and not only hearers who mislead themselves” (v. 22).

Questions about the Scriptures you may wish to discuss:

- How do these Scripture passages relate to the issues raised in the sermon?
- What new insights did you gain into these passages from hearing this sermon?
- If we are to speak only in ways that are useful for building up, avoiding “evil talk” as the writer of Ephesians directs, how would that affect the way you talk about political issues with others? How would it affect the way you use the Internet and social media to comment on political issues?
- How would you hear Paul’s words about the kind of love that puts the interests of others ahead of our own interests and apply them to divisive issues in our country?

Close with Prayer

O God, your Word reminds us that we are all very different people and that we become one body in Christ through the love for one another that knits everything together in harmony. Kindle that spirit within us as we approach the issues that divide so many people in this nation, and as we seek to live in faith amid our neighbors with whom we may disagree. Amen.

Optional Activities If You Have More Time

Consider additional Scriptures in your discussion.

Along with the previous Scriptures that Adam Hamilton used in his sermon, here are some additional passages that relate in various ways to the subject “keeping faith.” If you have longer than one hour for your sessions, you may wish to read these Scriptures as a group and include them in your discussion. Consider together how these passages shed light on the topic:

- Ephesians 4:14-15
- Philippians 2:3-4
- Galatians 5:13-15
- Proverbs 20:3
- Galatians 2:11-14
- Matthew 5:9

Illustrate the effect of drawing closer to God.

Lead the group in an exercise at the end of your session. By way of background, explain that one of the Desert Fathers—members of Christian communities in the Sinai during the early centuries after Jesus' ministry—became concerned about unChristian behavior by his fellow monks toward one another. To help his brothers think about how their behavior affected their relationship with God, he created the following activity.

Ask your group to stand and form a circle. Find a space that gives everyone adequate room to move forward and backward. (If no such space is available to you, then create this illustration on paper or a blackboard rather than acting it out.) In the middle of the circle, designate a point that represents God. Now have everyone in the circle take two or three steps backward. Point out that, as everyone moved farther away from God, they also moved farther from one another. Now have everyone return to their starting point and take two or three steps toward the center of the circle—and invite them to note how drawing closer toward God brings everyone closer to one another. Invite participants to remember the lesson of this exercise as they deal with political issues that divide us.

Session 2

Immigrants and the Bible

Session 2 focuses on the controversial issue of immigration and what the Bible says about the subject.

Preparing for the Session

- Review Adam Hamilton's blog post and sermon video.
- If participants are to view the sermon video prior to the session, e-mail the blog post to each of them that includes the link to the sermon.
- Using this Leader Guide, review "Key Points from Adam Hamilton's Sermon" and "About the Content Experts" (below).
- Read through the discussion questions, activities, and optional activities. Identify which items you plan to cover. However, be prepared to adjust your plan as group members interact and questions arise.
- Pray for the leading of the Holy Spirit as you prepare for the study. Pray for discernment for yourself and for each member of the study group.

Key Points from Adam Hamilton's Sermon

1. Most Americans are descendants of people who immigrated to this land seeking freedom and opportunity. [There are, however, millions of African Americans whose forebearers came to this country against their will, as slaves, who make up a significant exception.]
2. We often have struggled with accepting those who came here for exactly the same reasons that our own forebears did. The same fears about immigrants that many Americans have today have been found among every generation of Americans going back for at least 175 years.
3. Many argue that undocumented aliens take jobs away from Americans. Others counter that these immigrants perform work that native-born Americans are unwilling to do (at least not for the wages being offered). Undocumented aliens contribute to our economy by buying goods and services. Many have children who were born here. On the other hand, they have violated our immigration rules.
4. Most Americans feel some ambiguity on this issue. We know we cannot allow unlimited numbers of people into our country. But we also feel compassion for people who risk their lives to come here, who work hard and contribute to our society.
5. The Bible does not function as a policy manual that spells out a solution on the issue of immigration. What it can tell us is the heart, character, and will of God with regard to immigrants at the time the Bible was written.
6. The Bible contains more than 150 references to immigrants, strangers, and aliens, beginning in Genesis with Abraham and Sarah.
7. The passage from Leviticus 19 shows that God was concerned for the aliens who would live in the land of Israel.

8. Matthew 25 makes clear the call of Jesus to welcome the alien (*xenos*, in Greek) rather than being xenophobic. We must recognize—and resist—our own tendencies toward xenophobia.
9. We need to review our current policies toward immigration. There must be a way in which we can address undocumented aliens that both respects our laws and shows mercy.

We are a nation divided. . . . A recent National Public Radio report noted, “Immigration is shaping up to be one of the most contentious and emotional topics in the 2016 presidential race.”

—from Adam Hamilton’s blog

About the Content Experts

In each video, Adam Hamilton interviews one or more people whose professional experience gives them added perspective on the controversial issue he is discussing. Below is some brief background on two people whom Hamilton interviewed for this sermon.

Roger McCrummen is the managing partner of a Kansas City–based law firm, the McCrummen Immigration Law Group. He has experience in family-based and humanitarian-based immigration law, with emphasis on aspects of the law that relate to employment issues, such as work visas and green cards. As someone who holds both a law degree (from New York University) and a masters of divinity (ranking first in his class at Princeton Theological Seminary), he brings both a legal and a biblical perspective to this controversial subject. He speaks frequently about immigration law at legal conferences as well as at churches and universities.

Bill Gordon is president of Signature Landscaping in Kansas City. He has more than three decades of experience in the field and has testified before Congress about the landscaping industry. Because Signature Landscaping hires a number of documented guest workers through the United States’ H-2B visa program, Bill has developed particular insights into the issues faced by those coming to this country from other nations.

During the Session

Open with Prayer

O Lord, your Word reminds us that none of us is in our home here on earth, because our true home is with you. As we explore the difficult issue of immigration today, help us remember what, as fellow strangers, we share in common with all the other human beings made in your image. Amen.

Watch the Sermon Video

Prepare the group to watch the video:

- Remind everyone that immigration is the topic of Adam Hamilton’s message today.
- Ask the group to watch especially for what the Bible says about strangers, aliens, and immigrants.

After the Sermon Video

Discuss:

- If the Bible calls us to welcome the strangers in our land, does that mean we must have an open-border policy? If we can't take in everyone, how do we draw the line? How do our existing laws draw the line?
- If you learn that someone is in this country illegally, what action should you take, based on your understanding of the Bible's message? Should you do nothing, even though the person is violating the law? Should you report this person to the authorities, even if that risks violating the call to welcome the stranger?
- Does welcoming the alien and the stranger apply only to those who have entered this country by legal means? If so, why? If not, why not?
- Does the person's reason for entering this country illegally make a difference? For example, should someone who came here to escape violence in his or her own country be welcomed more than someone who came here purely for economic opportunity?
- Adam Hamilton says we must recognize and resist "our own xenophobic tendencies." Where do you see those tendencies in our community? in our church? in our own ways of thinking and acting?
- According to Hamilton, what does the Bible say about the treatment of strangers and aliens? If, as Hamilton argues, the Bible does not serve as a policy guide for solutions on immigration, how does the Bible's message affect your own views on this issue?
- While the Bible calls us to love the alien, a persistent problem for ancient Israel involved too-comfortable relationships with people from neighboring lands who worshiped foreign gods. (Solomon, for example, allowed idols in the Temple in order to please his foreign wives, whom he had married to help preserve peace with their native countries.) Is it legitimate to be concerned about the influence of newcomers in our communities who practice non-Christian faiths? If so, how do we balance that concern with the call to love the stranger as ourselves?
- The Holy Family were refugees and immigrants to Egypt, where they fled to escape King Herod's murderous intentions. Does their story influence how you might view immigrants seeking to escape violence in their home countries today? If so, how?

Explore the Word

As part of your session, you may wish to spend a few minutes examining the Scripture passages that Adam Hamilton used in his sermon. Even if you do not plan to bring these Scriptures into your discussion, read and think about them as you prepare for this lesson.

When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God."

(Leviticus 19:33-34)

As you reflect on this passage:

As Jesus describes them, the two greatest commandments are to “love God” and “love your neighbor as yourself.” This passage from the Law of Moses uses the same words, substituting “alien” for “neighbor.” The implication is that people are to treat the alien in their land just as they would treat someone who has always been their neighbor and who shares their traditions and culture. (It is worth noting here that the Israelites had not yet settled in the Promised Land of Canaan when they received this commandment from God. It was a land that, as with everything else, ultimately belonged not to the people but to God, and God was setting up rules for the people to follow when they inhabited this land of promise.)

What is implied in Leviticus is made clear by Jesus in Luke 10. When the lawyer asks Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus answers with a story about a Samaritan, someone his audience would have seen as both a despised foreigner and a religious apostate.

[Then the Son of Man said to the righteous], “I was a stranger and you welcomed me.”
(Matthew 25:35)

As you reflect on this passage:

This passage is part of a much longer statement in which Jesus equates himself with those who are infirm, those who can’t afford adequate clothing, and those who are in prison. In fact, Jesus suggests, we will ultimately be judged by how we respond to the plight of “the least of these.” Jesus’ words here suggest that the two greatest commandments—to love God and love our neighbor—are so closely intertwined that they are impossible to separate. If we fail to act out of love for our neighbors who are hungry, or naked, or imprisoned, or are strangers, then we have failed to show love for God.

Questions about the Scriptures you may wish to discuss:

- How do these Scripture passages relate to the issues raised in the sermon?
- What new insights did you gain into these passages from hearing this sermon?
- In terms of your daily life, what does it mean to “love the alien” and “welcome the stranger”?
- In dealing with aliens in their midst, the Israelites are called to remember that they, too, were once aliens in a foreign land. Has there ever been a time in your own life when you were able to take a more understanding view of someone who might have been looked down on by society because you had gone through a similar experience yourself? How did your past experience affect your perceptions and actions?

Close with Prayer

O God, give us wisdom and courage in answering your call to love our neighbor, remembering that in everyone we meet we see a reflection of you. Amen.

Optional Activities If You Have More Time

Consider additional Scriptures in your discussion.

Along with the Scriptures above that Adam Hamilton used in his sermon, here are some additional passages that relate in various ways to the subject of immigrants in our land. If you have longer than one hour for your sessions, you may wish to read these Scriptures as a group and include them in your discussion. Consider together how these passages shed light on the topic:

- Genesis 15:12-13
- Romans 12:13
- Romans 13:1-4
- Hebrews 13:1-2
- Deuteronomy 10:17-19
- Hebrews 11:8-16
- Deuteronomy 24:17
- Luke 10:25-37
- Ruth 2:1-7

Consider immigration as it relates to current events.

In advance of the session, download some current news stories from the Internet about immigration. Summarize the content of these stories for the group as an introduction to the topic. Ask participants what they have heard or read about the immigration issue. What are some of the issues of contention within the larger issue? How is immigration affecting your community or your state?

Session 3

A Christian Response to Islamic Extremism

Session 3 focuses on some ways Christians can approach and respond to Islamic extremism.

Preparing for the Session

- Review Adam Hamilton's blog post and sermon video.
- If participants are to view the sermon video prior to the session, e-mail the blog post to each of them that includes the link to the sermon.
- Using this Leader Guide, review "Key Points from Adam Hamilton's Sermon" and "About the Content Experts" (below).
- Read through the discussion questions, activities, and optional activities. Identify which items you plan to cover. However, be prepared to adjust your plan as group members interact and questions arise.
- Prepare the room where the group will meet. To facilitate the discussion, group members should be seated around a table or in a circle so they can see one another. If the group will be viewing the sermon video during the session, make arrangements for video display or projection.
- Have a supply of Bibles handy if you plan to read and discuss the accompanying Scripture texts.
- Reread the ground rules for the discussion and hints on facilitating a productive discussion. You may wish to review these ground rules again with the group after viewing the video and before the discussion begins.
- Pray for the leading of the Holy Spirit as you prepare for the study. Pray for discernment for yourself and for each member of the study group.

Key Points from Adam Hamilton's Sermon

1. Terrorist acts by Islamic extremists have heightened our concerns about future attacks. These acts have contributed to fear and suspicion of all Muslims.
2. Though the Quran contains passages about fighting, most Muslims today read them the same way Christians read stories from Joshua in our Bible about the killing of Canaanite men, women, and children; that is, today most Muslims do not see these passages as commands to kill those who do not share their faith. Islamic extremists, on the other hand, see the Quran's passages about the rules of engagement in wars from Mohammed's time as permission for violent activities.

3. The Five Pillars of Islam: (1) There is only one God; (2) Pray five times a day; (3) Give to support the needy; (4) Fast from dawn till sundown during the month of Ramadan; and (5) If possible make a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a lifetime.
4. Just as there are divisions among Christians, the same is true of Muslims, whose faith has its own liberals, moderates, conservatives, fundamentalists, and extremists. Most Muslims in America fall into one of the first three camps. Extremism goes further than fundamentalism, often advocating the elimination of those who disagree.
5. ISIS (the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) truly believes what it professes: that it is engaged in a conflict to bring about the end times. The primary enemies of ISIS are other Muslims who do not share their beliefs. The Islamic view of end times involves victory in a climactic battle in Syria among all the nations of the world and God's people.
6. Whatever the military solution to ISIS in the Middle East may be, our aim on American soil must be to exemplify a better way of acting toward others, serving as a model for that very small number of Muslims who might be drawn toward ISIS's extreme views.
7. Fighting ISIS at home means showing what it means to be Christians: loving our neighbor, going out of our way to express hospitality to Muslims, assuming the best about them and not the worst.
8. Paul, in his Letter to the Romans, expresses how we are to wage this spiritual war: never avenging ourselves, never repaying evil for evil, overcoming evil with good.

Most of us believe it's wrong to judge an entire category of people based the actions of a relatively small number of extremists within that group. At the same time, terrorist attacks by Islamic extremists within our midst have heightened our concerns about future attacks.

—from Adam Hamilton's blog

About the Content Experts

In each video, Adam Hamilton interviews one or more people whose professional experience gives them added perspective on the controversial issue he is discussing. Below is some brief background on two people whom Hamilton interviewed for this sermon.

Mahnaz Shabbir is president of Shabbir Advisers, a strategic management consulting company based in Kansas City. Locally, nationally, and internationally, she has given hundreds of lectures on diversity issues. Before starting her own firm, she was an executive with Carondelet Health, a large health system in Kansas City. She is author of an article, "I Am an American Muslim Woman," that was syndicated throughout the United States.

Brian Steed is a lieutenant colonel in the US Army who also spent eight years as an officer in the US Foreign Service focused on the Middle East. He has been an officer in the Jordanian army, a liaison to the Israeli Defense Forces, and a military adviser in Iraq. He has traveled to nearly every Arabic-speaking country. He is the author of several books on Islam, including *Bees and Spiders: Applied Cultural Awareness and the Art of Cross-Cultural Influence*. He teaches at the US Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

During the Session

Open with Prayer

O Lord, we are saddened to recognize that much evil has been done in your name, by those who call you God and by those who call you Allah. Even as we strive to keep our neighbors and families safe, help us nevertheless not to judge others based only on their religion or nationality, but to live in the way you showed us through your son, Jesus. Amen.

Watch the Sermon Video

Prepare the group to watch the video:

- Remind everyone that Adam Hamilton's message today is about a Christian response to Islamic extremism.
- Remind everyone that the purpose of this session is not to get into an extended debate about specific policies.
- Ask the participants, as they watch, to look for ways to defeat Islamic extremism on American soil by living out their faith.

After the Sermon Video

Discuss:

- Describe some of the fears that have been voiced about Muslims in the United States. In what ways do some of these fears seem unjustified? In what ways might they seem justified?
- Based on Hamilton's sermon, where do you see common ground between Islam and Christianity?
- Hamilton references passages in the Old Testament in which God appears to call for the slaughter of men, women, and children. As a Christian, how do you view these passages? What, if any, guidance do they offer for your life and faith? In reading these passages, would it be fair for non-Christians to claim that our religious texts condone genocide? Why or why not?
- Can you think of examples of Christian groups that have hurt others, physically or otherwise, in the name of our religion? How do you as a Christian feel when others criticize Christianity as a whole for the actions of a smaller group of fellow Christians?
- Do you agree with Hamilton's view that living out our faith is a way to combat extremism here in America? Why or why not? If so, describe a specific way in which living out your faith might affect the situation.
- When people have legitimate fears about attacks by Islamic extremists, how do we apply our faith in ways that balance those concerns for people's safety with our belief that it is wrong to judge someone only the basis of religion or nationality?
- To illustrate the shock that must have registered in the minds of Jesus' listeners, some present-day commentators have retold his parable of the good Samaritan by substituting an Islamic

fundamentalist in the role of the hated Samaritan. How would your hearing the story in this way add to your insight into Jesus' message? Would the change make it more difficult to accept Jesus' message? Why?

Explore the Word

As part of your session, you may wish to spend a few minutes examining a scriptural passage that Adam Hamilton used in his sermon. Even if you do not plan to bring this Scripture into your discussion, read and think about it as you prepare for this lesson.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:14-21)

As you reflect on this passage:

Romans is Paul's letter of introduction to a Christian community that has been experiencing division between Jewish and non-Jewish followers of Jesus. In contrast to the situation he confronted with the Galatians and others, in Rome it is the Jewish Christians who have been made to feel somehow inferior to their Gentile brothers and sisters in Christ. Paul's advice in this chapter applies not only to the situation within the church in Rome but to how all Christians should interact with one another and with the dominant pagan culture. As scriptural authority, Paul here cites two passages from Jewish Scriptures, Deuteronomy 32:35 and Proverbs 25:21-2.

Questions about the Scripture you may wish to discuss:

- If Paul is writing to Christians who come from different religious backgrounds (Jewish and Gentile), how might his words apply to relationships today between American Christians and American Muslims?
- How would you interpret Paul's directive to live peaceably with others "so far as it depends on you"? How far are we called to go in our efforts toward peace before it no longer depends on us?
- Where in your life have you seen good overcoming evil by refusing to repay evil with evil?

Close with Prayer

O God, give us the courage to repay evil with good, and give us the faith to trust the outcome to you. Amen.

Optional Activities If You Have More Time

Consider additional Scriptures in your discussion.

Along with the Scripture above that Adam Hamilton used in his sermon, here are some additional passages that relate in various ways to the subject of today's sermon. If you have longer than one hour for your sessions, you may wish to read these Scriptures as a group and include them in your discussion. Consider together how these passages shed light on the topic:

- Matthew 15:21-28
- Hebrews 13:1-2
- James 4:11-12
- Jonah 4:11
- 1 Peter 3:8-17
- 1 John 3:13-16

Discuss the headlines.

Perhaps as an icebreaker for the discussion, invite participants to recall recent stories in the media about terrorist attacks by Islamic extremists. Ask: How do these stories make you feel? How do you want to respond? How do they affect your view of Islam and of Muslims?

Now, invite participants to recall recent stories in the media about Muslims on commercial air flights or elsewhere who were profiled and wrongly suspected of being terrorists. Ask: How do these stories make you feel? How do they affect your view of Muslims?

Ask for a show of hands regarding how many in the group personally know any Muslims, perhaps as neighbors or as co-workers. Ask whether these relationships have affected their views of Islam and of Muslims.

Session 4

Christianity and Health Care

Session 4 focuses on how Christianity relates to the controversial issue of health care.

Preparing for the Session

- Review Adam Hamilton's blog post and sermon video.
- If participants are to view the sermon video prior to the session, e-mail the blog post to each of them that includes the link to the sermon.
- Using this Leader Guide, review "Key Points from Adam Hamilton's Sermon" and "About the Content Experts" (below).
- Read through the discussion questions, activities, and optional activities. Identify which items you plan to cover. However, be prepared to adjust your plan as group members interact and questions arise.
- Prepare the room where the group will meet. To facilitate the discussion, group members should be seated around a table or in a circle so they can see one another. If the group will be viewing the sermon video during the session, make arrangements for video display or projection.
- Have a supply of Bibles handy if you plan to read and discuss the accompanying Scripture texts.
- Re-read the ground rules for the discussion and the hints on facilitating a productive discussion. You may wish to review these ground rules again with the group after viewing the video and before the discussion begins.
- Pray for the leading of the Holy Spirit as you prepare for the study. Pray for discernment for yourself and for each member of the study group.

Key Points from Adam Hamilton's Sermon

1. The political debate is not about whether government should be involved in health care; there is general agreement that government has a role to play. The question is how government should play that role.
2. What does Christianity have to do with health care? For starters, one of the most common activities in which Jesus engages, according to the Gospels, is healing the sick. In the parable of the good Samaritan, Jesus offered an example of what Christian love looks like.
3. Following Jesus' teaching, early Christians made a practice of caring for the sick. From the time of Emperor Constantine through John Wesley's day and beyond, Christians have built and run hospitals to provide care for those who could not afford it.
4. Health care changed in the twentieth century. Hospitals no longer were primarily for the poor. We saw the rise of prepaid health insurance, which most people who were covered received through their employers. To cover those who were no longer working, the federal government launched Medicare. Medicaid was created for those too poor to afford insurance.

5. As health care costs skyrocketed, many employers were no longer able to afford insurance coverage for their employees. The number of uninsured Americans rose, creating the conditions that led to the passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA).
6. The health care experts Hamilton interviewed believe that access for all Americans to affordable health care coverage is a moral imperative and an economic necessity. Whether we retain or repeal the ACA, the problems it sought to address must continue to be addressed.
7. Our faith should impact our thinking about health care—our own and that of our neighbor—in at least three ways:
 - The Bible teaches that our bodies are a gift from God, a “temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 6:19), and that taking care of our bodies glorifies God.
 - Our physical bodies are only our temporary homes. Bearing that faith statement in mind may affect how we approach decisions about how we use medical care in the final days of our lives.
 - Our faith should compel us to care about the vulnerable.

[On the subject of health care,] Christians may not all agree about the answers, but they do care about the issues raised by these questions.

—from Adam Hamilton’s blog

About the Content Experts

In each video, Adam Hamilton interviews one or more people whose professional experience gives them added perspective on the controversial issue he is discussing. Below is some brief background on two people whom Hamilton interviewed for this sermon.

Doug Henley, M.D., is CEO of the American Academy of Family Physicians, which represents more than 120,000 physicians and medical students nationwide. He also serves on the board of directors of the Patient-Centered Primary Care Collaborative—a coalition of businesses, consumers, and health care organizations that have joined together to advocate for the patient-centered medical home. In addition, Dr. Henley is a founding member of the Ambulatory Care Quality Association Steering Committee, whose mission is to improve health care quality and patient safety.

Samuel Turner is associate dean at the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Medicine and served for ten years as CEO of the Shawnee Mission Healthcare System. He has more than twenty-five years experience as a senior-level executive in large health care organizations. During his eleven years of leadership at Shawnee, the facility earned top ranking for patient satisfaction and was named multiple times as one of the top one hundred hospitals in the United States.

During the Session

Open with Prayer

O God, open our eyes, our minds, and our hearts to hear and understand your Word for us today. Amen.

Watch the Sermon Video

Prepare the group to watch the video:

- Remind everyone that Adam Hamilton's message today is about how our Christian faith relates to the debate over health care in this country.
- Remind everyone that our purpose today is not to get into an extensive debate about health care policy and solutions.
- Ask the participants, as they watch, to look especially for ways that Scripture can inform our views on health care.

After the Sermon Video

Discuss:

- How have your own experiences, or those of someone you know, influenced your thinking about the adequacy of Americans' access to health care?
- According to Hamilton, what issues did the Affordable Care Act attempt to address? How serious do you believe these issues were in our society? From your observation, what serious issues remain since the act was implemented?
- Based on your recall of Jesus' healing miracles, why do you believe he cured the sick rather than allowing nature to take its course?
- Hamilton suggests that, because Christians regard our bodies as only our temporary, earthly homes, this understanding should affect how we approach end-of-life care. Do you agree? Why or why not? Some Christians take this view to an extreme and believe we should not use medical care at all to heal the body (or, at the other extreme, they favor allowing assisted suicide for the terminally ill). Where can we draw the line? What principles do we use?
- Hamilton says that one way our faith should affect our thinking about health care is that we should take seriously the call to treat our bodies as a temple and a gift from God. Hamilton also says we should show compassion for our neighbors in need. But what happens when those values seem to conflict—when people need help but are suffering from health conditions for which their own behavior (for example, poor diet, lack of exercise, smoking, substance abuse) may have been a contributing factor?
- Jesus did not attempt to cure every sick person in Judea and Galilee; he healed only those whom he encountered. He also said the poor would always be with us. In light of these facts, how do you think we are to understand our obligation to help others?
- Some Christians argue that offering charitable assistance (such as health care) to people who can't afford it for themselves should be undertaken by individuals but not by society as a whole. Others say that, in a democracy, Christians should vote for a society that reflects their own principles, such as assisting those who cannot afford health care coverage. Is there common ground between these two views? Did the video affect your thinking about these two viewpoints? How?

Explore the Word

As part of your session, you may wish to spend a few minutes examining a scriptural passage that Adam Hamilton used in his sermon. Even if you do not plan to bring this Scripture into your discussion, read and think about it as you prepare for this lesson.

“A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.’ Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

(Luke 10:30-37)

As you reflect on this passage:

Jesus told this parable in response to a simple question from an expert on religious law: “And who is my neighbor?” His story was probably not the answer most of his listeners expected, since the person held up as an example of loving a neighbor was a Samaritan. Religious people among Jesus’ audience had been taught to view Samaritans as religious apostates. So despised were Samaritans in Judea that, if an observant Jew encountered one while walking on the road, the Jew would not even allow a footstep to fall within the Samaritan’s shadow. By the end of the parable, the expert on religious law was able to answer his own question: The neighbor is the one who showed mercy. And then Jesus issued a call that echoes to all of us: “Go and do likewise.”

Questions about the Scriptures you may wish to discuss:

- Based on this parable, how would you define mercy? How does your definition here compare with the way you usually have thought of that term?
- What does it mean to show mercy? Describe a time when you have seen mercy shown in the way Jesus applies the idea here.
- Everyone knew that the road from Jerusalem to Jericho was a dangerous place. Was it incautious for the man who was attacked to have traveled alone? Wouldn’t he bear some of the responsibility for being attacked by putting himself at such risk? Why doesn’t Jesus bring this up in his parable?

- Martin Luther King, Jr. once used this parable to illustrate what he regarded as the difference between justice and mercy. Mercy, he said, was helping the man attacked by robbers. Justice, by contrast, was making the road safe so others wouldn't be attacked. What do you think of Dr. King's argument? How might it apply to an issue such as health care today?
- If showing mercy is God's vision for how we should interact with one another, and if justice is about following God's vision, then couldn't you say that mercy is justice?

Close with Prayer

Lord, we don't always know the best course of action, but teach our hearts what it means to be a neighbor and to act from a desire to show mercy, practice your justice, and walk humbly with you. Amen.

Optional Activities If You Have More Time

Consider additional Scriptures in your discussion.

Along with the Scripture above that Adam Hamilton used in his sermon, here are some additional passages that relate in various ways to the subject of health care. If you have longer than one hour for your sessions, you may wish to read these Scriptures as a group and include them in your discussion. Consider together how these passages shed light on the topic:

- 1 Corinthians 6:19-20
- 2 Corinthians 4:7-5:9
- Mark 5:25-34
- Mark 7:31-37
- Mark 1:40-42

Invite people to share their experiences.

Either directly or through family members, most of us have had interactions with the health care system that touch on one or more of the issues that the Affordable Care Act sought to address. Invite participants to share their experiences if they are comfortable doing so.

Conduct an exercise in rationing care.

Present your group with four hypothetical patients who have life-threatening conditions. Explain that there are enough funds to provide treatment for only two of these patients. The group must decide which patients to treat:

1. A fifty-five-year-old man with Stage 3 colon cancer. With treatment, there is a 60 percent chance that the patient will be alive in five years.
2. A twenty-eight-year-old nurse contracted Ebola when she was on a medical mission to help address an epidemic in Liberia. With treatment, there is an 80 percent chance of survival.

3. A five-year-old boy with leukemia whose only chance for survival now rests with an experimental treatment. Doctors believe there is a 20 percent chance of success.
4. A seventy-year-old woman, who is raising her grandchildren, is suffering from kidney failure brought on by diabetes. Her survival depends on receiving a transplanted kidney, though a new kidney will not cure her diabetes.

Explain that, because of finite resources, health care decisions sometimes come down to questions of cost and potential effectiveness. Ask the group to discuss how they would go about choosing which two patients receive treatment. What additional information about each patient might help them make a more informed decision?

Session 5

Christianity and Guns

Session 5 focuses on how Christianity relates to the controversial issue of guns and gun control.

Preparing for the Session

- Review Adam Hamilton's blog post and sermon video.
- If participants are to view the sermon video prior to the session, e-mail the blog post to each of them that includes the link to the sermon.
- Using this Leader Guide, review "Key Points from Adam Hamilton's Sermon" and "About the Content Experts" (below).
- Read through the discussion questions, activities, and optional activities. Identify which items you plan to cover. However, be prepared to adjust your plan as group members interact and questions arise.
- Prepare the room where the group will meet. To facilitate the discussion, group members should be seated around a table or in a circle so they can see one another. If the group will be viewing the sermon video during the session, make arrangements for video display or projection.
- Have a supply of Bibles handy if you plan to read and discuss the accompanying Scripture texts.
- Reread the ground rules for the discussion and hints on facilitating a productive discussion. You may wish to review these ground rules again with the group after viewing the video and before the discussion begins.
- Pray for the leading of the Holy Spirit as you prepare for the study. Pray for discernment for yourself and for each member of the study group.

Key Points from Adam Hamilton's Sermon

1. For Hamilton, the gun issue raises two primary questions: how can we minimize gun accidents, and how can we keep guns out of the hands of those who would use them criminally?
2. Two-thirds of all gun victims are suicides.
3. According to Hamilton's survey of five thousand church members, the top reason for owning a gun is personal protection.
4. Since we require people to pass a test in order to obtain a driver's license, it seems paradoxical that they can receive a gun permit without demonstrating they know how to use or store a gun safely.

5. Gun rights advocates and gun control advocates agree that we want to keep guns out of the hands of criminals, terrorists, domestic abusers, drug addicts, and persons who are mentally ill. For this reason, background checks are required when guns are purchased from a gun store. However, thirty-two states have a huge loophole that allows people to bypass these background checks when the sale is private. In the church's survey, a large majority of people believed this loophole should be closed.
6. "Straw man" purchases, by someone buying a gun on behalf of a friend who could not pass a background check, are another way that existing laws are subverted.
7. While good laws will not eliminate gun accidents and gun crimes, Hamilton believes these laws can have a positive impact. In the end, however, there is only so much that laws and government can do.
8. Ultimately, the problem of violence, and the relationship that good people have with guns, is a deeper issue.
9. The Bible has been used on both sides of the argument. Jesus allows his disciples to carry a sword for self-defense, but he also says that those who draw the sword will die by it.
10. Both Jesus and the prophets envision a world where the weapon we use to defeat enemies is the power of love.
11. Our peace should come not from guns but from God. This doesn't mean it is wrong to own a gun for hunting, sport shooting, or self-defense. But we should not trust in guns to bring peace to our lives.

[The vast majority of Americans who own guns] do so either for sport or to protect themselves and their families, . . . [g]uns raise questions for many Christians about what it means to "turn the other cheek" and not to "live by the sword."

—from Adam Hamilton's blog

About the Content Experts

In each video, Adam Hamilton interviews one or more people whose professional experience gives them added perspective on the controversial issue he is discussing. Below is some brief background on two people whom Hamilton interviewed for this sermon.

Bill and Jean Basore are the owners of Centerfire Shooting Sports. Seeking to provide an environment for safety and proficiency training needed by both novice and experienced shooters, the Basores retired in 2012 from the construction business they had owned for thirty-five years and opened Centerfire.

During the Session

Open with Prayer

O God, as we search for answers and for ways to build bridges to understanding, help us remember today that, above all else, we are your people and that we share one baptism, one Spirit, and one Redeemer. Amen.

Watch the Sermon Video

Prepare the group to watch the video:

- Remind everyone that Adam Hamilton's message today is about Christianity and guns.
- Ask the participants to watch for what Hamilton says about where we should look for peace of mind.

After the Sermon Video

Discuss:

- Were you surprised by any of the statistics about guns and gun violence that Hamilton presented? Were you surprised by any of the poll results from his congregation? Explain.
- Addressing the first major issue Hamilton raised, how could we reduce the number of gun accidents? On a related note, how could we reduce the number of suicides involving guns?
- Addressing the second major issue Hamilton raised, how could we do a better job of keeping guns out of the hands of those who would use them illegally?
- Hamilton points out a disparity between tests required to operate a motor vehicle and the lack of tests required for a gun permit. Do you believe such testing should be required for gun ownership? Why or why not?
- In addition to the sheer number of guns in our society, what other factors may contribute to the high number of gun-related deaths in our society compared with other countries?
- How do we reconcile Jesus' command to turn the other cheek and not resist evildoers with a legitimate desire to protect lives in self-defense?
- How do we trust fully in God without forfeiting the ability to defend ourselves and others? If we own guns because we fear for our safety, does that mean we aren't trusting fully in God? Explain.

Explore the Word

As part of your session, you may wish to spend a few minutes examining the scriptural passages that Adam Hamilton used in his sermon. Even if you do not plan to bring these Scriptures into your discussion, read and think about them as you prepare for this lesson.

Some trust in chariots and some in horses, / but we trust in the name of the LORD our God. (Psalm 20:7 NIV)

As you reflect on this passage:

This psalm may have been composed as a prayer to be sung before going into battle. It also is an affirmation that the people are to trust God more than in weaponry. As such, it harkens back to Israel's history and the many times that the Israelites enjoyed victory over their enemies in spite of inferior numbers and weapons. Unlike Pharaoh's army, the Israelites had no chariots, but victory came from God's hand.

“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, / to the temple of the God of Jacob. / He will teach us his ways, / so that we may walk in his paths.” / ... He will judge between the nations / and will settle disputes for many peoples. / They will beat their swords into plowshares / and their spears into pruning hooks. / Nation will not take up sword against nation, / nor will they train for war anymore. / Come, descendants of Jacob, / let us walk in the light of the LORD. (Isaiah 2:3-5 NIV)

As you reflect on this passage:

The prophet foresees a new age when all the nations of the world acknowledge the primacy of the God of Israel. As a natural result of people seeking to “walk in his paths,” nations will repurpose their weapons into instruments of peace and will never again practice war.

Suddenly, one of those with Jesus put his hand on his sword, drew it, and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, “Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.” (Matthew 26:51-52)

As you reflect on this passage:

All four Gospels report this incident. John reveals the slave’s name, Malchus. Luke includes a detail not mentioned by the other Gospels: Jesus immediately healed the slave’s ear. This passage has sometimes been used in the issue of gun ownership, as gun rights advocates correctly point out that at least one of Jesus’ group carried arms. And yet, as Hamilton points out, Jesus also warns his followers that weapons will not bring about the kind of victory that his ministry is about.

Questions about the Scriptures you may wish to discuss:

- On the one hand, Jesus warns that those who live by the sword will perish by it. On the other hand, he allowed at least one of his disciples to carry a weapon, presumably for protection. Do you see any conflict between these two messages from Scripture? How? If so, how can we reconcile them?
- In the Old Testament, the Israelites often battled opponents (such as the Philistines) who had superior weapons. In one battle against a Canaanite army (Judges 4), the Israelites, who had no chariots, defeated an overwhelmingly superior force of nine hundred iron chariots. The message to the Israelites was to place complete trust in God even if victory seemed humanly impossible. What would it mean to have that kind of trust in God today? Does it have any implications regarding our attitudes about weapons for self-defense?
- Why would Jesus allow an act of violence to be committed by one of his disciples? Why would he intervene to stop the violence?
- Amid thousands of deaths from violent crime in this country each year, with wars erupting everywhere, what sustains our faith in Isaiah’s vision that one day people will turn their swords into plowshares?

Close with Prayer

*Lord, shape us into people who work for peace, and who look to you for ultimate peace in our lives.
Amen.*

Optional Activities If You Have More Time

Consider additional Scriptures in your discussion.

Along with the Scriptures above that Adam Hamilton used in his sermon, here are some additional passages that relate in various ways to the subject of today's sermon. If you have longer than one hour for your sessions, you may wish to read these Scriptures as a group and include them in your discussion. Consider together how these passages shed light on the topic:

- Matthew 10:28
- Matthew 5:39
- Joel 3:10
- Judges 4:1-16
- Matthew 5:9

See both sides.

Using a chalkboard or the page of a flip chart, ask the group to list five reasons why there should be greater regulation of guns. Then have them list five reasons why there should be less regulation of guns. Once you have developed your two lists, ask the group to analyze which reasons would be considered primarily moral and which would be considered primarily practical. Discuss whether this exercise enabled participants to gain any new insights into the issue.

About the Author



Adam Hamilton is senior pastor of The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in the Kansas City area with an average weekly attendance of over 10,000. It has been cited as the most influential mainline church in America. A master at explaining questions of faith in a down-to-earth fashion, Hamilton speaks across the United States each year on leadership and connecting with nonreligious and nominally religious people. In 2013 the White House invited him to preach at the National Prayer Service as part of the presidential inauguration festivities. In 2016 he was appointed to the President's Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships.

Also by Adam Hamilton

Half Truths

John: The Gospel of Light and Life

*The Call: The Life and Message
of the Apostle Paul*

Revival: Faith as Wesley Lived It

Not a Silent Night

The Way

The Journey

24 Hours That Changed the World

Final Words from the Cross

Making Sense of the Bible

Love to Stay

Forgiveness

Why?

When Christians Get It Wrong

Seeing Gray in a World of Black and White

Christianity's Family Tree

Selling Swimsuits in the Arctic

Christianity and World Religions

Confronting the Controversies

Unleashing the Word

Leading Beyond the Walls

To learn more about Adam and follow his regular blog postings,

visit www.AdamHamilton.org.