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Why I Believe War is Not the Answer

If an intelligent life form from a planet many galaxies away and unknown to us visited earth for one day it would inevitably have some pressing questions. After asking basic questions about human traits and characteristics, the most puzzling question would arise. The question it would ask would be about war. "Why," it would ask, "do humans organize into groups that create conflicts amongst themselves over land, resources, religion, or beliefs, that are resolved by fighting and killing members of the opposing group with specially prepared weapons and force rather than reasoning toward a common vision with words? Doesn't mankind know these groups are of his construction and that he is really killing himself?" It would not be a stretch to assume that a majority of humans have seen the negative effects of war and, if a choice was given between a state of either peace or war with no strings attached, I believe most humans would pick the state of peace. Just like an alien would, many humans see the absurdity or, at the very least, inconvenience of war and do not want to fight. Even (or especially) the people in countries that are at war want peace for themselves and their families. This is one thing we all have in common, a desire to live in peace.

It is obvious though, that a dichotomy has formed between the general opinion of the masses and the reality that multiple wars of different conflicts and locations rage on this very instant. And, confusingly, the underlying need for peace seems to drive most wars. How can this be? Well, one tribe is afraid that their neighbors (who may look different) will take their crops. The tribe feels they should invade the neighboring village to establish dominance and boundaries therefore assuring peace for their own tribe. The logic is not hard to follow yet is not the right way of going about it. Violent conflict, like in the example just shared, stems from a fear of the perceived opponent. This fear comes ultimately from a misunderstanding of the other side. When fear of the other is present the disconnect between

the desire for peace and the reality of war affirms itself. Fear blinds and paralyzes both sides, preventing any chance of compromise through conversation and words.

The first step in eradicating war is to reconcile what most already know about peace being the better state, and the newer concept that war is not the answer to conflict. War is not the answer because, as I have already pointed out, the concept of killing fellow man for anything is absurd. We have developed beautiful languages and translation is easier than ever. There is no excuse not to use these tools to get to know who your enemy is. They will be less of an enemy if you get to know them. War is not the answer because it brings terror and devastation into the lives of the families of soldiers on every side and the civilians who are caught in crossfire or almost inevitably imprecise bombings. War is not the answer because, less obviously, it promotes fear and misunderstanding of your fellow humankind. If we can overcome the enormous task of connecting both sides of a conflict to eliminate this fear, war would be only a vestige of the past. We start spreading the truth that war is not the answer by stimulating connection through communication between different people in our own community microcosm. We start by looking at our own lives and improving on what we can do to be a kinder citizen of the planet. War is not the answer because once we have a majority of people who are simply kind to one another; this truth shows itself in their actions and the alternative of truly seeing the other's perspectives is brought to the table and hopefully used. If we all work toward this goal of just being kinder in our own lives to those who are different than us, maybe we can stop future wars from happening. Some would call me naïve but I know I will be working on this goal for the rest of my life.