

# CHRISTIANS & SELF DEFENSE

When it comes to training and using force to protect our self and others, what is reasonable from a faith perspective? Do we have an obligation to be a pacifist and rebuke any idea of using force against another human being? Wasn't Jesus a pacifist and shouldn't we follow his example?

First, I'll point out an often, but incorrectly, used scripture example is "turn the other cheek" (Mat. 5:39). The implication is that we should not resist attack. If we read the full context of this, it turns out to be in response to an insult or provocation. In this case it is a backhanded slap across the cheek, not an assault to do bodily harm. We are taught to rid ourselves of the spirit of retaliation. (see also Prov. 15:1 ) The equivalent today would more probably be a shove or spitting on the person to provoke them. To strike back in this case is NOT self defense, morally or legally, so in this case we have every obligation to "turn the other cheek" and not provoke the situation further but possibly even calm the situation by our passive action. Also note that Jesus did not "turn the other cheek" when wrongfully struck by the temple official (John 18:22). He answered "If I said anything wrong, testify as to what is wrong, but if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?"

Jesus also made a point to state the greatest act of love was to lay your life down for others (John 15:13), the ultimate sacrifice, which is exactly what he did for us! The Apostle Paul then penned a comparison for us to read in his letter to the Ephesians (Eph 5:25) stating that "husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." Could you risk your life to save someone else? If you are WILLING, do you have the ABILITY? Jesus most certainly taught us about love and compassion, even for our enemies, taught the people with authority and also confronted the leaders with boldness, overturning tables and clearing the temple with a makeshift whip (Mat.21:12 + Mar.11:15 + Luke 19:45 + John 2:14) ! Jesus did so righteously and without sin.

Just before his arrest, Jesus gave final orders to his disciples (Luke 22:36), the first time he had sent them out to the towns they were to take nothing with, now things were going to be different, they were to bring not only money, but if they didn't have a weapon they should SELL THEIR COAT AND BUY A SIDEARM! They had already been armed all this time, for self defense, which was not unusual because of the dangers from criminals and wild animals (the same dangers we face today). They even drew their weapons to defend Jesus at his arrest. Jesus had never corrected them to disarm before and only did so at his arrest because that was the way it was supposed to be! Jesus also never told soldiers to turn in their arms and take up a more peaceful profession. He did comment on the great faith of the Roman Centurion, a military leader! We as believers today have no less reason to disarm ourselves and men in particular should gather up the courage to fulfill our responsibility to provide and PROTECT our families and communities. Men and women should learn safe and practical ways to keep a firearm for defensive purposes or, at the very least, get some practical unarmed self defense training. Everyone should be training and preparing our families for natural and man-made emergencies. The LA riots in the 90's and the Katrina aftermath in New Orleans are good examples of how looters and criminals take advantage of tragic situations and that law enforcement cannot save you.

One more biblical example to study is David. The boy was both brave and a warrior, not hesitating to attack and kill Goliath (1 Sam.17). Not for his own glory, but because Goliath was an offense to God who's Spirit was with David. David had the boldness and confidence that the Lord was with him. Much more can be said, but God has given us all we need to know in His Word. Study it thoroughly and constantly be enlightened at what you find! There is a time for peace and forgiveness (even for our enemies), but there is also a time for war. Keep in mind that most of our battles are **spiritual**, not physical. (Eph. 6:12 & 2 Cor.10:3,4)

**Here are some scriptures to look up, this is by no means a complete list of related verses.**

Mat. 5:9 & 5:43,44

Rom. 8:38,39

1 Tim. 4:7,8

Eph. 6:10-18

2 Cor.11:26-33

James 1:19

Exodus 20:13....then read Ex. 21:12-14 and Ex. 22:2

1 Sam 16:18, 17, 21:10-15,

2 Sam 22, 23:8-39

Psalms 144

Proverbs 10:12, 11:12, 13:3, 13:10, 13:20,14:15, 14:17, 14:29

15:1, 15:18, 15:21, 16:18, 16:32, 17:14, 17:27, 17:28

18:13, 20:3, 20:22, 21:23, 22:3, 26:21, 29:11, 29:22