



THE ARMOR *of* LIGHT

BIBLE STUDIES FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

TABLE OF *Contents*

About <i>The Armor of Light</i>	3
Letter from the Director	4
Letter from Rev. Schenck	5
Letter from Lucy MacBath	6
Biographies of the Cast	7
Using This Guide	8
Series Outline	9
Tips for Facilitating Discussion	10
Session 1: Screening and Discussion Script	12
Session 2: Sanctity of Life	17
Session 3: Fear, Faith and Firearms	19
Session 4: Church and Politics	21
Session 5: Safer Community	22
Sample Facilitator's Script	25
Appendix: Invitations, Flyers, Feedback Forms	29
Event Checklist	30
Conversation Agreements	31
Self-Help Tools for Participants	32

ABOUT *The Armor of Light*



Reverend Rob Schenck is an Evangelical Minister of more than 30 years and is known for his belief that one's Christianity must be expressed vigorously through one's relationships and actions. As his ministry and influence grows he is confronted with the controversial debate surrounding gun violence in the U.S. When he begins to explore gun violence from a faith-based perspective, he is shocked by the opinions of longtime friends and colleagues who caution him to tread carefully on such a politically divisive issue. An ardent pro-life activist, Reverend Schenck struggles with the ethical implications of being both pro-life and pro-gun as he seeks to facilitate conversation and understanding amidst a country divided.

Throughout his journey, Rev. Schenck links up with Lucy McBath, the mother of Jordan Davis, an unarmed teen who was murdered in Florida and whose story cast a spotlight on "Stand Your Ground" laws. Despite being pro-choice, McBath and Schenck resolve to work together as they explore the moral underpinnings of gun violence and their desire to protect human life. Lucy must cope with the loss of her son while using her grief to catalyze conversations about gun violence and fuel a movement towards effective and practical change.

These two unlikely allies confront rejection, heartbreak, and anger as they work boldly to get people to examine gun violence from a moral and ethical perspective. On their journey, they bring people together across deep party lines to have a discussion about beliefs and the value of human life. Their ability to transcend disparate beliefs illuminates our individual capacity to hold productive conversations and make the conscious decision to find common ground.

LETTER FROM *the Director*



“Miraculous things can happen when people put aside their differences and choose to inhabit the spaces they share. Those spaces tend to be way above politics. That’s what Rob and Lucy and I chose to do. And I think we have all been changed for the better.”

Abigail E. Disney

I was raised in a filmmaking family. We talked about “story” and took apart other people’s films over dinner. To me, it was just business, and when I was young I didn’t think about making my own films. My family was also church going. I was raised on the Bible and the teachings of Jesus Christ. But along with filmmaking, I left faith behind when I left home for college.

So it’s interesting to me that when I did finally come to filmmaking I was drawn to stories about people of faith—remarkable people who put themselves on the line for what they believe. They succeed because of, or possibly in spite of, doing the unexpected. They can be contrary, they can be bold, but they are willing to take risks for something bigger than themselves.

Reverend Rob Schenck is one such person. The subject of guns was not on his front burner when I approached him about an idea for a film in 2013. I was looking for someone—anyone—from the pro-life movement who would be willing to entertain the idea that there were some logical and even theological inconsistencies in the positions that many conservative evangelicals were taking on abortion and guns. In short, I wanted to know how a person could be both “pro-life” and “pro-gun.”

For instance, most conservative Christians back “Stand Your Ground” laws. Those laws essentially say that when a person carrying a weapon feels threatened, he or she can shoot without first trying to de-escalate the situation. It seemed to me that if the law relieved citizens of the burden of retreat from conflict, then it was stating that there are some things that are worse than taking a human life. Whether a life is that of a good person or a bad person is irrelevant—Jesus charged us with loving all of them.

From my perspective, shooting first is not a pro-life ethic; I wanted to find someone who could explain why so many Christians are arming up these days. I called many faith leaders and got nowhere. I was just about to give up when Reverend Schenck invited me down to Washington for a conversation.

I was worried. Reverend Schenck had spent a lifetime fighting with all his heart and soul on the opposite side of every social issue I believed in—most importantly abortion. He was a founding member of Operation Rescue. To my friends he was the “devil.” Yet Reverend Schenck was full of surprises. He said the growing gun violence in our culture could no longer be ignored; he wondered why so many Americans were living in fear and taking up arms. And it goes without saying that far from being the devil, Rob is extremely nice, smart, literate, and tolerant. Shame on me for my preconceptions.

I have learned some important lessons on this journey, the most important of which is that if you approach people with genuine respect and an open heart, they will almost always respond to you in the same way. Reverend Schenck and I formed the most unlikely friendship and it was in that spirit that we went forward on this journey together, poking into the darkest of political corners, asking the hardest, most sensitive of questions and pushing back on some of the most dearly held American creeds.

Lucy McBath, also a deeply faithful person, was far easier for me to meet and to understand. She is warm, eloquent and passionate. The story of her love for the son she lost in what can only be described as a monstrous act of cruelty was too awful to listen to, and too compelling to turn away from. Her honesty, her willingness to fight against the “shoot first” mentality that contributed to her son’s murder, and her deep convictions as a Christian moved Rob to take more risks and to dig yet deeper for his moral courage.

Miraculous things can happen when people put aside their differences and choose to inhabit the spaces they share. Those spaces tend to be way above politics. That’s what Rob and Lucy and I chose to do. And I think we have all been changed for the better. Thank you so much for taking the time to talk about this film. May it inspire deep introspection and the spirit of cooperation in each of you.

LETTER FROM *Reverend Schenck*



"In talking with pastors, I often ask them, 'How do you deal with the challenge of armed discipleship? Do you train your people to pray before they shoot another person? Have you equipped them to make biblically responsible decisions when it comes to whom they may kill, how they may kill, and under what circumstances they may kill?'"

Rev. Rob Schenck

Thank you for your interest in *The Armor of Light*, a documentary by Abigail Disney and Fork Films. I joined this project because I believe the question of Christians and guns is a relevant one for all of us. I think it is urgent for Christians to seek prayerful and biblical answers to the moral and ethical questions surrounding the use of lethal weapons.

My hope is that this film stimulates a desire to look at the issue of guns and gun violence from a different perspective—one of scriptural integrity and ethical reflection.

For me, this issue is not about "gun control," which is a government concern, but rather, "self control," which, as a fruit of the Holy Spirit, is a church concern. Attempted legislative solutions, up to this point, have simply not worked. My goal is to explore this difficult challenge in the context of Christian morality; the will of God; and our personal disposition toward our neighbors.

Within a framework of Christian discipleship, I think we ought to be asking questions like:

1. When, how, and against whom may a Christian use lethal force?

2. Is it right for a Christian to live his/her life ready to shoot someone dead in a confrontation?

3. Are there non-lethal ways to protect ourselves and others; and is it better for Christians to choose non-lethal means over lethal means?

I also think it's important to ask whether it is right for Christians to look to non-Christian, secular sources for answers to these questions.

In my opinion, the most important questions around gun ownership and use are principally theological ones—not political or even legal. That's why I believe it's time for pastors and Christian leaders to boldly speak to this issue as they help form the consciences of the Christians under their care. In talking with pastors, I often ask them, "How do you deal with the challenge of armed discipleship? Do you train your people to pray before they shoot another person? Have you equipped them to make biblically responsible decisions when it comes to whom they may kill, how they may kill, and under what circumstances they may kill?" These are paramount questions for a violence-prone society awash in guns and ammunition.

My prayer is that we as believers will be guided in our approach to this sometimes-inflammatory issue by looking at the life and teaching of the greatest source we have, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The attached study guide has been developed with this objective in mind.

Yours in the name of the One who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life,

Rev. Rob Schenck

"In my opinion, the most important questions around gun ownership and use are principally theological ones—not political or even legal."

LETTER FROM *Lucy McBath*



"In the three years since the loss of my son, Jordan Davis, I have found a deeper and more guiding sense of faith, and in that I have felt a deeper responsibility to preserve human life."

Lucy McBath

Faith Outreach Leader, Everytown for Gun Safety

Thank you for your support and interest in this most important film *The Armor of Light*. In the three years since the loss of my son, Jordan Davis, I have found a deeper and more guiding sense of faith, and in that I have felt a deeper responsibility to preserve human life.

Since Jordan died, God has been revealing to me a greater purpose for my tragedy. I am truly learning to walk by faith and not by sight. I continue to grow and move in greater revelation of the bigger plan that God has for the life and death of my son.

It's my earnest hope and prayer that *The Armor of Light* will spark a conversation that inspires you to participate in the growing gun violence prevention movement. It is our charge as Christians to love, care for, and serve our fellow man. I truly believe that this film is part of the move of God upon His people. I feel the film is inspired by God for us to move and act on protecting our children, our families, and our communities from senseless gun violence.

Be a peacemaker.

**"Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called
sons of God."**

—Matthew 5:9

BIOGRAPHIES *of the Cast*



Abigail E. Disney

Abigail E. Disney is a filmmaker, philanthropist, and the CEO and President of Fork Films.

Disney's longtime passion for women's issues and peace building culminated in producing her first film, *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* (winner, Best Documentary Feature, Tribeca Film Festival 2008). She then executive produced the five-part PBS series, *Women, War & Peace*. Her executive producing and producing credits include Fork Films supported films *1971*, *Citizen Koch*, *Family Affair*, *Hot Girls Wanted*, *The Invisible War* (2012 Academy Award Nominee, Best Documentary Feature), *Return and Sun Come Up* (2011 Academy Award Nominee, Best Documentary Short).

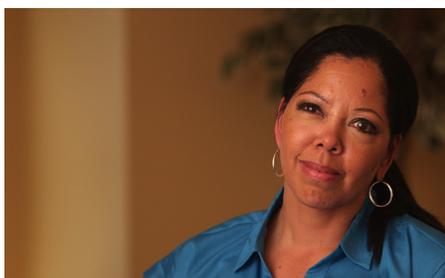
Her most recent projects include Fork Films original productions *The Trials of Spring*, which she executive produced, and *The Armor of Light*, her directorial debut.

Disney is also the founder and president of Peace is Loud, a nonprofit organization that uses media and live events to highlight the stories of women who are stepping up for peace and resisting violence in their communities.



Reverend Rob Schenck

Reverend Rob Schenck is an Evangelical minister and founder of the Christian outreach organization Faith and Action, based in Washington, DC. His candid and personal views on Capitol Hill activities have put him at the center of many Washington news conferences. He is often a guest on TV and radio shows, and he has been the focus of feature stories in the *New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Houston Chronicle*, and *Los Angeles Times*. Rev. Schenck is also the president of the National Clergy Council and the chairman of the Evangelical Church Alliance.



Lucy McBath

Lucy McBath is the mother of Jordan Davis, an unarmed teenager who was shot and killed in Jacksonville, Florida in November 2012. Since his death, McBath has advocated for solutions to the problem of gun violence as a national spokesperson for Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America. In her work as a gun safety advocate, she has been invited to the White House, testified before the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee, and appeared on CNN and MSNBC. She recently founded the Walk With Jordan Scholarship Foundation.

USING *This Guide*

All of us are affected in one way or another by gun violence, whether through a family member, friend, colleague, community member, or through the news. It is important to discuss the issues that affect us all and to understand why people hold differing beliefs. Hosting a local screening to showcase *The Armor of Light* can offer your community a unique forum for education, discussion, self-reflection, and unity.

This guide has been designed to help you address this sensitive issue. It is difficult to have conversations about gun violence. It divides congregations and communities, yet it is an inescapable part of our lives. Discussion often turns to angry debate and highlights differences, not shared values. Not talking about this issue has not made it go away. But talking about it takes courage.

This guide is intended to catalyze productive conversations by creating a safe and open environment for sharing beliefs, values, and opinions.

Before you decide to organize your own screening and discussion, we invite you to review the tips here to help the event be welcoming, engaging, and filled with curiosity and insights. If you have questions, contact us at Outreach@ArmorOfLightFilm.com—we want to help you have the best event possible.

SERIES *Outline*

This series can be used in an ongoing Bible studies or church group. Each session covers a different theme raised by *The Armor of Light*, focusing on relevant clips from the film, to reflect on issues of gun violence and gun safety through a Christian lens. This series can also be adapted for use in a faith-based classroom setting by selecting elements from one or more themes as the basis for a teaching module.

- SESSION 1.** 90-minute film + 60-minute discussion (2.5 hours), or only discussion if all participants have already seen the film
- SESSION 2.** Sanctity of Life (60-90 min.)
- SESSION 3.** Fear, Faith, and Firearms (60-90 min.)
- SESSION 4.** Church and Politics (60-90 min.)
- SESSION 5.** Safer Community (60-90 min.)

Sample Discussion Format:

- 5 MIN.** Welcome: Gather and greet
- 1 MIN.** Opening prayer
- 3 MIN.** Communication agreements
- 5-10 MIN.** Share session focus and show clip(s) from film
- 5-10 MIN.** Reading/Scripture passages
- 10 MIN.** Show clip(s) from film
- 30-50 MIN.** Discussion (part go-round, part open discussion)
- 5 MIN.** Reflection
- 1 MIN.** Closing prayer

TIPS for Discussion Facilitation

Controversial topics often make for excellent discussions. But by their very nature, those same topics can also give rise to deep emotions and the expression of strongly held beliefs. As a facilitator, you can create an atmosphere in which people feel safe, encouraged, and respected, making it more likely that they will be willing to share their ideas openly and honestly.

Your overarching role is to shepherd a process that enables people to have a conversation that frees them to speak to be understood rather than to defend, correct, convince, or win, and encourages them to listen to understand rather than to find weaknesses.

To achieve that, you will help the participants honor or explicitly revise a set of suggested communication agreements (provided in this guide), use the available time in a purposeful manner, and work through any challenges that may arise.

You may lead the discussion with one facilitator or with co-facilitators. The role is best-suited for someone who is:

- relatable, friendly, and warm.
- collaborative—willing to take direction and to offer suggestions with grace.
- fair and respectful—willing to make space for a diverse group and to listen carefully to all involved.
- curious—able to lead with a question rather than an assertion of fact.
- boundaried—able to keep from entering into the conversation themselves and can hold confidentiality.
- able to intervene—strong enough to redirect the group if it needs to be guided back to the agreements and purposes, but also graceful enough to do it with care.



During the Discussion: What to Do

- **Use the provided conversation agreements**, or a variation of them, to foster a respectful, safe environment.
- **Ensure that people stick to time limits in go-rounds.** You may want to pass a watch or phone so that people can time one another or, if you are the time-keeper, signal from your seat when people have 15 more seconds and then when time is up.
- **Act on behalf of the agreements**, helping people to keep to their promise. Intervene quickly and fairly. If you let it go with one person, it will be much harder to be seen as fair if you redirect another later.

During the Discussion: What to Avoid

- **Telling people what they will experience, think, feel.** This almost always provokes resistance when the subject is hot.
- **Thanking people after they speak.** This practice a) directs attention toward you and breaks the circle of the group, and b) can get you in trouble re: fairness if you're not thanking everyone in the same way with the same level of feeling. Let them recognize one another and feel their own sense of accomplishment.
- **Using jargon** or language that might be experienced as putting you on one side of the issue.
- **Being the center of attention**, expert, hub of the wheel, etc. This includes thanking, repeating back what people say after they speak, making interpretive comments, asking your own questions, and speaking more than a little about your personal or professional background or content expertise. Your goal is to have the center of the circle free for people to engage each other. The practices above detract from that purpose.

Responding to Challenges

- **Redirect** the discussion should it get off track. When individuals offer opinions about topics other than the one at hand, acknowledge it, remind participants of the goal of the conversation and the topic being addressed, and invite them back to the focus.
- **Use "PSA."** If an agreement is broken, use this "PSA" framework: State the agreement that seems to have been broken and the **purpose** of that agreement; note what looks like a **slip** in adhering to the agreement and check in with the speaker or others as appropriate for confirmation, and offer an **alternative** way of speaking/engaging that's in keeping with the agreement.
- **Help make reparations by examining intentions.** If someone appears to have hurt or offended another, work with them on examining the intention of what they said and check in with the offended party about whether that matched the effect that the speaking had on her/him. If there is a gap, work with both until the person offending can deliver their statement in an acceptable way.
- **Solicit participant input.** If you have a concern or a dilemma about how the dialogue is unfolding, don't feel that you need to know the answer or fix the problem. Raise your concern, see if participants share it, and if they do, discover what ideas they have about addressing it.

SESSION 1 *Screening and Discussion Script*

Welcome and Orientation

Welcome. Firearms are a part of our lives in this country. It is difficult to have conversations about firearms and their place in our communities. Discussion often turns to angry debate, highlighting differences, not shared values. But not talking about this issue has not made it go away—it has only kept us from discovering what might be possible.

Intention

Our purpose is to have a respectful conversation about firearms, community safety, and the value of human life. The conversation format invites you to share your perspectives on these issues in ways that others can hear and understand, and to listen with the intention of understanding others, even those with whom you disagree. The goal is not to debate with one another, but rather to use the film as a springboard for conversation that deepens our personal, moral, and Biblical reflection.

Your conversation will be guided by shared communication agreements and will be structured with time limits to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to speak.

Opening Remarks on the Film

The Armor of Light profiles the experience of Reverend Rob Schenck, an evangelical minister, founding member of Operation Rescue, and a national leader of the pro-life movement, on his journey of examining the connection between guns and Christian faith. It also features the story of Lucy McBath, whose unarmed son Jordan was murdered in Florida, inspiring her to become national spokesperson for Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America. Lucy and Reverend Schenck have worked together to encourage people to examine their beliefs about firearms, safety, and the sanctity of human life.

After the film we'll be discussing these issues in a way designed to help us talk and listen with one another fairly and respectfully.

As you watch the film, if there are things you want to remember to speak about, note them down so you can refer back. When the film is done we'll take a quick break, then go over some guidelines for the discussion and split into groups to have more intimate conversations about what we've seen.

Show Film

Break (Let participants know how much time they have before reconvening for the start of the discussion, and warmly note that all points of view are welcome)

Agreement

Discussion

Closing

Sample Script: Post-Screening Discussion

As the facilitator, you should feel comfortable reading this word-for-word if that is helpful to you. Professional facilitators often do this to be exact in language. If you would prefer to use it as an outline, that can work too.

INTENTIONS

The film tells a powerful story about how two people came to their perspectives on the proper place of firearms. The conversation to follow is an opportunity for you to tell some of your story and listen to others. As stated earlier, the purpose of this conversation is to learn from one another and to hear each other's perspectives as well as to feel heard. It is not to persuade, debate, or convince each other of our positions.

We hope that you get a chance to reflect and speak deeply about your own experiences and values and listen with resilience when you hear something that might differ from your viewpoint.

We hope that you will come away with some new understandings about what is important to others and a clearer understanding of what is important to you.

My role as facilitator is:

- *To guide you through the dialogue and make sure everyone gets a chance to speak.*
- *To present Conversation Agreements for your approval and/or amending.*
- *To remind you of the agreements, if people need reminding.*

OVERVIEW

Our purpose here today is to share some of our own perspectives regarding the film's subject matter. In future sessions, we will be reviewing selected short clips of the film and using Scripture to discuss several different themes, such as the sanctity of life and our understanding of God as our protector.

*Today, we will begin by reviewing **Conversation Agreements**.*

*We will give you an opportunity to **introduce yourselves**.*

*We'll pose an **discussion questions**, and then you'll speak in a "go-round." Each person will have an equal amount of time to respond to the question. If you have questions for people, write them down, you'll be able to ask those directly to each other later.*

*Then we will open the floor for you to have the opportunity to **ask each other questions** to increase your understanding of those whose views differ from yours.*

*Then we'll close by asking each of you to **reflect on your experience here** together and say something that will help you bring this to a meaningful conclusion.*

So that's the structure of how we'll spend time together. Let's get started now with the Agreements.

Conversation Agreements

In order to have a constructive conversation, where people speak thoughtfully and listen respectfully, we have proposed the following agreements.

Could we go around the circle and read them out loud? You have them in your handout.

We will keep confidentiality. People may want to express sensitive opinions. As participants, we agree to keep all opinions and beliefs expressed confidential and within this room.

We will participate voluntarily. If we don't feel comfortable answering a question at any point, we may feel free to "pass" or "pass for now."

We will use respectful language. Productive discussion requires that we not disparage others' opinions or beliefs. We will refrain from attacking or criticizing others, and ask questions instead to deepen our understanding of how they came to their views.

We will be open. We will attempt to recognize and set aside assumptions we may have about the experiences, beliefs, and motives of others. We will do our best to be open to learning from one another.

We will listen attentively. We will give speakers our full attention and listen without interrupting.

We will speak for ourselves. We will avoid using generalizations like "we all" and "nobody." We don't want to assume where everyone is coming from or isolate anyone from the conversation. Let's use language like "I believe" or "I think."

We will stay on topic. Staying on topic allows us to explore the many viewpoints and beliefs that stem from this issue.

Does anyone have any questions about these or suggestions to make?

Does everyone agree to follow these agreements? (Get nods or yeses)

OK, so these are the Agreements that you're all committing to doing your best to follow. Your commitment also serves to authorize us as facilitators to remind you if need be.

Introductions

We are going to take a moment for you to introduce yourselves.

Say your name and initial thoughts or feelings coming up for you in response to the film.

Take a minute to think of an answer, write it down if it helps and then I will ask the person on my right to start and we will go around in a circle.

Question

The next question is designed to open a fresh conversation about your experiences with guns and how they have shaped your beliefs. I'm going to ask the question, make sure that it's clear, and then give you a moment in silence to reflect on what you want to say. Then I will ask one of you to begin and we will go around the circle again.

The film shows various ways that the life experiences of Reverend Schenck, Lucy McBath, and attorney John Phillips have influenced their perspectives on gun violence and safety. What experiences in your life have shaped your beliefs or feelings about guns? (Repeat the question)

Take 2 minutes to think and make some notes about what you're going to say, so that you'll be able to give full attention to each other when others are speaking.

AFTER 2 MINUTES:

As you listen to each other, listen to understand, not to judge or find fault. You also may hear things that you want to ask about. Write your questions down as you think about them; you'll have time to ask each other later. Don't interrupt at this point—unless you are having a hard time hearing.

I am going to keep time for you. So when you're ready to speak, I am going to start the 2 minutes. When the 2 minutes are up, I will let you know and then you can find a quick way to finish your thought with another sentence. We'll pause for a beat between speakers.

(turning to a person next to you) *Would you like to start?*

Go around.

Before we go on to the next question, reflect back on what you heard. Is there a question that you would like to ask later that you are curious about—something you heard just now that you wish you could hear more about? Jot that question down so you will have it when we get to the section meant for questions.

Sample Discussion Questions

What scene from the film affected you most, and why?

Reverend Schenck asks, "As a Christian, as a believer, what are your feelings when I say the phrase 'Christians and guns?'" What are your feelings?

How do you respond to Reverend Schenck's assertion that in respecting the Second Amendment right to bear arms, we must be careful not to violate the Second Commandment?

What is your hope for your community regarding gun use? Your prayer to God for your community?

Questions of Genuine Interest and Connected Conversation

This is the time to learn more about what others have said and to make connections between what is on your mind and what you've heard. It is important to remember that you are not here to debate or persuade but to explore your curiosity, to better understand others.

Is there something someone said that you are curious about or would like to understand better? Ask your question of the group or of particular individual or individuals. Other members of the group are welcome to reflect and comment as well.

You will have 10 minutes and I will let you know when you have about 2 minutes left. Please take a moment now to think of the questions that you have for others. When someone has one—please begin.

Remember to track who has asked and who has answered so that everyone has an opportunity to participate.

After 10 minutes, tell people something like the following:

There's never a perfect time to end this section, but we want to be respectful of the time that you have committed to be here and so we're going to move to the Closing section.

Reflection

You can take up to one minute to respond to the following closing question:

What was interesting or valuable to you from the film or discussion?

Confidentiality

As we come to a close, please remember you have all agreed to honor confidentiality (not sharing what you hear in a way in which the speaker could be identified without the speaker's permission). Will you all leave our time together here with that in mind? Thank you.

Closing Prayer (or another of your choosing)

Lord, we thank you for the richness of our time together. We thank you for the presence of your Holy Spirit, which has informed us and held us together. As we leave this space and conclude this conversation, grant us the grace to fearlessly contend against evil and make no peace with oppression, and help us to reverently use our freedom to pursue justice and love among all people.



SESSION 2 *Sanctity of Life*

Opening Prayer

Oh Lord of life and all that is, help us to plumb the depth and breadth of reverence for life. Help us to feel your presence with us and to be open to what you have to teach us tonight.

Film Clips

46:02 – 46:57 (Rev. Schenck comments on God's immense and permanent love)

01:13:04 – 01:16:19: (At the site of the 2014 Isla Vista, California, shooting, Rev. Schenck calls upon clergy "to courageously offer clear, spiritual, moral, and ethical guidance on this life-and-death matter")

Reading/Reflection and Scripture

Throughout his career, Reverend Schenck has been an ardent supporter of the pro-life movement due to his personal convictions. Through the film we follow Reverend Schenck on his exploration of what being truly "pro-life" means. He concludes that it is a respect for life, from conception to natural death, and it is through this lens that he rethinks gun violence and its effect on communities. He challenges us all to consider the sanctity of human life since God created each person in His image:

When God created mankind, he made them in the likeness of God. He created them male and female and blessed them. And he named them "Mankind" when they were created.

- Genesis 5:1-2

And since Jesus told us how highly God values human life:

Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten in God's sight. But even the hairs on your head are all counted. Do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

- Genesis 5:1-2

As we reflect upon the meaning of life we may find ourselves questioning—as Reverend Schenck does—why there is so much gun violence and loss of life. We want our children, our families, and our communities to be free of violence. We want to be free from wrongful death and to, over all else, value the sanctity of life in every form.

Sample Discussion Questions

If we are made in God's image and are so cared for by God that even our hairs are numbered, what are the implications for the way we view human life?

How do possession and usage of weapons promote or diminish the sanctity of life?

What can we as a community of faith do personally or collectively to reduce the unjust taking of human life after birth?

Some voices in the film assert that the only thing that can stop a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun. Rob Schenck seems to question the notion of good guys and bad guys, in part based on his conviction that all people are equal in the eyes of God. As he says in the clip, some people perceive *"a certain narrow category of good people whose lives should be preserved, and then there's all these other very bad creatures whose lives don't matter...That contradicts God's view of the world. Because his love is equal even for the menace, even for the enemy...God's love is immense."* Do you feel there are good guys and bad guys—is this a helpful distinction?



SESSION 3 *Fear, Faith and Firearms*

Opening Prayer

Lord, we have faith but it is incomplete. You have told us to trust in You and to let go of our fears. Sometimes we do, other times we do not. Help us to examine our fears and faith together; help us to join with You and one another to relieve our fears and strengthen our faith in Your hand.

Film Clips

47:40 - 49:30 (Christians respond to the question, "What do you have to say about guns?")

1:00- 1:01:50: (Rev. Schenck speaks about the "racial dimensions to this whole subject")

1:17:13-1:19:06 (Rev. Schenck addresses ministers and expresses concern about God's people being "in bondage to fear")

Reading/Reflection and Scripture

It is clear throughout the film that fear is a big motivator for people on all sides of this conversation. For some, guns make people feel safer and for others less safe. Reverend Schenck helps us recognize that, at times, we may all become afraid. Sometimes this fear stems from differences in our communities—being afraid of "the other." A spirit of fear may overcome us that can only be defeated by a trust and love from God. The promises in the Bible tell us to fear not. Scripture is used in the film to help people articulate what we should do with that fear and where weapons should and should not play a role. Though the Bible is clear that we should put our trust in God, people base their perspective how this is lived out on differing passages. Consider the following:

If a thief is found breaking in, and is beaten to death, no bloodguilt is incurred; but if it happens after sunrise, bloodguilt is incurred. - Ezekiel 22:2-3

Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who rely on horses, who trust in the multitude of their chariots and in the great strength of their horsemen, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel, or seek help from the LORD. - Isaiah 31:1

Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. With that, one of Jesus' companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. "Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword." - Matthew 26:51-53

And here Jesus seems to ask his followers to both pick up the sword and to put it down, but ultimately to trust in Him: He said to them, "But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one." - Luke 22:36

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives.
Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. - John 14:27

Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You. In God (I will praise His word), in God I have put my
trust; I will not fear. What can flesh do to me? - Psalm 56:3-4

Sample Discussion Questions

What role does fear play in your beliefs about the firearms in your community? Fear of what or whom?

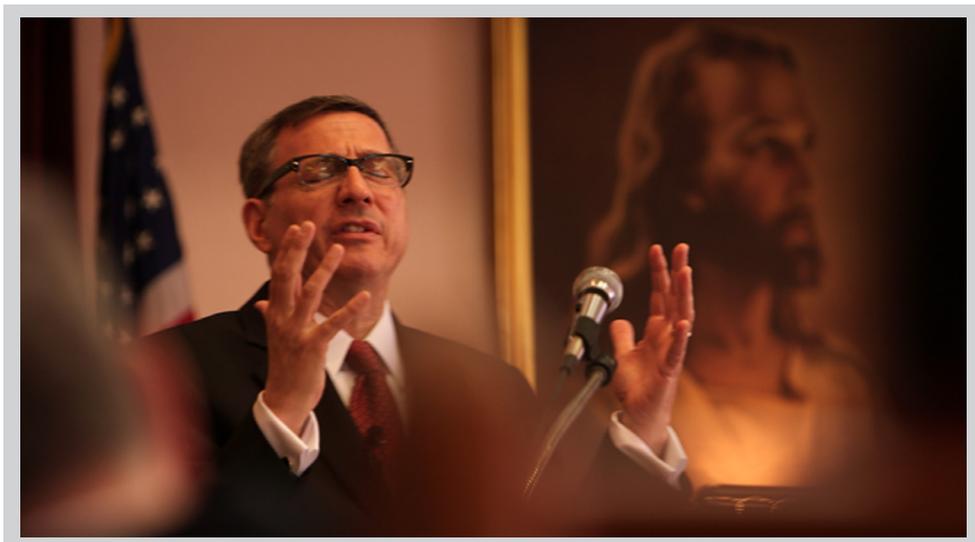
What is the nature of the peace that Jesus promises?

When you feel physically threatened, to whom or what do you look for protection? How do you understand God's teachings on this?

What role, if any, should firearms play in protecting us and our communities? What part of Scripture most guides you as you form that belief? What part of Scripture do you struggle with as you hold that belief?

Closing Prayer

Lord, You said to Your apostles, "Peace I give to you; my own peace I leave with you." We thank You for this peace and pray that we truly and fully recognize ourselves as Yours.



SESSION 4 *Church and Politics*

Opening Prayer

Lord we come before you tonight as members of the body of your Son. We come as hands, feet, eyes and ears, each if us unique yet united in You. Help us to honor one another; never to say "I have no need of you."

Here and elsewhere: Guide the thoughts of our hearts and the words of our mouths that we may listen and respond to one another in love, bringing glory to your Name.

Clip

55:06 - 59:19 (Rev. Schenck discusses the political history of U.S. Evangelicals)

The film alludes to the frequent marriage of Christian faith and political perspectives. Rev. Schenck is critical of this pairing, especially when politics come first, informing faith rather than the other way around, leading Christians to judge the faith of others based on their politics. He says: "When faith becomes inseparably linked to a political position, when those lines of distinction become blurred...we become vulnerable to selling our souls." He sees this as especially problematic when it comes to perspectives on gun ownership and use, and when politicians co-opt the Church. While the Bible offers multiple messages about the relationship believers should have with the state, it is clear that God sees our true identity as resting in Christ.

Scripture

"Bring me a denarius and let me see it." And they brought one. "Whose head is this, and whose title?" They answered, "The emperor's." Jesus said to them, "Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's."
- Luke 22:36

All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.
- Matthew 26:51-53

As it is, there are many members yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you. - I Cor. 12:20-21

Sample Discussion Questions

How do you understand the distinction that Jesus draws between God and empire?

In what ways have your faith and politics influenced each other as you've come to your perspective on fire-arms?

The friendship that developed between Lucy McBath and Rob Schenck, and between Rob Schenck and filmmaker Abigail Disney, are examples of people coming together across party lines to find common ground. Do you possess relationships with individuals with whom you differ? What allows you to continue in these relationships?

Reverend Schenck preaches, "Brothers and sisters, Fox News and the NRA are not spiritual authorities." How can we balance our worldly information-gathering with living according to the word of God?

SESSION 5 *Safer Community*

Opening Prayer

Oh Lord of life and all that is, help us join together in examining our own differences and what unites us. Help us see a path for ourselves and our community to work to build a more just a peaceful place to live. Help us to feel Your presence with us and to be open to what You have to teach us.

OR

Dear Lord, help us to be salt, light and leaven wherever we are, making the world a better place. Help us to receive Your guidance tonight about how best to bring the fruits of our conversations to bear on the very real problems we encounter each day in our communities.

Film Clips

32:14 – 32:28 (Lucy McBath talks about the legacy of her son, Jordan)

1:23:17 – 1:23:49 (McBath contemplates the power of faith while working toward change)

Though Reverend Schenck and Lucy come from different perspectives on many issues, they have found a way to work together for what they believe to be the common good. There are times when though we come from different understanding about God's commandments and teaching, different perspectives about gun rights and ownership, we still want to work together to make our community safer for our family, friends, and neighbors. What is our role—the Body of Christ as witness to the world of the power of the love of God—in making that happen?

Scripture

Consider the following passages in Scripture that speak to our responsibilities before reflecting on the questions on the following page:

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me." Then the righteous will answer him, saying, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?" And the King will answer them, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me."
- Matthew 26:51-53

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.

In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.
- Matt. 5:13-16

The German pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer also has much to teach us about making the world a safer place. He gave his life for it by breaking with his church and standing up to Hitler. This quote from him is featured at the opening of *The Armor of Light*.

"Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act." - Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Many communities have worked together across differences to implement policies, share information, teach, and sponsor programs to reduce illegal gun violence and accidental shootings. Knowing what you do about the various beliefs around the circle, let's explore what might be desirable and possible in the community.

NOTES: This final session can be conducted in a more open format, posing questions to all, eliciting, discussing, and charting responses. Facilitators or a scribe can note participants' ideas on a big piece of paper or index cards, and if there are multiple groups, report out so that other groups in the room can hear what each group spoke about.

Sample Discussion Questions

Not everyone feels the exact same way as Lucy McBath does about changes she'd like to see. But what effort would you personally—no matter your position—like to be part of in your community to make it safer for all?

Knowing that there are differences in beliefs and attitudes about gun rights and ownership, differences in understanding about what God expects of us, what common interests exist between you and people who come from different perspectives than you that would be helpful to acknowledge? Can you identify any shared values between different perspectives on firearms that have been expressed or implied?

How does terminology surrounding the issue, such as "gun control," "gun rights," and "pro-gun," affect the debate at large? How do the terms that people put on this debate accurately or inaccurately describe your positions? What would accurately describe them?

10 minutes before the end of your time, start a final, timed go-round.

Questions To Respond To

What are you taking with you from this series of discussions; what do you want to make sure to remember?

What would you like to say to others here that might bring this experience to a meaningful close for you?
(Consider for 2 min., then take 2 min. each)

Closing Prayer

Lord, we thank you for the richness of our time together. We thank you for the presence of your Holy Spirit which has informed us and held us together. As we leave this space and conclude these conversations, grant us the grace to fearlessly contend against evil and make no peace with oppression, and help us to reverently use our freedom to pursue justice and love among all people.

SAMPLE *Facilitator's Script*

SHORT VERSION FOR FOLLOW-UP SESSIONS

Welcome

Welcome back. We're here to speak about another important theme raised by the film. This week we're discussing _____. As before, the purpose of this conversation is to learn from one another and to hear each other's perspectives as well as to feel heard.

Hopefully you will come away with some new understandings about what is important to others and a clearer understanding of what is important to you.

We will begin by reviewing the **Communication Agreements**.

We will **watch some clips** from the film and read a few selected passages from Scripture.

We'll pose questions and **speak in a "go-round."**

Then we will open the floor for you to **ask each other questions**.

Then we'll close by asking you to **reflect on your experience** together.

Prayer

Before we go any further, let's take a moment for a prayer.

(Read suggested prayer or another of your choosing here.)

Conversation Agreements

In order to have a constructive conversation, where people speak thoughtfully and listen respectfully, we have proposed the following agreements.

Could we go around the circle and read them out loud? You have them in your handout.

We will keep confidentiality. People may want to express sensitive opinions. We agree not to share what we hear from others in a way that they can be identified, without permission.

We will participate voluntarily. If we don't feel comfortable answering a question at any point, we may feel free to "pass" or "pass for now."

We will use respectful language. Productive discussion requires that we not disparage others' opinions or beliefs. We will refrain from attacking or criticizing others, and ask questions instead to deepen our understanding of how they came to their views.

We will be open. We will attempt to recognize and set aside assumptions we may have about the experiences, beliefs, and motives of others. We will do our best to be open to learning from one another.

We will listen attentively. We will give speakers our full attention and listen without interrupting.

We will speak for ourselves. We will avoid using generalizations like "we all" and "nobody." We don't want to assume where everyone is coming from or isolate anyone from the conversation. Let's use language like "I believe" or "I think."

We will stay on topic. Staying on topic allows us to explore the many viewpoints and beliefs that stem from this issue.

Does everyone agree to follow these agreements? (Get nods or yeses)

Your commitment also serves to authorize us as facilitators to remind you if need be.

Introductions

Remind us of your name, what new insight do you have since last week or what question are you still asking yourself?

Take a minute to think of an answer, write it down if it helps and then we'll start on my right and go around in a circle. To keep this brief, we ask that you respond in two sentences.

Watch Clips

Today's theme is _____ and we have a couple of clips from the film that we can watch, and then a few readings from Scripture to guide our conversation. Let's watch the clips.

(Viewing of Film Clips)

Reading Scripture

We have chosen passages from Scripture to read to help us further understand these issues through the lens of our faith. You may have some others that come to mind, and in the spirit of sharing and inviting diverse perspectives, if you have a passage that comes to mind, this is a time to share it.

(Scripture Reading)

Do others have passages to share?

Question (Repeat it once)

Take a minute, make some notes if you want.

Like we did last week, I'll keep time for you. So when you are ready to speak, I'll start the 2 minutes. (turning to a person next to you) Would you like to start?

(Do a go-around.)

Repeat with your chosen discussion questions.

Questions of Genuine Interest and Connected Conversation

This is the time to learn more about what others have said and to make connections between what is on your mind and what you've heard. It is important to remember that you are not here to debate or persuade but to explore your curiosity, to better understand others.

Is there something someone said that you are curious about or would like to understand better? Ask your question of the group or of particular individual. Others are welcome to reflect and comment as well.

We have about ___ minutes to discuss. (Indicate your desired amount of time.)

Remember to track who has asked and who has answered so that everyone has an opportunity to participate.

After the allotted time, tell people something like the following:

There's never a perfect time to end this section, but we want to be respectful of your time so we're going to move to the Closing section.

Closing

The purpose of this section is to bring your dialogue to a conclusion. You will have up to one minute to share a reflection:

*What was meaningful for you today from the film or discussion, or what would you like to continue to think about, talk about, or work on in the community? **(Repeat)***

Take a minute to reflect on this question.

Confidentiality Review and Wrap-up

A final piece of business is to review the confidentiality agreement that you made at the beginning. You have all agreed to:

- *Honor confidentiality (not sharing what you hear in a way in which the speaker could be identified without the speaker's permission).*

Does everybody feel comfortable with this level of confidentiality?

Express some words of acknowledgment and appreciation for the group and their participation, and note the focus of the next meeting. For the final session, hand out feedback forms as described on the following page.

Closing Prayer

Thanks to God for the conversation, and for the people here present. Lord, we thank You for the richness of our time together. We thank You for the presence of Your Holy Spirit, which has informed us and held us together. As we leave this space and conclude these conversations, grant us the grace to fearlessly contend against evil and make no peace with oppression, and help us to reverently use our freedom to pursue justice and love among all people.

INVITATIONS, *Flyers*, *Feedback Forms*

A customizable invitation and an informational flyer about the film are available to you among the downloadable resources at ArmorOfLightFilm.com/Downloads

NOTE TO EVENT FACILITATORS:

As your course of study comes to a close, please take a moment to ask your participants to fill out the participant feedback form available at ArmorOfLightFilm.com/Downloads.

Please scan and email your collected feedback forms to Outreach@ArmorOfLightFilm.com (or email us to let us know if you need assistance). If you don't have access to a scanner or a scanner app for your phone or tablet, one of your event participants may be able to help.

In addition, as soon as possible after your event, be sure to provide your own feedback using a special questionnaire for facilitators, available online at ArmorOfLightFilm.com/Connected. The film's production team is trying to bring screenings and discussions to a wide range of audiences around the country, including many faith-based settings. Reporting back on how it went for you will help others!

EVENT *Checklist*

Supplies & Materials

- Your plan/script
- Your provided Audience Guide to hand out to those in attendance
- Name tags
- Conversation Agreements handout (included in this Appendix and in the Audience Guide) or a flipchart to list them
- Index cards and pens for all
- Time-keeping mechanism: watch, phone, etc.
- Bell, chime, or other means to signal time shifts in large group
- Copies of feedback forms to distribute at the end

Preparing Yourself

- If you have a co-facilitator, meet to divide responsibilities; support
- Familiarize yourself with the agenda
- Decide who you want to acknowledge/thank; include in opening
- Write your opening/framing remarks; practice delivery
- Read the dialogue script several times so that it will sound more natural
- Time out the plan to make sure you can fit everything in and still have room
- Prepare for the unexpected, e.g. more people showing up than planned

Venue

IN ADVANCE:

- Visit and ensure there's enough space for your group
- Enough moveable chairs of equal height
- Public transportation available? If so, convey to participants
- Ensure accessibility
- Inquire about any restrictions on animals (e.g. therapy dogs)
- Have contact person's cell phone number in case of a problem
- Arrange for refreshments: caterer, helper, you
- Determine who is providing A/V: you or site
- If you are showing the film on a big screen from your Mac laptop, pack a dongle (an adaptor to connect the laptop to the projector)
- Prepare feedback forms

ON-SITE:

- Familiarize yourself with heating/cooling/lighting controls, location of rest rooms
- Test projection equipment and sound
- Table at entry for name tags, handouts, etc.
- Table for refreshments
- Arrange seating: pro/con, pro/con if you know
- Plan for shifting from large to small groups if needed: break-out rooms, all in one space, etc.

NOTES: _____

CONVERSATION *Agreements*

In order to have a constructive conversation, where people speak thoughtfully and listen respectfully, we have proposed the following agreements.

WE WILL KEEP CONFIDENTIALITY.

People may want to express sensitive opinions. We agree not to share what we hear from others in a way that they can be identified, without permission.

WE WILL PARTICIPATE VOLUNTARILY.

If we don't feel comfortable answering a question at any point, we may feel free to "pass" or "pass for now."

WE WILL USE RESPECTFUL LANGUAGE.

Productive discussion requires that we not disparage others' opinions or beliefs. We will refrain from attacking or criticizing others, and ask questions instead to deepen our understanding of how they came to their views.

WE WILL BE OPEN.

We will attempt to recognize and set aside assumptions we may have about the experiences, beliefs, and motives of others. We will do our best to be open to learning from one another.

WE WILL LISTEN ATTENTIVELY.

We will give speakers our full attention and listen without interrupting.

WE WILL SPEAK FOR OURSELVES.

We will avoid using generalizations like "we all" and "nobody." We don't want to assume where everyone is coming from or isolate anyone from the conversation. Let's use language like "I believe" or "I think."

WE WILL STAY ON TOPIC.

Staying on topic allows us to explore the many viewpoints and beliefs that stem from this issue.

SELF-HELP TOOLS *for Participants*

Controversial topics often make for excellent discussions. But by their very nature, those same topics can also give rise to deep emotions and the expression of strongly held beliefs. These strategies are helpful in working through any challenges that may arise.

IF YOU FEEL CUT OFF, say so or override the interruption. ("I'd like to finish...")

IF YOU FEEL MISUNDERSTOOD, clarify what you mean. ("Let me put this another way...")

IF YOU FEEL MISHEARD, ask the listener to repeat what she heard you say and affirm or correct her statement.

IF YOU FEEL HURT OR DISRESPECTED, say so. If possible, describe exactly what you heard or saw that evoked hurt feelings in you. ("When you said x, I felt y..." where "x" refers to specific language.) If it is hard to think of what to say, just say, "OUCH" to flag your reaction.

IF YOU FEEL ANGRY, express the anger directly ("I felt angry when I heard you say x...") rather than expressing it or acting it out indirectly (by trashing another person's statement or asking a sarcastic or rhetorical question).

IF YOU FEEL CONFUSED, frame a question that seeks clarification or more information. You may prefer to paraphrase what you have heard. ("Are you saying that...?")

IF YOU FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE WITH THE PROCESS, state your discomfort and check in with the group to see how others are experiencing what is happening. ("I'm not comfortable with the tension I'm feeling in the room right now, and I'm wondering how others are feeling.") If others share your concerns and you have an idea about what would help, offer that idea. ("How about taking a one-minute Time Out to reflect on what we are trying to do together?")

IF YOU FEEL THE CONVERSATION IS GOING OFF TRACK, share your perception, and check in with others. ("I thought we were going to discuss x before moving to y, but it seems that we bypassed x and are focusing on y. Is that right?" [If so] "I'd like to get back to x and hear from more people about it.")

THE ARMOR *of* LIGHT

www.TheArmorofLightFilm.com



[/ArmorTheFilm](https://www.facebook.com/ArmorTheFilm)



[@ArmorTheFilm](https://twitter.com/ArmorTheFilm) and [#ArmorOfLight](https://twitter.com/ArmorOfLight)



[@ArmorTheFilm](https://www.instagram.com/ArmorTheFilm) and [#ArmorTheFilm](https://www.instagram.com/ArmorTheFilm)

This guide was created by Public Conversations Project, Inc.

