

Should I Carry A Gun?

Sunday Evening Bible Study

February 21, 2016

1. The Bible On Deadly Force in Defense Others and Self

1. The sixth commandment (Ex. 20:13; Mt. 5:21; 19:18; Ro. 13:9; Jas. 2:11; 1 Jn. 3:12) forbids murder, but not all homicide (“man-killing”). There is “a time to kill” (Ecc. 3:3). Hebrew for murder (*ratsakh*) is not the same as kill/put to death (*muth*). See Nu. 35:16.
2. Murder is unjustifiable homicide (Gen. 4:8); the taking of human life that one is not authorized by God to take (Lev. 24:17; Nu. 35:16-21). Only God has the authority over life and death (Dt. 32:9; 1 Sam. 2:6; 1 Tim. 6:13).
3. Justifiable homicide includes: killing in the course of a just war or of duly enforcing the law (Nu. 1:3; 1 Sam. 17:50); killing as a punishment by the state for unjustifiable homicide (Gen. 9:6; Ro. 13:4); killing in the course of defending others or one’s self, when their life or your life is in jeopardy, but only as a last resort (Ex. 21:12,13; 22:2; Nu. 35:22f).
4. Jesus and the apostles treat military service and law enforcement as honorable professions (Mt. 8:5ff; Acts 10:1-3; 2 Tim. 2:3,4; Romans 13; 1 Peter 2:13-14).
5. Justifiable homicide is not contrary to a pro-life position. Because human life is so sacred, by committing murder or attempting to commit murder, you forfeit your right to life. Unborn babies have done nothing to forfeit their right to life, but murderers have.
6. Only proportionate physical resistance is allowed to restrain another from committing bodily harm and murder. First, retreat, deceive, or use non-lethal force if you can.
7. Taking personal revenge or seeking retaliation after the fact is not self-defense and does not prevent murder. Vengeance is specifically forbidden to individuals and is the exclusive purview of God (Ro. 12:19). God often executes justice indirectly through the state (Ro. 13:1-4) and will repay all evildoers in due time (Heb. 4:13; 9:27).
8. Jesus admonition to “turn the other cheek” (Mt. 5:39) is likely a command to receive insults without retaliation, not a prohibition of self-defense.
9. Yet, there is only a slim permission of self-defense in the Bible and self-defense is never commanded in the Bible.
10. Jesus taught his disciples non-resistance (Lk. 22:36–38; Jn. 18:11).
11. For these reasons, many Christians through the centuries separate impending harm into two categories. The first category is “crime-oriented,” in which case the believer is justified in using deadly force against deadly force (possibly Lk. 22:36–38). The second category is “persecution-oriented,” in which case the believer will do more for peace and the glory of God by following the example of Christ and the apostles by submitting to the suffering instead of resisting with violence (Mt. 5:39; Jn. 18:36; Heb. 12:4; Phil. 1:21).
12. Conclusion: It is often hard to see when, how, or if a Christian should resist or prevent physical attacks against his loved ones or himself. Consequently, Christians will disagree.

Three Forms of Self-Defense

1. Defense from foreign foes by forming states with an armed military (just war doctrine)
 - 1.1 The war must have a just cause (Most wars defensive, few wars pre-emptive, no wars offensive, which is the equivalent of theft.)
 - 1.2 The war must have a just intention (Only just goal is to secure peace for all. Revenge, conquest, or economic gain do not qualify).
 - 1.3 The war must be a last resort (diplomatic efforts, negotiations and compromises tried and failed).
 - 1.4 The war must be formally declared by proper authority. (Use of military force is the right of governments not private individuals).
 - 1.5 The war must have a reasonable probability of success. (Bloodshed for a lost cause negates the just intention; Difficult to apply since threat of resistance is a deterrent)

- 1.6 The war must employ proportionate means. (Weapons and force limited to only what is needed to secure just peace; Total, unlimited war is ruled out).
- 1.7 The war must not target non-combatants. (Only those authorized by the state can fight; only agents of the enemy state can be attacked; POW's, casualties, and civilians are immune; difficult to apply in modern war because of weapons and identification; collateral damage must be limited).
2. Defense from domestic foes by forming states with police forces.
3. Defense through the personal use of force when no authorities are present.

A Brief History of Guns In America

- 1620 Mayflower arrives and Pilgrims, armed with guns, found Plymouth Colony. Note: U.S. is most heavily armed industrialized state largely because it was founded in a vast wilderness just as guns were being developed.
- 1770 Boston Massacre: British soldiers fire into a mob in Boston killing five unarmed civilians. Taxation without representation enforced by soldiers with guns!
- 1775 Battle of Lexington and Concord; British troops attempt to seize armory of local militias to disarm citizens.
- 1776 Declaration of Independence creates the United States of America, not the United State.
- 1789 Constitution ratified, including a Bill of Rights to limit power of federal government. The 2nd Amendment: *“A well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed.”* This amendment follows the separation of powers philosophy, in that an armed citizenship provides a check and balance to a strong national government that has potential for tyranny.
- 2008 District of Columbia v. Heller. Supreme Court decides (5-4) that the 2nd Amendment applies to individual's right to possess a firearm for lawful purposes (self-defense) in the home. Dissent: the 2nd Amendment only applies to a “well regulated militia” in 18th century which has now been replaced by a standing and professional military.
- 2010 McDonald v. Chicago. Heller applies to all states.

Consequences and Considerations

1. U.S. has highest number of guns per capita than any nation (112 guns to 100 residents).
2. U.S. has 2nd highest per capita rate of firearms-related murder among developed nations.
3. U.S. is 91st in per capita homicide rate.
4. About 34,000 people die every year in the United States from guns (vs. 6 in Japan).
5. 60% of gun deaths in U.S. are by suicide (about 19,000 a year). 87% males.
6. 32% of gun deaths in U.S. are by homicide (about 11,000).
7. 8% of gun deaths in U.S. are by accident/unintentional (about 3,000)
8. Remember: The Founders warned that the American experiment in self-government will succeed only as long its citizens are virtuous and educated, informed by the ethics of Christ.

Falwell vs. Piper (December 2015)

1. “I just wanted to take this opportunity to encourage all of you to get your permit. We offer a free course. Let's teach [those Muslims] a lesson if they ever show up here.” –Jerry Falwell, Jr., President of Liberty University
2. “[We are] the people whom the Bible calls ‘refugees and exiles’ on the earth; namely, Christians....Our weapons are not material, but spiritual (2 Cor. 10:4)...The overwhelming focus and thrust of the New Testament is that Christians are sent into the world—religious and non-religious— ‘as lambs in the midst of wolves (Lk.10:3)...Exhorting the lambs to carry concealed weapons with which to shoot the wolves does not advance the counter-cultural, self-sacrificing, soul-saving cause of Christ.” –John Piper, Chancellor, Bethlehem College and Seminary.