
Study Guide for *Christian Faith and the Truth behind 9/11*

by Martha Bettis Gee

This study guide for *Christian Faith and the Truth behind 9/11* by David Ray Griffin provides plans for four sessions. Each session includes activities for forty-five minutes to an hour, with additional activity suggestions to extend the session to ninety minutes. The opening and closing moments of Scripture reading and prayer are essential to set the tone for the ensuing discussion, and to provide closure. Plan to allow time for these elements. Otherwise, adapt the session plans to fit your group.

Part 1 of Griffin's book provides evidence for his contention that 9/11 was orchestrated by forces within the U.S. government. Because Griffin's thesis is provocative and controversial, it will be important to provide a safe place for discussion and dialogue. Participants need to explore this thesis fully, but the purpose of the study is to move forward to the meat of part 2, where Christians are called to examine this momentous event in the light of our unique perspective—one which affirms that our first allegiance must be to a loving God. To that end, the use of Mutual Invitation, a tool for facilitating sharing and discussion developed by Eric Law for use in multicultural groups, is suggested.

Although the group will probably be tempted to extend the material in session 1 to an additional session, resist that temptation. If participants are interested in further discussion of the evidence Griffin presents, suggest that they suspend such a discussion until the four sessions are finished. In that way, consideration of Griffin's case will be informed by the theological reflection of part 2.

In preparation for leadership of this study, read the entire book yourself prior to session 1. Check out some of the source materials and additional insights that Griffin cites in the endnotes (Web sites, articles, and so forth). Pray for a mind and heart open to the potential movement of the Spirit in the dialogue to come.

If possible, suggest that participants read the entire first part of the book, chapters 1–5, prior to the first session. This is an ambitious

assignment, but important for optimal discussion of the topic. If participants are unable to complete this section prior to the first session, suggest that they choose either chapter 3 or chapter 4 to read carefully. Sessions 2–4 require the reading of two chapters' homework at a time.

9/11: An Alternative Theory

Purpose

To examine evidence supporting an alternate theory that the 9/11 attacks were a false-flag operation.

Materials

- newsprint and markers
- candle and matches
- Bible

Preparation

- Set up chairs in a circle. If your group is larger than seven or eight, you'll also need enough space to allow for smaller groups of seven or eight participants.
- On separate sheets of newsprint, list the following: responses for bidding prayer; elements of the Guidelines for Interaction; false-flag operations of other countries and of the United States as named in chapter 1. Review the material in chapter 1 so that you will be able to summarize it briefly for participants.
- Have available newsprint and markers, white board and dry-erase markers, or chalkboard and chalk.

Opening

1. Pray a Bidding Prayer

Invite participants to find a comfortable position for sitting, to close their eyes and breathe in and out slowly and deeply. Then pray the following bidding prayer:

I bid you pray for openness: openness of your own heart and mind as we begin this study; openness to hearing and speaking truth as you perceive it, openness to the movement of the Spirit in our midst.

Response: O God, make us open.

I bid you pray for wisdom: the wisdom to suspend judgment, the wisdom to weigh facts, the wisdom to hear other viewpoints without condemnation.

Response: O God, make us wise.

I bid you pray for compassion: compassion for lives lost and lives shattered, compassion for the empty and the alienated, compassion for those whose names we will never know and whose situations never cross our minds, compassion for those we love and those to whom we are indifferent.

O God, make us compassionate. Amen.

2. Introduce Participants and the Study

Invite participants to introduce themselves in turn and to respond briefly to one or both of the following:

“My hopes for this study are . . .”

“My fears about this study are . . .”

Introduce yourself as well, emphasizing that your role is to facilitate discussion, not to serve as an expert.

3. Introduce the Covenant for Interaction

Say that when we engage in any study addressing controversial and provocative material, we run the risk of digressing into behaviors that impede open dialogue rather than facilitating honest sharing. Invite the group to consider adopting the following Guidelines for Interaction. These guidelines provide ground rules on which the group agrees to guide the discussions to come. Read the guidelines aloud.

Guidelines for Interaction

As we begin this book study, we the study group of _____ Church agree to the following guidelines:

1. We agree that we are not here to debate who is right and who is wrong. We covenant instead to engage in open and honest dialogue.
2. We agree that the leader is not an expert.
3. We recognize that we may have preconceptions about others, both conscious and unconscious. We covenant to be aware of how these preconceptions influence the way we listen and interpret others' words.
4. We covenant to accept responsibility for what we say.
5. We covenant to expand our listening to include not only words, but the feelings and body language being expressed.
6. We covenant to take responsibility for the feelings that may surface.
7. We covenant to hold in confidence the personal information shared here.

After reading the Guidelines aloud, ask for any questions or comments for clarification. Then ask for a verbal agreement to abide by these guidelines.

Encountering

4. Set the Stage

Briefly share with participants Griffin's statement in the preface as to why he, a Christian theologian, would write a book like this one, or one of his previous books on the subject. Point out that Griffin states that he did not immediately conclude that 9/11 was orchestrated by the Bush-Cheney administration in order to further the aims of the empire. Like many others, for about eighteen months after 9/11 he believed that the attacks were blowback for U.S. foreign policy. Only as he worked on a book about the American empire did his research lead him to a different conclusion.

ASK: Why should we study such a controversial book?

Remind participants that, as Christians, our perspective is that all of life should be the arena where our faith is lived out. In dialogue with others we can test information that affects our lives and decide how we might respond as people of faith.

Point out that Griffin states the tendency of Americans to reject out of hand (on an a priori basis) any suggestion of government complicity. Read the following statement:

9/11 was a false-flag attack orchestrated by forces within the U.S. government.

Ask participants to raise their hands to rate this statement numerically, on a scale of one to ten, with one being “I completely reject this premise” and ten being “I completely affirm this statement.” Explain that, in this session, they will be asked to lay aside their own opinions about the thesis being proposed in the book and examine the evidence Griffin presents.

5. Review Previous False-Flag Operations

Referring to the newsprint you prepared, assign one of the thirteen false-flag attacks listed in the text to each of the participants. If your group is larger than thirteen, assign operations to pairs of participants. In smaller groups, choose operations that seem representative of the thirteen presented. Allow a few minutes for participants to read over the description of the operation, then ask them to briefly summarize what they read. For the purpose of this exercise, encourage them to summarize only, without passing judgment on their perception of the accuracy of the information.

6. Introduce Mutual Invitation

Say that it is important when discussing a controversial topic that everyone has both the opportunity and the invitation to share freely. To facilitate that kind of sharing, the group will use a process called “Mutual Invitation.” Divide the group into smaller groups of no more than eight.

- Designate a person to begin the discussion. After sharing, this person will invite someone else to share (ideally *not* the person sitting next to him or her in the circle).
- Any participant invited to share can choose to Pass, indicating he or she does not want to share.
- Persons can also choose to Pass for Now, indicating they want an opportunity to share later.

- Each participant will have a designated amount of time to share depending on the question or prompt, usually from two to five minutes.
- No one is allowed to speak again until every person in the group has had the opportunity to speak.

Teaching Tip: Choose an objective method for determining who will begin the discussion, such as the person with the birthday closest to today's date, the tallest person in the group, the one who lives the farthest from the church, or some other neutral factor.

7. Respond to Open-Ended Prompts

Divide your group into at least two smaller groups of no more than eight members and have them form circles with their chairs. Ask one group to consider the information in chapter 3 and the other the information in chapter 4. If participants were only able to read one chapter (chap. 3 or 4), assign them to the group considering that chapter. Remind the group of the Guidelines for Interaction. On newsprint, a chalkboard, or a white board, write the following:

What I find troubling is . . .

What I find compelling is . . .

Ask participants to use the process just described to share in their small groups their responses to one of the two prompts, referring to the information in their assigned chapter.

When the groups have had time for all participants to share, invite volunteers to call out, popcorn-style (i.e., quickly, without long explanation), both troubling and compelling facts or bits of evidence. Record these on separate sheets of newsprint.

Responding

8. Consider the Case

Call attention to the contentions in chapter 5 that the 9/11 Commission was in effect the White House investigating itself. Briefly summarize the ideas on pages 76–78.

Hand out copies of Appendix A, “Distortions and Omissions.” Ask participants to individually read over what Griffin calls the distortions and omissions of the Commission’s report, and to place a checkmark under one of the three options for each statement (Troubling, Compelling, or ?). This worksheet is for participants’ own reflection. Suggest that they keep the worksheet until the final session.

Closing

9. Remember, Lament, Affirm

Say that in this consideration of troubling and controversial theories, it is important not to forget that the entire nation suffered through the shock of the 9/11 attacks, and that many lives were lost, while other lives were changed forever. Light a candle. Invite participants to silently call up their own memories of that day. Then allow a little time for one or two volunteers to share memories out loud.

Remind the group that the Psalms express the full range of emotions humankind experience when confronted by an inexplicable tragedy. Invite two volunteers to read first Psalm 22:1–11 and then Psalm 46:1–7. Close with a few moments of silent prayer, followed by “Go in Peace.”

Assignment

Ask participants to read chapters 6 and 7 as preparation for the next session.

Additional Activities

List the eleven features of the collapse of the Twin Towers and the five additional facts in the material in chapter 2. Invite the groups to use Mutual Invitation to respond to this information in the light of these two prompts:

What I find troubling is . . .

What I find compelling is . . .

Appendix A: Distortions and Omissions

Troubling Compelling ?

Distortions

1. The Core of the Twin Towers
2. Cheney's Timeline
3. Unusual Purchases of Put Options

Omissions

1. The Alleged Hijackers and Osama Bin Laden
2. The Strike on the Pentagon
3. The President and His Secret Service
4. The Destruction of the World Trade Center
5. The Failure to Intercept

2

Pax Romana, Pax Americana

Purpose

To explore the concept of empire in relation to both the Roman Empire and American culture today.

Materials

- newsprint and markers
- coins or paper currency
- Bible
- colored markers and construction paper

Preparation

- Head two sheets of newsprint with the following:

Questions?

Need More Information About . . .

- Also on newsprint, a chalkboard, or a white board, print the following quotations from the end of chapter 6:

“Not since Rome has one nation loomed so large above the others.” —Joseph Nye (2003)

“In the 1990s most citizens still comforted themselves with the belief that as the sole superpower the United States was *nothing* like Rome. . . . Like it or not, America today *is* Rome.” —Andrew Bacevich (2002)

- Bring some coins or paper currency for group members who may not have a piece of currency available for the meditation activity.
- Gather colored markers and construction paper.

Opening

1. Post Questions

As participants arrive, invite them to list on the newsprint any questions or areas that since the last session have arisen in their minds about which they need more information.

2. Meditate on Scripture

Invite participants to hold a piece of currency, such as a quarter or nickel or a piece of paper currency, as you read Mark 12:13–17. Then ask the following:

- Whose (or what) image is on the piece of currency you are holding?
- What mottos or other elements important to our nation's mythology do you see?
- Reflect on the following: Give to the president (or the U.S. government) the things that are the president's and to God the things that are God's.

Exploring

Prior to beginning this session's discussion, look over the questions and comments posted by participants. If there are factual details to be cleared up, take a few moments to do so. Say that other questions can be considered in the final session.

3. Consider the Roman Empire and Palestine

Call participants' attention to the two quotations you posted from the end of chapter 6. Point out that the author tells us in the beginning of chapter 7 that to understand the implications of America as empire in comparison with the Roman Empire, we must first understand what the Roman Empire was like. List the five features of the Roman Empire that the author identifies on page 108. Ask for volunteers to quickly summarize each feature.

Invite participants to respond to the author's statement, "There was a difference in the way in which Galilee and Judea were ruled" (p. 110).

ASK: What was the difference, and what was its effect on the people?

4. Explore the Lord's Prayer

Divide the group into three small groups or pairs. Assign to each of the groups one of the following petitions of the Lord's Prayer:

Thy kingdom come.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

Ask the groups to consider the petitions in the light of the information presented in this chapter. Invite them to respond to the following two questions in turn, using Mutual Invitation to guide the group's responses. Remember to choose someone to begin the process in each group.

- What evidence is presented here that this petition reflects an anti-imperialist perspective for Jesus' message? How do you respond?
- Griffin states that since the fourth century, Christianity has seldom taken a radically anti-imperialist position. Why do you think this is so?

When groups have had time to reflect on and respond to these questions, invite them to respond to the information from chapter 5 which supports the contention that imperialist impulses were behind the attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq. In the groups, ask participants to respond to the following:

What I find troubling is . . .

What I find compelling is . . .

Responding

5. Pax Romana/Pax Americana/Shalom?

Invite participants to recall the concept of false-flag attacks, in which a country—to mask its intentions—attacks while flying the flag of another country. Ask them to consider what a flag might look like

that reflects the true character and intentions of a nation-state. Give participants access to construction paper and colored markers. Invite them to create a flag showing the true nature of Pax Romana, drawing on the five characteristics of an empire listed in the book.

After allowing a few minutes for participants to work, invite those who are willing to display their flags. Encourage group members to walk around and look at each flag.

Say that the realm God intends will be a state of living in which all of humankind will experience *shalom*, or a state of wholeness and well-being. Ask group members to call out phrases or images that might be included on a *shalom* flag. List on newsprint or a chalkboard. Then invite participants to set aside the well-known depiction of the American flag and reflect in silence on what a flag might look like that really shows the nature of our nation-state at this present time.

Closing

6. Meditate on the Lord's Prayer

Invite participants to find a comfortable position for sitting, to close their eyes, and to breathe in and out deeply several times. Say that you will be reading the petitions of the Lord's Prayer considered in the session, as well as some facts about the situation of people living in the world today. Invite them to reflect on the petitions as well as the statements, and to offer prayers, either silently or out loud.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Pray for the governments of powerful nation-states, especially for the government of the United States, that our intention will be to bring shalom, not our own imperial rule, to the whole inhabited world.

(Silent prayer)

Give us this day our daily bread.

Pray for the people in the United States living below the poverty line, who live with food insecurity, not daily bread.

Pray for the 18 million people worldwide who die from poverty-related ailments each year, 11 million of them children.

(Silent prayer)

Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Pray for our national deficit, presently accumulating at the rate of nearly \$1.5 billion a day.

Pray for the richest 10 percent of the world who receive 54 percent of the world's total income, while 40 percent live on only 5 percent.

Pray for citizens of third-world countries living with crippling debt of which they can only pay interest instead of building up the well-being of their own citizens.

(Silent prayer)

Amen.

Assignment

Ask participants to read chapters 8 and 9 in preparation for the next session. Also ask for volunteers to be prepared to summarize the examples of U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War (Iran, Guatemala, Greece, and Indonesia).

Additional Activities

1. Discuss Griffin's understanding of the kingdom of God as being a new liberation from political and social bondage. Traditionally we have taught that the Jews did not recognize that Jesus was Messiah because they expected precisely the kind of Messiah who would bring "regime change." Invite participants to respond to Griffin's understanding.

2. Invite participants to read the Parable of the Wicked Tenants (Mark 12:1–12). Then have them read Isaiah 65 and Revelation 21:1. The author cites these Scriptures to support the idea that Jesus was critiquing the economic system that resulted in a gulf between the very rich and the very poor. How does the group respond to that idea? How do they think Jesus would respond to the economic situation in the United States today?

Critiquing the American Empire

Purpose

To examine a nonmythical view of demonic power and to explore whether the critique of the Roman Empire also applies to the American empire.

Materials

- newsprint and colored markers
- paper and pencils
- Bible

Preparation

- Head a sheet of newsprint with the phrase “I picture Satan as . . .”
- On another sheet of newsprint or an overhead transparency, print the following: “And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid?”
- Obtain paper and pencils.

Opening

1. Picture Demonic Power

As participants arrive, invite them to respond to the word “Satan” posted on newsprint. Encourage them to use words or phrases to illustrate their impression of the concept of the devil.

2. Meditate on Scripture

Read aloud Ephesians 6:11–12. Invite participants to reflect in silence on this image of destructive, demonic power. Then read Romans 8:28–37.

ASK: How do you reconcile with the power of evil these words from Scripture that “all things work together for good for those who love God”?

Exploring

3. Describe the Devil

Invite participants to describe what they think is the cultural or common idea of the Devil or Satan. Ask a volunteer who is willing to make a sketch to do so as participants describe Satan. Talk about where participants’ mental images of Satan originate. Have they been influenced by John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*? Popular culture?

Point out that theologian Shirley Guthrie poses the question: How shall Christians understand the reality and power of the Evil One? Guthrie addresses this question in *Christian Doctrine* and says that today some Christians believe in a literal existence of a personal devil, while others adhere to the position that there are satanic or demonic forces at work in persons and in the world. Either interpretation can be authentic, as long as it bears witness to both the reality and power of evil and to the power and love of God.

Tell participants that as they consider the concept of demonic power in this session, you have deliberately chosen to leave until the final session the discussion at the end of chapter 9 about the Iraq War and 9/11.

4. Explore a New View of Demonic Power

Review with participants the Guidelines for Interaction, then divide into the same small groups as in previous sessions. Ask participants to use Mutual Invitation to discuss the following:

- Griffin states: “If God is the supreme but never the only embodiment of creative power, then power is always shared power.” Choose one of the following to respond to in the light of this statement:

Creative power is persuasive.

Creation is risky.

Divine creativity and creaturely creativity are distinctly different.

- Respond to the following:

“[I]f we interpret the demonic out of our contemporary situation and the New Testament, we see this side of the demonic [structures that channel human creativity toward the seductive] as the seduction to resort to destruction in the name of achieving good” (p. 144).

5. Examine the Case for Manifest Destiny

Read the following quotes:

America isn't like the empires of old. It does not seek to enslave other peoples and steal their lands. —Max Boot, as quoted on page 152

[America is] a military juggernaut intent on world domination. —Chalmers Johnson, as quoted on page 153

Read the two positions as stated by Griffin at the top of page 154. Ask those who volunteered to do so to present the examples of U.S. policy from the book.

6. Global Apartheid?

Again ask participants to divide into small groups and to use Mutual Invitation to explore the following:

Just as the world community opposes apartheid in South Africa, it should also oppose the global apartheid. —Gernot Köhler, as quoted on page 170

In the light of Köhler's assessment that global apartheid is more severe than that institutionalized in South Africa, do you agree or disagree that the United States' "benevolent hegemony" (Robert Kagan) is good for a vast portion of the world's population (see p. 175)?

Responding

7. Empire: Good or Evil?

Call the attention of participants to the list of characteristics of the Roman Empire from session 2 (activity 3). Invite them to reflect in

silence as you read. For the sake of this exercise, encourage individual reflection rather than group discussion. Say that you will read the elements on the list one at a time. In the light of the information in this chapter, invite participants to consider in silence whether these characteristics can be applied to the American empire, and if so, whether the general character of Pax Americana seems benevolent or evil.

Now read from the bottom of page 155 the list of what Griffin calls universal moral principles, and ask participants to listen in silence, considering whether U.S. culture can be said to live up to these principles as a member of the world community.

8. Create a Christmas Card

On newsprint, post the rhetorical question from Dick Cheney's 2003 Christmas card (p. 153):

And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid?

Invite participants to create their own rhetorical questions framed in the language of God's realm of *shalom* rather than the empire. If time permits, participants might create actual Christmas cards using their questions; otherwise, simply ask those who are willing to do so to read their questions.

Closing

9. Meditate on the Lord's Prayer

As in the last session, invite participants to find a comfortable position for sitting, to close their eyes, and to breathe in and out deeply several times. Say that you will be reading the petitions of the Lord's Prayer considered last session, as well as some facts about the situation of people living in the world today. Invite participants to reflect on the petitions as well as the statements, and to offer prayers, either silently or out loud.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Pray for the governments of powerful nation-states, especially for the government of the United States, that our intention will be to bring shalom, not our own imperial rule, to the whole inhabited world.

(Silent prayer)

Give us this day our daily bread.

Pray for the people in the United States living below the poverty line, who live with food insecurity, not daily bread.

Pray for the 18 million people worldwide who die from poverty-related ailments each year, 11 million of them children.

(Silent prayer)

Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Pray for our national deficit, presently accumulating at the rate of nearly \$1.5 billion a day.

Pray for the richest 10 percent of the world who receive 54 percent of the world's total income, while 40 percent live on only 5 percent.

Pray for citizens of third-world countries living with crippling debt of which they can only pay interest instead of building up the well-being of their own citizens.

(Silent prayer)

Now invite participants to use the words of the petition, "Save us from the Evil One," as a prayer phrase, repeating it silently over and over and letting God's Spirit speak to them.

Allow several minutes for silent repetitive prayer, then close with "Amen."

Assignment

Invite participants to read the final chapter, chapter 10. Also ask them to reread pages 166–69 and 180–83, the information on the Iraq War and 9/11.

Additional Activities

1. Ask participants to discuss the statement “Nice Guys Finish First” with respect to the material about the Parable of the Tribes.

Ask: Agree or disagree? Once the war system began, everyone was forced to participate.

If we cease to rule others, we are in danger of being ruled ourselves.
—Thucydides

2. Obtain a copy of *Christian Doctrine (Revised Edition)* by Shirley C. Guthrie (Westminster John Knox Press, 1994). Read chapter 9: “Why Doesn’t God Do Something about It? The Doctrine of Providence and the Problem of Evil.” Discuss in the light of Griffin’s material on demonic power.

3. Discuss the following:

[I]f we interpret the demonic out of our contemporary situation and the New Testament, we see this side of the demonic [structures that channel human creativity toward the seductive] as the seduction to resort to destruction in the name of achieving good. —Griffin, *Christian Faith and the Truth behind 9/11*, page 144

Satan . . . is also at work especially where pious people try to use God to maintain their own personal or social security, prosperity, and power instead of serving God. —Guthrie, *Christian Doctrine*, page 180

Ask participants to consider the American empire in the light of these descriptions of the demonic. What evidence can they see that evil is at work here? What evidence is there of benevolent forces?

4. Make a copy of the Golden Rule Principle handout (which follows). Download a copy of the Declaration of Human Rights from <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>. Let participants evaluate how well the actions of the American empire live up to these universal moral values.

Golden Rule Principle

Christianity: So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets. —Matthew 7:12 (NIV)

Buddhism: Treat not others in ways that yourself would find hurtful. —*Udana-Varga* 5.18

Baha’i: Lay not on any soul a load that you would not wish to be laid upon you, and desire not for anyone the things you would not desire for yourself. —Baha’u’llah *Gleanings*

Confucianism: One word which sums up the basis for all good conduct . . . lovingkindness. Do not do to others what you would not want done to yourself. —Confucius, *Analects* 15:23

Hinduism: This is the sum of duty: do not do to others what would cause pain if done to you. —*Mahabharata* 5:1517

Islam: Not one of you truly believes until you wish for others what you wish for yourself. —The Prophet Mohammed, *Hadith*

Judaism: What is hateful to you do not do to your neighbor. This is the whole torah; all the rest is commentary. —Hillel, Talmud, *Shabbat* 31a

Native Spirituality: We are as much alive as we keep the earth alive. —Chief Dan George

Jainism: One should treat all creatures in the world as one would like to be treated. —Mahavira, *Sutravitanga*

Sikhism: I am no stranger to no one; and no one is a stranger to me. Indeed, I am a friend to all. —Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1299

Taoism: Regard your neighbor’s gain as your own gain, and your neighbor’s loss as your own loss. —*T’ai Shang Kan Ying P’ien*, 213–18

Unitarianism: We affirm and promote respect for the interdependence of all existence of which we are a part. —Unitarian principle

Zoroastrianism: Do not unto others what is injurious to yourself. —Shayast-na-Shayast 13.29

4

A Call to Reflection and Action

Purpose

To consider how Christians might further reflect and what actions might ensue.

Materials

- newsprint and markers
- newsprint sheet of questions and concerns from previous sessions
- worksheets from session 1

Preparation

- Display again the newsprint sheets with participants' questions, areas where they needed more information, and issues that troubled or compelled.
- On newsprint, print Griffin's major theses (p. ix).
- Make copies of the prayer of confession below, or print it on a sheet of newsprint and display it.

Opening

1. Questions and Concerns

As participants arrive, invite them to revisit the sheets where they recorded questions, areas where more information was needed, and issues that either troubled or compelled them. Also hand out worksheets from session 1 and ask them to read over their responses. Ask them to add any additional musings that have occurred to them since the study began.

2. Pray a Prayer of Confession

Invite the participants to pray the following in unison:

Merciful God,
In your gracious presence
We confess our sin and the sin of this world.
Although Christ is among us as our peace,
We are a people divided against each other
In our pursuits of power, control, and security.
The fears and jealousies that we harbor
Set neighbor against neighbor
And nation against nation.
We abuse your good gifts of imagination and freedom,
Of intellect and reason,
And have turned them into bonds of oppression.
Lord, have mercy upon us;
Heal and forgive us.
Set us free to serve you in the world
As agents of your reconciling love in Jesus Christ,
In whose name we pray. Amen.

—from worship resources for the Anniversary of the
September 11, 2001, attacks, prepared by Sheldon W. Sorge,
at <http://www.pcusa.org/ideas/Sumer02/9-11incongreg.htm>

Exploring

3. The Evil Empire

Refer participants to the discussion of America as an evil empire (p. 175 and following). Note in addition to the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, Bush's characterization of North Korea, Iran, and Iraq as the Axis of Evil. Invite participants to again form their small groups and use Mutual Invitation to respond to the following:

The American behavior in regard to these two issues—nuclear weapons and global warming—demonstrates as clearly as possible that demonic power is now firmly lodged in the United States, especially in its government, its corporate heads, the “defense” industries, its plutocratic class more generally, and its ideologues.
(p. 179)

4. Questions That Remain

Read to participants the following observation from page 180:

Most Americans who believe in God have been brought up assuming that America is at least basically on God's side, perhaps even the chief instrument of divine purposes in the world. To go from that understanding to the view that our country is instead the chief embodiment of demonic power, hence the primary threat to divine purposes on our planet, is not an enjoyable conversation.

Ask participants to review the questions and other pieces of information they listed on newsprint. What questions remain? Which ones can we answer definitely? What are areas where more information, perhaps much more, is needed?

Ask participants to consider if they would like to further explore the factual contentions of Griffin's position. Review the major theses from the preface (p. ix):

- That the historical record does not support the assumption that we can know a priori that American political and military leaders would not have orchestrated the attacks of 9/11.
- That once the relevant evidence is examined apart from the a priori judgment, it strongly supports the twofold conclusion that members of the Bush administration and the U.S. military orchestrated the attacks of 9/11 and that they did do so to advance their imperial aims.
- That Christians have especially strong reasons to oppose their imperial aims.
- That because recent efforts to fulfill these imperial aims have been justified by the official account of 9/11, Christians have especially strong reasons to expose the truth behind 9/11.

ASK: Is it possible to accept one or more of these theses without being sure of the veracity of the whole argument?

5. Consider 9/11

In the total group, review the six demonic dimensions of 9/11 listed by Griffin.

ASK: Is there one of these six dimensions that seems to you pre-eminent, assuming one accepts Griffin's argument about the instigators of the attacks?

Is there one dimension so compelling and/or urgent that would convince you to at least explore the evidence further?

Responding

6. How the Church Responds

State that Griffin's expressed desire is that the Christian community be the place from which a movement would arise to reexamine the facts behind the 9/11 attacks. The last of his suggested actions is the one he would recommend happen first:

The church in America needs to disassociate itself, fully and explicitly, from American's imperial project. (p. 192)

Invite participants to comment briefly on the other reflection and action suggestions in the chapter. With which do they agree? What other suggestions might the group make?

Closing

7. Memory and Hope

Refresh participants' memories that in the first session they were reminded of the importance of remembering that the entire nation suffered through the shock of the 9/11 attacks, and that many lives were lost, while other lives were changed forever. It's also important to keep foremost in our minds those whose lives are impacted daily by the policies of our government

Light a candle.

Tell participants that Shirley Guthrie comments that remembering the past gives hope for the future. He says that the memory of God's love and justice in the past gives hope for God's love and justice in the future. This, he says, leads to an active service of God in anticipation of liberation, justice, and peace that will surely come. Pray the following prayer:

Prayer of Confession

Lord Jesus Christ, you who said to your apostles, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you,” forgive our lack of faith in your word and your purposes. Pardon our belief that war and hunger are inevitable and peace is unattainable. Teach us, O Lord, that nothing in this world is to be feared more than our trust in you. Give us such confidence in your love and your care for the faithful in this life and the next that we can live out a quality of eternal life even in the midst of powers that would threaten to undo us. So may we live as a people marked by justice, vision, and hope. For it is your own Holy Spirit at work in us to bring about your sovereign reign of love in this time and this place. Amen. —from Worship Resources for the Peacemaking offering, 2006

Additional Activity

Obtain a copy of the *Book of Confessions* of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and make copies of the Theological Declaration of Barmen, the confessional statement of German Christians in response to Nazism. Also download the Confession of Belhar (<http://www.pcusa.org/theologyandworship/confession.htm>), a confessional statement of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church of South Africa that addresses racism and relates directly to apartheid. This statement has been commended to congregations of the PC(USA) for study by its General Assembly. Invite participants to discuss each statement. If the Christian church were to respond to imperialism in America with a confessional statement, what might it say?