5 Biblical Ways to Defend Your Mental Health Against Ongoing World Conflicts

As mental health issues continue to spread throughout our society and the world, Terrence Harris shares 5 important and practical Biblical insights to help protect your mental health, considering the ongoing wars and conflicts we see today.

1. Mental Health Needs God's Truth

God's truth demands obedience, even against personal preference. Repentance and faith in Jesus Christ gives us new life and compels us to joyfully obey God's truth. Christ offers salvation to those who receive Him as Lord and Savior. Some think they can save the world by their own actions. Many hope to make the world a better place through charity or a perverted version of peace, love and unity. Any vision of peace that denies the return of Christ rejects the truth and ultimately collapses.

World conflicts aren't just a political issue—they are the result of humanity rejecting God's truth and replacing it with deception. The Bible speaks of a humanity that desires everything they see, physical pleasures, and the pride of life. All of these come from a sinful world that refuses to obey and submit to the Living God (1 John 2:16, 17). Consequently, we live in a decaying world (2 Peter 3:10, 1 Corinthians 7:31) of which no human can control or stop.

Anxiety, another symptom of humanity's brokenness, exists as a major issue within the mental health crisis today. Anxiety can express itself through a sensation of "being choked" and suffocating. Those who suffer from anxiety, like I once did, tend to also experience the sensation of "falling." Without

anchoring ourselves in God's truth, our emotions begin to interpret reality instead of responding to it.

Medication helped during my struggle with anxiety and mental health issues, but I improved when I relied less on my truth and more on God's truth. He has full authority over heaven and earth. Humanity assumes absolute control over our lives because we take God's grace for granted. This illusion of control contradicts the truth that God alone has authority over heaven and earth. When we align our lives with God's truth, we can experience freedom from the pressure to hold everything together on our own. This reduces and even frees us from undue stress and worry.

2. When Community Grows, Mental Health Improves

Some people serve in the military overseas, have loved ones fighting, or worry about the war's impact on American soil. Navigating war's presence and uncertainty is challenging. While war and violence exist, God doesn't want us to bear these challenges alone. Sometimes, a kind reminder that fear doesn't come from God (2 Timothy 1:7) is needed. If fear arises, remember God's love and care through others (Galatians 6:2, Hebrews 10:24-25). Having a solid group of family, friends, and trusted people is wise (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12). Helping each other through hard times keeps our mental health from
deteriorating because God created humanity for connection. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have distinct functions but exist as one. Togetherness and community are essential to the Living God. Created in His image, humanity must imitate God's likeness, seeking and building meaningful, God-honoring relationships, unity, and community in Christ.

3. Solitude: Where Mental Health Speaks

Jesus sought solitude to spend time with the Father (Mark 1:35, Luke 5:16, Mark 14:23).

Solitude differs from isolation. The Bible says isolating oneself is foolish and contrary to God's standard for community. Biblical solitude seeks intimacy with God, hearing His voice, experiencing His presence, and minimizing distractions. Finding sacred time to enjoy God's company improves mental health. This connects our hearts to the Father who made us and our interests. Ask God for solutions to mental health and navigating the world's brokenness.

4. Fasting: A Secret Weapon Against Mental Oppression

Jesus said, "When you fast and pray . . ." His words sound like a command, not an option.

Christians tend to focus on the physical benefits of fasting rather than the supernatural benefits. Queen Esther called for the Jews to fast on her behalf before entering her king's throne room uninvited—which could have resulted in her death (Esther 4:15-17). All the people of Ninevah (Jonah 3:5-10) fasted and repented for sinning after hearing Jonah preach, turning God's coming judgment away from the city. Daniel fasted while mourning and for understanding (Daniel 10:2). In Mark 9:29 (in some manuscripts), Jesus tells His disciples that prayer and fasting invites supernatural authority in deliverance from demonic oppression. Fasting exchanges the natural pleasures of food for a complete focus on God. Sometimes, our mental health needs relief from anxiety or comfort from life's hardships—especially in times of world conflicts. Other times, we may need God's mercy, favor, or His supernatural strength to overcome the challenges of an immaterial nature. Scripture has shown how fasting can turn the tides of worldly conflicts and challenging circumstances. Incorporating a fast that Yahweh commands and respects could be the spiritual discipline necessary for life's journey.

5. Enjoying Life: A Gift for Mental Health

No matter the difficulties we face in life, we can still trust

and believe that God gave us life to appreciate and enjoy, as well as experiences to enjoy along with it. In Ecclesiastes 5:18–21, we can discover a desirable pattern, one blessed by Yahweh that most Christians may overlook. One of the best things you can do for your mental health is to enjoy the work you do, developing the ability to enjoy the wealth it produces, and using the resources to create wonderful and exciting memories and experiences for yourself, your family, and others.

Unstable circumstances cannot sustain mental health in a world marked by ongoing conflict, uncertainty, and moral confusion. The wars and tensions we see around us reveal a deeper reality—humanity's rejection of God's truth. When we try to carry the weight of a broken world or place our hope in human solutions, mental health issues such as anxiety increase, and peace fades. But God has not left us without help. When we anchor our minds in His truth, walk in community, seek Him in solitude, practice spiritual discipline through fasting, and choose to enjoy the life He has given, we begin to experience stability in our mental health that the world cannot offer. True peace exists outside of trying to control outcomes, but in trusting the God who is already in control. As we align our lives with His truth, we protect our minds, strengthen our faith, and learn to live with confidence—even in the midst of a world at war.

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Nuclear War

Kerby Anderson provides an overview of nuclear war from Annie Jacobsen's book Nuclear War: A Scenario *with a biblical response.*

Hell on Earth

Annie Jacobsen begins her book with a scenario:{1} a one-megaton thermonuclear bomb strikes the Pentagon and vaporizes the building and the 27,000 employees within it. A mile away the marble columns of the Lincoln and Jefferson memorials burst apart and disintegrate. Two and a half miles west at National Park, the clothes of a majority of the 35,000 people watching the ballgame catch on fire.



Her book, *Nuclear War: A Scenario*, takes you through, in a minute-by-minute description, what would happen if a "bolt out of the blue" nuclear attack took place on U.S. soil. This 370-page book isn't for the faint-hearted, but it is an in-depth investigation in how we got to this place in world history and what would happen if the unthinkable became reality. And the book provides a sequel to the 2023 biographical film, *Oppenheimer*.

Why are we discussing this difficult topic of nuclear war now? First, there is a need to educate a new generation. Although Americans talked about the danger of nuclear war during the Cold War years, much less has been said in recent years. Second, the threat of nuclear war is even greater today because of countries like North Korea that have nuclear weapons and other countries like Iran that are attempting to develop nuclear weapons. Third, this discussion is relevant because so many documents about nuclear war have been declassified. We know so much more about nuclear war than we knew just a few years ago.

It is impossible for our minds to comprehend what happens in a nuclear blast. The air heats to one hundred and eighty million degrees Fahrenheit. This is nearly five times hotter than the temperature in the center of the sun. The blast levels any structure within miles, but also creates winds travelling at several hundred miles per hour.

The nuclear fireball then rises like a hot-air balloon forming the iconic mushroom cloud with cap and stem. Then the inferno begins. Gas lines explode and look like giant blowtorches. Washington, D.C. has now become a mega-inferno. Asphalt streets turn to liquid from the intense heat. More than a million people are dead or dying within two minutes after the detonation.

Outside of the blast area, the electromagnetic pulse obliterates all radio, television, and the Internet. Cars with electric ignition systems cannot start. Water stations cannot pump water. And deadly radiation spreads to those who survived the initial blast.

Nuclear war may be unthinkable, but that is why we are thinking and talking about it.

Happens Too Fast

Nuclear war could develop unthinkably fast and devastate our world.

An intercontinental ballistic missile is a long-range missile that delivers nuclear weapons to political and military targets on the other side of the world. These ICBMs exist to do one thing: kill millions of people in another country.

Back when the ICBM was invented, Herb York, the Pentagon's chief scientist, wanted to calculate how many minutes it would take for it to reach the Soviet Union.{2} A group of defense scientists estimated that it would take 26 minutes and 40 seconds. From launch to annihilation takes just 1,600 seconds. Nuclear war happens too fast.

Today that estimate varies because we have nine countries that possess nuclear weapons: Russia, France, China, Pakistan, India, Israel, North Korea, the UK, and the US. Given North Korea's geographical location, the launch-to-target time frame

from the Korean peninsula to the East Coast of the US would be about 33 minutes.

But a nuclear blast can come even sooner from nuclear-armed, nuclear-powered submarines. These submarines are called “boomers” or even have been called the “handmaidens of the apocalypse.” They are undetectable under the sea and can sneak up very close to a nation’s coast and launch a first-strike attack. This is why the president actually has only a six-minute window to decide on a nuclear counterattack.

Launch on Warning

America has a policy known as “launch on warning.”{3} What that means is that America will launch its nuclear weapons once its early-warning electronic sensor system warns of an impending nuclear attack. Put another way, the US won’t wait to check if a warning is accurate, it will not wait and physically absorb a nuclear blow before launching its own nuclear weapons at whoever sent a missile to them.

This policy has been in place since the height of the cold war and represented an incredibly high risk. As one advisor explains, launch on warning during at time of intense crisis is a recipe for catastrophe.

Presidential candidates have promised to change this policy, but nothing has happened so far. George W. Bush in 2000 vowed to address this policy: “Keeping so many weapons on high alert may create an unacceptable risk for accidental of unauthorized launch.” Barack Obama argued that “keeping nuclear weapons ready to launch on a moment’s notice is a dangerous relic of the Cold War.” President Biden has also encouraged to eliminate this perilous policy. No change has been made.

President’s Football

The decision to launch a nuclear strike comes from the

president. How did the government decide to give the president the nuclear football? The story begins with Harold Agnew back in 1959.{4} He visited a NATO base and noticed there were four F-84F aircraft at the end of the runway; each was carrying two nuclear gravity bombs. This meant that these nuclear bombs were in the custody of one U.S. Army private armed with a M1 rifle with eight rounds of ammunition. The only safeguard against unauthorized use of an atomic bomb was this single GI surrounded by numbers of foreign troops on foreign territory with thousands of Soviet troops just miles away.

When he got back to the U.S., Agnew contacted a project engineer at Sandia Laboratories and asked if they could put an electronic "lock" on the bomb's firing circuits that would prevent others from arming the nuclear bomb. They produced a lock and coded switch that would be activated with a three-digit code.

They presented the idea and the device to the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy and then to President Kennedy who ordered it to be done. But the military objected. A general asked how a pilot somewhere in the world could get a code from the President of the United States to arm a nuclear weapon before being overrun by a massively superior number of Soviet troops? And why not have other nuclear bombs also coded?

The answer came in the creation of the President's Football, which is an emergency satchel. This gave the president, not the military, control of America's nuclear arsenal. The Football must always be near the president.

There is a story of how important it is for the president to have access to the Football.{5} When President Clinton was visiting Syria, President Hafez al-Assad's handlers tried to prevent Clinton's military aide from riding in an elevator with him. The Secret Service would not let that happen, and they did not let that happen.

Inside is a set of documents known as the Black Book. Robert "Buzz" Patterson served as a military aide to President Clinton, and I was able to interview him one time on my radio program. He likened the Black Book to a "Denny's breakfast menu" because of how it looked. The president must choose retaliatory targets from a predetermined nuclear strike list on the menu.

Let me end with this question: Do you believe the current president has a mental capacity to make a rational decision of about launching nuclear weapons?

War Games

One question that was asked more than forty years ago was whether anyone could win a nuclear war. Spoiler alert: no one can. President Reagan ordered a simulated war game with the name Proud Prophet to explore the outcome and long-term effects of a nuclear war.{6}

The research used mathematical models to predict outcomes and was conducted at the National War College. Participants were cloistered away inside a secure location to prevent leaks. The results were only declassified in 2012, but much of the material was blacked out. Fortunately, this declassification allowed participants to discuss it without violating the Espionage Act of 1917.

Over the two weeks, every simulated scenario ended the same way. Sometimes they began with a tactical nuclear strike and a so-called limited nuclear war. Other times they simulated exercises with NATO and then with other exercises without NATO. There were scenarios where the U.S. launched nuclear war preemptively. Sometimes that was when the Pentagon was supposedly in focused calm and other when in a crisis mode.

Sadly, the result was the same. Once a nuclear war starts, there is no way to win it or even end it. No matter how a

nuclear war begins, it ends with complete Armageddon-like destruction. As one participant put it, this destruction “made all the wars of the past five hundred years pale in comparison.” At least a half billion (and probably more like a billion) people die in the war’s opening salvo. Then billions more die of radiation poisoning and starvation.

Nuclear Winter

When the bombs cease striking targets, the world turns cold and dark. Everything is on fire. Smoke produces noxious smog of pyrotoxins. Fires in the cities ignite other fires. Even in the less-populated areas, forest fires rage.

The density of soot reduces global temperatures by 20-40 degrees depending on the location. Earth plunges into the horror known as a “nuclear winter.” This might be a familiar term for those of us who lived in the 1980s. Astronomer Carl Sagan wrote about it and warned us of the dangers of nuclear war.

A nuclear war would change the troposphere and thus the amount of sunlight reaching the earth. Once the radioactive fog and haze diminish, the ozone layer disappears, and the sun’s warming rays are now killer UV rays.

Earth is no longer as hospitable for humans as it once was. After millennia of planting and harvesting, the few humans to survive return to a hunter-gatherer existence.

Biblical Perspective

We will conclude this discussion of nuclear war with a biblical perspective. Let’s begin with the realization that God is sovereign and in control. But that doesn’t mean that He would never allow a nuclear war to take place. Throughout history, we have had tyrants and armies destroy people groups and civilizations. God used pagan nations to judge the nation

of Israel.

How should we respond? Since the first atomic bombings at the end of World War II, there has been a condition known as “nuclear anxiety.” Jesus instructs us not to “be anxious about tomorrow” (Matthew 6:34), and Paul also tells us not to “be anxious about anything” (Philippians 4:6). Jesus even says that “if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved” (Matthew 24:22).

In the book of Daniel, we have another reminder of God’s sovereignty that came in the second dream of Nebuchadnezzar. It reminded him of the fact that God “rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men” (Daniel 4:17). Nebuchadnezzar knew more about human sovereignty than anyone and proclaimed God’s sovereignty over the earth at the end of his days (4:34).

Some Christians have suggested that the Bible may be describing a nuclear war. In the book of Revelation, there is a description of the poisoning of the waters (8:11), death of the earth’s vegetation (8:17), the end of ocean life (16:3), and the inability to block the sun’s rays resulting in severe burns (16:8).

There is a description of stars of heaven falling to earth (6:13) that some have suggested might be describing nuclear missiles raining down on earth during a nuclear war. These would be visible as they enter the atmosphere and begin striking the cities on earth.

Even passages in the Old Testament might point to the effects of a nuclear war. For example, in Zechariah 14:12 we read that “the Lord will strike all the peoples that wage war against Jerusalem: their flesh will rot while they are still standing on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths.”

One prophecy yet to be fulfilled can be found in Ezekiel 38

that describes nations that will come against Israel. But critics point to the fact that it says they are riding horses, wearing helmets and armor, and wielding swords (38:4-5). That doesn't look like a modern army. But I remember a famous quote from Albert Einstein: "I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones." The world might look very different after a nuclear war.

In this article we have been discussing the unthinkable: a nuclear war. We should remember the words of Jesus: "In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Notes

1. Annie Jacobsen, *Nuclear War: A Scenario*, NY: Dutton, 2024, xvii.
2. Ibid., 53-55.
3. Ibid., 59-60.
4. Ibid., 86-87.
5. Ibid., 84-85.
6. Ibid., 173-178.

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"Is It Always Wrong to Kill? Even During War?"

I read your answer in your article "Is It Always Wrong to Lie? Even During War?" The last paragraph created another question in my own mind. The paragraph read, "Saving one's own or someone else's neck is not always the highest goal. Obedience and aligning ourselves with God's heart and character is.

Hebrews 11 has a list of people who chose martyrdom over doing what was expedient to save their lives, and they wear a crown of glory in heaven. There are better things than lying to stay out of trouble."

My question is this – in light of your answer based upon the Ten Commandments – Is it always wrong to kill even during war?

No, because the word used in the 10 Commandments that we usually read "Thou shalt not kill" is actually the word for "murder." There is a personal and deliberate aspect to murder that is not present in wartime killing. This difference is seen in the distinction between a cancer surgeon and a gang member who stabs someone in a fight. Both of them use knives to cut into people, but for completely different reasons with different motivations.

I hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"What About All the Violence and Conquering in the Name of the Christian God?"

Just read your answer to email on the Pope's inflammatory remarks about Islam, and I had a question about this statement:

> *"Muslims certainly cannot deny that Mohammed admonished Muslims to pick up their swords for Allahs cause (see my essay Islam and the Sword at Probe.org). They also cannot*

ignore the fact that Islam conquered both the Persian and Byzantine Empires via warfare."

While both statements are or may in fact be true, one we Christians cannot deny that as much violence and conquering has been done in the name of God. One should be careful about removing the speck from a brother's eye before taking the log out of his own. Actually, I believe Christian war preceded Islamic war.

I am not discounting the evil done in the name of Christ, and of course there were Christians fighting before there were Muslims since Christianity preceded Islam by six centuries. My point is about their very nature as belief systems. When one compares the actions of Christ with the actions of Mohammed, the lives of the apostles with the lives of Mohammeds companions, and the teaching found in the New Testament with what is taught in the Quran, one finds a distinct difference in the role that violence plays. Even when we compare the early history of the two religions we find that Christianity went through a three hundred year period of persecution while Islam conquered a region stretching from Spain to India, experienced three civil wars, and had three of its first four caliphs assassinated by other Muslims.

There is also the distinction to be made between individuals committing violence and vengeful acts, and the responsibility of governments or kings to uphold justice and protect their people from harm. There has been a 1,400 year conflict going on between the civilization that has constituted Europe after the Roman Empire fell and the Islamic world. For most of that time Europe was on the defensive side of things. Not until the late 17th century did the Islamic threat diminish after their failure to take Vienna and the Ottoman Empire was forced to sign the treaty of Karlowitz in 1699.

One also has to remember that Islam is both a religion and a

political system; it does not recognize a separation between church and state. When a western nation acts against a Muslim one it is not Christianity vs. Islam, it is a political entity, democratic or otherwise, deciding to act against a religious/political entity.

All of this to say that while we can point to atrocities done in the name of Christ, they have no support in the New Testament. However, atrocities done in the name of Islam have explicit models in the life of Mohammed and can find justification and support in the Quran.

None of this discussion discounts our obligation as ambassadors for Christ to love and reach out to individual Muslims in humility and with compassion.

Thank you for your thoughtful comments.

Don Closson

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Terrorism and Just War

America's war on terrorism has once again raised important questions about the proper use of military action. President George W. Bush said on September 20, 2001, "Whether we bring our enemies to justice, or justice to our enemies, justice will be done." This message and following statements by President Bush and Secretary of Defense Rumsfield articulated portions of what has come to be known as *just war theory*. This 1600-year-old Christian doctrine attempts to answer two questions: "When is it permissible to wage war?" and "What are the limitations on the ways we wage war?"

Historically, Christians have adopted one of three positions: (1) ***Activism*** – it is always right to participate in war, (2) ***Pacifism*** – it is never right to participate in war, or (3) ***Selectivism*** – it is right to participate in some wars. The just war theory represents the third position and was articulated initially by Augustine who developed it as a logical extension of Romans 13:1-7.

> 1 Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.
> 2 Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.
> 3 For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same;
> 4 for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.
> 5 Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake.
> 6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing.
> 7 Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

Augustine argued that not all wars are morally justified. He said, "It makes a great difference by which causes and under which authorities men undertake the wars that must be waged."

This seven-point theory provides a framework for evaluating military action. A just war will include the following conditions: just cause, just intention, last resort, formal declaration, limited objectives, proportionate means, and noncombatant immunity. The first five principles apply as a

nation is “on the way to war” (*jus ad bellum*) while the final two apply to military forces “in the midst of war” (*jus in bello*). Let’s look at each of these in more detail.

Seven Points of a Just War

- ***Just cause*** – All aggression is condemned in just war theory. Participation must be prompted by a just cause or defensive cause. No war of unprovoked aggression can ever be justified.

- ***Just intention*** – War must be to secure a just peace for all parties involved. Revenge or conquest are not legitimate motives.

- ***Last resort*** – War must be engaged as a last resort only after diplomacy and economic pressure have been exhausted.

- ***Formal declaration*** – War must be initiated with a formal declaration by properly constituted authorities.

- ***Limited objectives*** – War must be characterized by limited objectives such a peace. Complete destruction is an improper objective. War must be waged in such a way that once peace is attainable, hostilities cease.

- ***Proportionate means*** – Combatants may not be subjected to greater harm than is necessary to secure victory. The types of weapons and amount of force used should be limited to what is needed to repel aggression and secure a just peace.

- ***Noncombatant immunity*** – Military forces must respect individuals and groups not participating in the conflict. Only governmental forces or agents are legitimate targets.

Objections to Just War

Two types of objections often surface against the idea of just war theory. First, there is the moral objection. Pacifists argue that it is never right to go to war and often cite

biblical passages to bolster their argument. For example, Jesus said believers should “turn the other cheek” (Matt. 5:39). He also warned that “those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword” (Matt. 26:52).

However, the context of the statements is key. In the first instance, Jesus is speaking to individual believers in his Sermon on the Mount, admonishing believers not to engage in personal retaliation. In the second instance, He tells Peter to put down his sword because the gospel should not be advanced by the sword. But at the same time, Jesus actually encouraged his disciples to buy a sword (Luke 22:36) in order to protect themselves.

Two political objections have been cited in the last few months against the application of just war theory to our war on terrorism. Critics say that the idea of a just war applies to only to nations and not to terrorists. Even so, that would not invalidate American miliary actions in Afghanistan or Iraq.

But the criticism is incorrect. It turns out that Christian thought about just war predates the concept of modern nation-states. So the application of these principles can apply to governments or terrorist organizations. Moreover, the very first use of American military force in this country was against Barbary Pirates (who were essentially the terrorists of the 18th century).

Critics also argue that since terrorism is an international threat, the concept of just war would require an international declaration of war. This is not true. The U.S. or any other country does not need to get international approval to defend itself. Even so, both President George H. W. Bush and President George W. Bush have brought the issue of Iraq to the United Nations for a vote. But as the current president made clear, he sought UN approval, not permission. He would like multilateral approval and help, but the U.S. is prepared to go

it alone if necessary.

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"What is a Christian Perspective on War?"

Is there anywhere in the Bible where God or Jesus speaks or justifies the Christian needing to go to war? I know we are to obey those who are in control of the government, unless the demands go against biblical principles. I also have read the various passages concerning loving our enemies and blessing those who persecute us. But what of war? What about the issues of defending our homes for the cause of freedom, right to worship, or when others infringe on the rights of those living in other countries?

There are essentially three Christian views concerning war:
Activism – it is always right to participate in war.
Pacifism – it is never right to participate in war.
Selectivism – it is right to participate in some wars.

Most Christians generally hold to the third position. This led to the development of what has come to be known as the just war criteria.

A just war would include the following elements:

• Just cause (defensive war)

• Just intention (just peace)

• Last resort (negotiations)

• Formal declaration

• Limited objectives

• Proportionate means

• Noncombatant immunity

There are a number of books that have been written on this subject of war and the Christian. Here is a short list of books that you might find helpful.

• Clouse, Robert. *War: Four Christian Views*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, revised 1991.
• Holmes, Arthur, ed. *War: Christian Ethics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, revised 1991.
• Payne, Keith and Payne, Karl. *A Just Defense*. Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1987.
• Schaeffer, Francis; Bukovsky, Vladimir; and Hitchcock, James. *Who Is For Peace?* Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1983.

Kerby Anderson

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"Is It a Sin For a Christian to be a Soldier in the Military?"

Is it a sin for a Christian to be a soldier (i.e. someone training to be on the frontlines to kill) in the military?

I have been reading some arguments on both sides of this coin, and both have some weight to them. The main argument from the peaceful side of this coin is that Jesus said "those who live

by the sword, will die by the sword" and that first century christians did not serve in the military, except for a few, but they weren't in war at that time. The other side of the coin seperates personal responsibility from state responsibility and says that if you are serving in the military and kill, God holds the head of the state responsible. It also uses the Old Testament wars in many of its arguments.

It seems to me that there is power in not fighting, and that the Bible teaches that we should love our enemies, and not kill others just because a government tells you too. However, it would seem in such an evil world that if we didn't stand up and fight for the protection of others, all Christians would be oppressed. It just keeps flipping back and forth.

Thank you for your question about Christians serving in the military. Probably the three best known books dealing with this subject are:

- *Robert Clouse, ed., War: Four Christian Views (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1981).*
- *Arthur Holmes, ed., War and Christian Ethics (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1975).*
- *Keith Payne and Karl Payne, A Just Defense (Portland: Multnomah, 1987).*

I could go into the details of the various positions, but I think these books (especially the InterVarsity book) provide a good overview of the arguments on each side.

I might also mention that Tommy Nelson (the pastor of Denton Bible Church in Denton, TX) has put together a 90-minute video on the subject of Christians in the military. It is simply called "God and the Military: Is It Right to Bear Arms?" You can contact him at www.dentonbible.org. Thanks for writing.

Kerby Anderson

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