

# Church of the Brethren

# CALL OF CONSCIENCE

---

## Introduction

While for the moment a military draft seems unlikely (and less desirable than a volunteer force), no one can predict world events that might set the machine in motion. And if the government suddenly enacts a military draft, those who have thoroughly considered their beliefs about war will be better prepared to make the case for conscientious objection. What's more, Selective Service will find their arguments more credible if they're well thought out.

The Church of the Brethren offers this study guide as an opportunity for youth to develop a personal, faith-based position on the Christian response to violence. A position of conscience, after all, is not just useful in a national emergency. It is important for life in a world filled with injustice and violence.

The goal of *Call of Conscience* is to help youth:

- Reflect deeply on difficult questions about war and peace
- Develop a personal position
- Create a file of "evidence" supporting a claim for conscientious objection, including letters of recommendation, a journal, and responses to three crucial questions the government will ask.

Youth group leaders, pastors, parents, and other adults who want to help Christian youth prepare to make a defense of their values will find almost everything they need to teach in this downloadable curriculum, which includes leader's guides, reproducible handouts, and links to online resources. Be sure to preview the materials lists, though, because the leader will need to bring a few additional items to the sessions.

It's especially important for leaders to read through the materials early enough that you can become familiar with areas that may be new to you, to read and view resources that are suggested, and to get comfortable with the topic. Study the material prayerfully. You are part of a long line of church leaders who have guided young people into the way of peace.

This curriculum is tightly focused on the serious matter of conscientious objection. There are many interesting related issues, but those will have to be held for another study. Remember that participants may have a wide range of beliefs on this topic; as the leader, you can model respect for each person.

The curriculum is adaptable for different settings and a variety of time periods. Each session generally has more than you can cover in one hour, but can be adjusted to fit into a Sunday school time slot. The four basic sessions can be adapted for an intensive retreat. They can also be expanded into a longer course by using more of the activities listed—or drawing from the “Call of Conscience” handout that goes home with the youth after each session. The website lists songs and worship resources from *Hymnal: A Worship Book* and the *Hymnal Supplement* that can be used if you wish to incorporate worship into your sessions.

Please note: The curriculum is written as if all participants are preparing to create a CO file. Most likely, members of your group are at different places. Be sure to adapt the language to fit the reality of your youth.

Julie Garber  
Writer



# Contents

## SESSION 1

### Holy Obedience

What do I do when God tells me to love my enemies and the government says I must kill them?

## SESSION 2

### Going by the Book

What the Bible says about Violence and Peace

## SESSION 3

### Taking a Stand

The Historic Peace Position of the Church of the Brethren

## SESSION 4

### Making a Defense for Hope

Declaring My Case for Conscientious Objection

