

**“Joyeux Noël” starring Diane Kruger, Benno Fürmann, Guillaume Canet, 2005, PG-13, 116 minutes**

### **Major themes:**

- War
- Soldiers
- Ceasefire
- Truce
- Friendship
- Understanding
- Music
- Christmas
- Love
- Reconciliation

### **Major characters:**

- Gordon (Lieutenant of the Royal Scots Fusiliers)
- Audebert (French Lieutenant of the 26th Infantry)
- Horstmayer (Jewish German Lieutenant of the 93rd Infantry)
- Father Palmer (Scottish priest)
- Nikolaus Sprink (German opera tenor)
- Anna Sørensen (Danish opera mezzo-soprano)

## Movie Nights for Thinkers and Seekers

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### Background info:

- The film's French title means "*Merry Christmas*" in English.
- This film is based on what is known as the "*Christmas Truce*," a series of widespread unofficial ceasefires along the Western Front of World War I around Christmas 1914. The following year a few units organized ceasefires, but commanders on both sides prohibited truces.
- The film is inspired by a book, "*Batailles de Flandres et d'Artois 1914-1919*" by Yves Buffetaut.
- French opera singer Nathalie Dessay did the singing for Diane Kruger's character. French / Mexican opera singer Rolando Villazón did the singing for Benno Fürmann's character.
- The film was originally rated R in the USA. However, after film critic Roger Ebert criticised the rating, the MPAA officially changed the rating to PG-13.
- Several songs have been written in commemoration of the Christmas Truce, including the 1996 song "*It Could Happen Again*" by Collin Raye (with a spoken intro by Johnny Cash giving the history behind the event) and "*1914 – A Carol of Christmas*" by Chris Eaton (which benefited British armed forces charities).
- On November 12, 2011, the opera "*Silent Night*," commissioned by the Minnesota Opera, had its world premiere in St. Paul, Minnesota. With libretto by Mark Campbell, based on the screenplay of this film and with music by Kevin Puts, it won the 2012 Pulitzer Prize for Music.
- A Christmas truce memorial was unveiled in Frelinghien, France, on November 11th, 2008.
- Alfred Anderson, the last survivor of the Christmas Truce of 1914 died November 21th, 2005 at a nursing home in his native Scotland. He was 109 years old.

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### Scriptures:

Ephesians 6:10-12 (NLT) – *“Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God’s armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.”*

Psalms 25:15-17 (The Message) – *“If I keep my eyes on God, I won’t trip over my own feet. Look at me and help me! I’m all alone and in big trouble. My heart and kidneys are fighting each other; call a truce to this civil war.”*

2 Timothy 3:1-5 (KJV) – *“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”*

2 Corinthians 5:14-20 (NIV) – *“For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.”*

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### Discussion points:

1. What conflict, of which you are aware, could be lessened or even healed if opposing parties came together and shared life together (a meal, a song, a story)?
2. *"You don't have to invade Paris to drop round for a drink."* Sometimes we wait until a crisis has occurred before reaching out to others. What invitation could you extend and to whom, this Christmas season, as a simple act of friendship?
3. What was your favorite song or music in this film, and why?
4. If you were asked by someone who was deaf to describe music and its effect on you, what would you say?
5. A truce is defined as *"a suspension of hostilities for a specified period of time by mutual agreement of the warring parties"*, or *"a temporary respite, as from trouble or pain."* What situation comes to mind that needs a truce in your world? What can you do about it?
6. What does a Merry Christmas look like to you?
7. What is one step that you can take that would help bring about reconciliation?