

Christians in conflict

Reconciling religious beliefs with the right to carry – and use – concealed weapons

BY STEVE FARMER

I've been asked many times, if I was ever faced with a life-threatening situation, would I be able to shoot – and possibly kill – someone, knowing that this conflicts with the Ten Commandments? If you are a Christian who has a permit to carry a concealed weapon, someone may have asked you the same question. Or maybe this issue has kept you from getting a license to carry a concealed weapon.

Hebrew scholars agree that the English translation in Exodus 20:13, "Thou shall not kill," should have been translated, "Thou shall not murder." This is not difficult to believe, because if one was to keep reading, he would discover 24 verses later that man is told to kill when the cause is justifiable. In fact, there are many justifiable reasons for man to kill, according to Exodus 21; therefore, the Scriptures clearly are not teaching that man should not kill.

Murder is intentional and premeditated; it's a crime of hate and malice. But according to Webster's Dictionary, the word "kill" simply means, "to put one to death."

As a police officer, one of the verses that helped me to answer that question is Romans 13:4, "For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer." What this verse tells me is that police officers are God's servants, they are permitted to carry a weapon and they are authorized to use it, even if it results in the death of another when it's justified.

I will cite several Scriptures that I hope will help anyone who is struggling with similar questions, so that they may have a clear conscience and peace of mind regarding this matter. The Scriptures do not teach that if your life or a member of your family's life is in jeopardy that you should not try to remove the threat. In fact, if you stand by and do nothing and allow yourself or your family to be harmed or killed, that would be wrong and much worse than using a gun.

● **1st Timothy 5:8** "But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."

What this verse tells me is that a man is supposed to provide for his relatives, especially the ones in his house. The provision may be food, shelter, clothing or protection, such as keeping them safe from harm. If he does not do that, then he is worse than an unbeliever.

As Christians, we don't carry a concealed weapon so that we can go out looking for trouble; in fact, we try to avoid it, if it's at all possible. If we are faced with a situation that we can't avoid, we don't shoot to kill; we shoot to stop the threat using only the amount of force necessary to stop it.

● **Exodus 22:2** "If a thief is caught breaking in and is struck so that he dies, the defender is not guilty of bloodshed; but if it happens after sunrise he is guilty of bloodshed."

● **Matthew 24:43** "But know this, that if the Goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to



Steve Farmer, a law enforcement officer and CCW instructor, says Christians do not need to worry that their religious beliefs will conflict with their right to carry a concealed weapon.

be broken up."

● **Matthew 12:29** "Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? And then he will spoil his house."

What these verses tell me is that if someone breaks into your home after sunset and before sunrise (during the dark), that it's OK to use force, including deadly force. Because it's during the hours of darkness that one rests, and when you are relaxed, or asleep, you are in what is known as Condition White, which is described by the U.S Armed Forces as: You are in a state of unawareness. A person's vision is also limited in the darkness, which could play tricks on one's mind, such as making an individual appear to be armed when in fact they aren't. If someone breaks into your home in the middle of the night, you have to assume that they were not sent there by the American Red Cross to help you, but to cause you or your family harm.

However, if they broke into your house after sunrise (in broad daylight), the situation is different. Throughout the daylight hours, one should remain in what is known as Condition Yellow, which is described by the U.S. Armed Forces as: You are in a state of relaxed awareness. In this condition you can function normally for long periods of time without difficulty. You're not paranoid; you just pay closer attention to anything that is out of the ordinary and that could be a potential threat to you. Also, the daylight hours allow you to see the other person's hands more clearly, which usually gives you a good indication of their intention, whether it is to steal your property or to cause you harm.

The courts have ruled that the police have no legal obligation to protect you. They are not your own personal bodyguards. They can not be everywhere. Their job is to keep the peace

● **Luke 22:36** "He said to them, 'But now if you have a



Steve Farmer, standing in front of his home, cites 1st Timothy 5:8 when he defends the Christian's right to use firearms: "But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."

purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one.' "

This verse tells me that Jesus knew that the 12 disciples would be faced with dangerous situations, so He was telling them to be prepared. He was telling them to sell their clothes, if they had to, and buy a sword. He did not want them to be without a weapon to protect themselves or each other. Firearms had not yet been invented, so he couldn't tell them to sell their clothes and buy a gun.

Having a gun is not enough to protect you, as there are other things that must be considered. **First, you have to be totally committed to protecting yourself and your loved ones.** If you don't, it does you no good to carry a gun.

Second, you need to align your beliefs and values about killing before you're faced with a life-threatening situation. As Christians we have been taught, "Thou shalt not kill." If we don't have a proper understanding of that verse, when we are faced with a life-threatening situation where deadly force is justified, our conflicting internal values may sabotage the accuracy of our shot. This will happen automatically on an unconscious level.

When one's thinking is incongruent (conflicting thoughts), the brain stutters, and when the brain stutters, so will one's behavior and performance. That's why it is just as important to align your beliefs and values as it is to align your front and rear sights on the weapon, so that you will be able to hit your intended target without any hesitation.

Whether you're a Christian, a police officer, or a law-abiding citizen, and you're involved in a shooting, chances are, if your beliefs and values are not in alignment you will experience what is called Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). PTSD is defined as a psychiatric disorder that can occur following an experience or witnessing a life-threatening event, such as military combat, natural disasters, terrorist incidents, serious accidents or violent personal assaults like a shooting or rape. People who suffer from PTSD often relive the experience through nightmares and flashbacks.

Signs of PTSD include substance abuse, self-injury, depression, sleeplessness, fatigue, self-doubt and anxiety. Not every person who has experienced a traumatizing event will experience PTSD. They may only experience some of the symptoms and not all of them. PTSD symptoms usually occur within days and weeks following the incident. The symptoms generally decrease over time and eventually fade away.

Because Christians may feel an increased sense of guilt if they are forced to shoot someone, they are at a great risk for PTSD. This makes it even more important for Christians to reconcile their beliefs with their right and potential need to use firearms to protect themselves.

Whatever the law of the land is, the believer has a right to practice it without guilt, as long as that law of the land does not violate the law of God. The Bible does not address the issue of a believer carrying a concealed weapon. Therefore it would fall into a grey area rather than black and white. Romans 14:23 tells us: "But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin."

So how do Christians decide on things that are neither morally right nor wrong, but are in the grey area? By letting our conscience be our guide.

About the author: Steve Farmer is from Lima, Ohio, and has more than 21 years experience in law enforcement, 10 of which he served as a police chief. He has also been a police trainer for 16 years, training and certifying numerous officers in the use of the revolver, semiautomatic, shotgun, tactical assault rifle, Oleoresin Capsicum, straight baton, expandable baton, side handle baton, Taser and radar. He has Taught basic



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