

Self-Defense

Self defense, CPL (Concealed Pistol License), CCW (Carry Concealed Weapon) ... these means to exercise our freedoms and rights for bearing arms and self-defense are really getting a lot of attention today. They seem to be getting more and more popular as the news of our safety hits critical mass.

Should Christians defend themselves and if so, how? Are you tired of seeing Christians pushed around? I am!! I believe it's understandable. Aren't you tired of seeing Christians beheaded in the Middle East and elsewhere? Aren't you tired of hearing your faith ridiculed by comedians and college professors. Are you tired of being labeled and libeled as narrow-minded reactionaries, or of being told you're not supposed to offend anyone but everyone is allowed to offend you? I'm tired of seeing Christianity blamed for every evil in society... when the fact is, back when Christianity was more prevalent in society; statistics for marriage, family, education, and crime were far more favorable than what we might see today. So, the question is: When should Christians defend themselves?

First, let's recognize that in Romans 12:17-18, God says, **"Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all."** Avoiding revenge, and doing what is honorable and peaceable--these are a Christian's first goals in self-defense. However, there are times when it's impossible to live peaceably with all. When that happens, there are a number of options open ... options which are appropriate in their level of response. First, when someone verbally attacks our faith, we can verbally defend ourselves and our faith... as did Jesus, Paul, and the other disciples. The Bible even says that we can do this ... look at 1 Peter 3:15. It says we should always be **"prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect."** That last bit, the part about gentleness and respect, says our defense should strive to bring honor to the Savior and not cause a greater conflict.

We can also defend ourselves in court, although most disputes between Christians ought to be settled out of court. When the world attacks us and what we believe, we can use the appropriate court system for redress. That is what St. Paul did when he appealed to Caesar.

Sometimes, however, the crowd and the court are both against you, as would be the case in many Islamic countries ... there's no protection or freedom there to practice your faith. The Apostles encountered that situation when the Jewish Supreme Court told them to quit preaching. They said, **"We must obey God rather than men."** That's in Acts 5:29.

We have Christian soldiers going to places like Iraq or Syria to help fight against Islamic radicalism. Is he or she defending the faith in that way? In that case the soldier would be bound by his or her conscience and God's Word. In such a situation, they are serving as representatives of the state and the church. In such a situation they must be faithful to both authorities.

What if someone breaks into your home to attack you? In Matthew 26, Jesus told Peter to put away his sword... but when the Lord sent His disciples out as missionaries, he told them to bring along a sword, just in case. That's in Luke 22. I believe that there is nothing to be found in the Bible that forbids Christians from exercising appropriate self-defense. Almost always, Christians are free to defend themselves, their religion, their families, their lives and what is right. But that defense is always appropriate, respectful, and never "over the top."

That's the View from Here.
Pastor Bill Winter