

Scripture & Violence Event Leader's Guide

This Scripture & Violence Event Leader's Guide provides ideas and tips for planning and leading group events on Scripture & Violence.

Contents of this Leader's Guide

Planning an Event.....	1
Facilitating Discussion.....	3
Contact Us.....	3

Planning an Event

The resources available at scriptureandviolence.org are designed to enable groups to think together about religion, scripture, and violence.

What type of groups can use Scripture & Violence resources?

Scripture & Violence resources can be used by any type of group, including church, mosque, synagogue, interfaith, and government groups, student religious societies, and classes in secondary school, college, university, or seminary.

Event Format

Scripture & Violence resources can be used at both online and in-person events.

Mix and Match Modules

Scripture & Violence resources are modular, and most events will incorporate several different modules. You can mix and match resources depending on your group's interests and the time you have available – whether you are planning a one-off 90-minute session or a 6- to 10-week course.

Sample event plans are available at scriptureandviolence.org.

Types of Modules

Scripture & Violence resources include the following types of modules:

- *Introductory Videos.* Many people have questions – and problematic assumptions – about violent-looking scriptural texts and their connection to real-world actions. The introductory videos at scriptureandviolence.org provide a very brief overview of the main issues one needs to consider, whether one is

puzzling over texts in one's own tradition, or looking to find better ways to respond when other people express concerns about particular religions and their texts. It might be a good idea to encourage event participants to watch some of these videos before your event, to help ensure that group discussion is as productive as possible. Alternatively, you can watch and discuss them together during the event. Or you can read the first chapter of the *Scripture and Violence* book, which covers many of the same topics in somewhat more detail.

- *Scripture Discussion Modules*. One of the best ways to learn to engage with scriptural texts is to read and discuss them with other people. Each of these modules focuses on a short passage from the Bible or the Qur'an, and includes discussion questions and interactive activities. Participants will learn inductively about the relationship between scriptural texts and real-world violence, and acquire essential skills for reading, engaging with, and talking about scriptural texts. Resources available for each module include a Participant Pack that can be distributed to all participants, and a Leader Pack with additional notes and tips for facilitating discussion.
- *Scripture & Violence in the Public Sphere Modules*. People in modern societies talk about religion, scripture, and violence all the time – in the media, on the internet, and in daily life. Using contemporary real-world case studies, S&V in the Public Sphere modules give participants the opportunity to practice analyzing and responding to things people say about scripture and violence, building confidence and sharpening their own understanding of the issues in the process. Participants look at short videos, newspaper articles, and other media, and engage in a guided interactive discussion. Resources available for each module include a Participant Pack that can be distributed to all participants, and a Leader Pack with additional notes and tips for facilitating discussion.
- *Scripture and Violence Book and Chapter Discussion Guides*. This project began with the book *Scripture and Violence* (Routledge, 2020), which discusses the relationship between scriptural texts and real-world actions from a variety of perspectives, with case studies from Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions. The book itself could be used as a basis for discussion in university and seminary classrooms, as well as reading groups in churches, mosques, synagogues and other settings. To make things easy, discussion guides for each chapter can be downloaded from scriptureandviolence.org.

Facilitating Discussion

Most Scripture & Violence resources are designed to be interactive, in order to allow participants to make their own discoveries and better internalize what they learn. If your group has more than 7 or 8 people, it is advisable to split into small groups of 2-3 people each for part of the discussion time, to ensure that participation is as active as possible.

A good facilitator can also make a big difference for this type of event. Facilitators do not need to be “experts” on the topics. A group can have a stimulating discussion, even if some questions arise that no one in the group is able to answer. The main role of the facilitator is to help keep the discussion focused, and to ensure that everyone has a chance to participate and be heard. Most groups appreciate it when the facilitator takes a fairly firm hand, keeping a watch on the time and making sure that no one speaks too long or dominates the discussion.

Facilitators can also help the discussion by prodding participants to be specific and concrete in their answers to questions, and to avoid speaking in vague generalities. Asking participants to give concrete examples to illustrate the points they are making works well. When discussing a text, it also helps to encourage participants to cite the text directly, word-for-word, to back up what they are saying.

For the topic of scripture and violence, the facilitator's role also includes noticing when participants say things that invoke problematic stereotypes or assumptions about people of other religious faiths, and calling attention to these.

Extra tips and guidance for facilitators are provided for most of the specific modules as part of module Leader Packs at scriptureandviolence.org. The guidance in Leader Packs is not meant as a set of “answers” that participants need to reach, but is designed to help leaders feel confident facilitating discussion. Participants should generally be allowed to discuss freely, and facilitators should draw on the material in Leader Packs primarily when the conversation gets stuck. Often, group members will come up with these ideas themselves, as well as many other interesting thoughts and questions that are not included in the Leader Pack.

Contact Us

The resources at scriptureandviolence.org – including this document – are still in the testing phase. We would love to hear your feedback and suggestions! If you are planning a group event, we would also be grateful if you would let us know how it went, who attended, what modules you used, any modifications you made, and any particular challenges you encountered. This will enable us to continue refining our resources, in order to make it as enjoyable and easy as possible for groups to think together about scripture and violence.

We can also tailor materials specifically for your group or event, and work together with you to develop new resources on scriptural passages or current events not covered by our current offerings. [Contact us to find out more, or to share your ideas.](#)