

Love, not deadly force, is the Christian's weapon.

You shall not murder.
–Exodus 20:13

Do not repay anyone evil for evil.
Be careful to do what is right in
the eyes of everyone... Do not
take revenge, my dear friends, but
leave room for God's wrath, for it is
written: "It is mine to avenge; I will
repay," says the Lord.
–Romans 12:17,19

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of
this world. If it were, my servants
would fight to prevent my arrest
by the Jewish leaders. But now my
kingdom is from another place."
–John 18:36

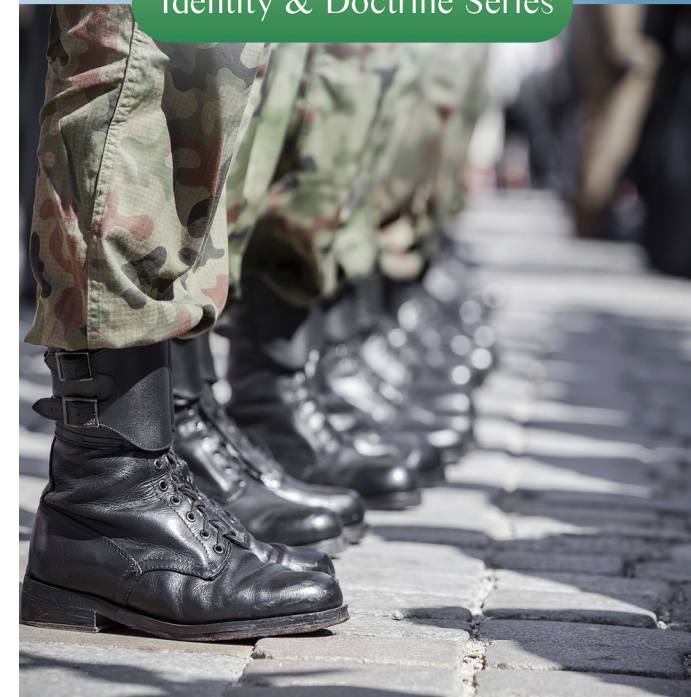
Peter and the other apostles replied:
"We must obey God rather than
human beings!"
–Acts 5:29

"You have heard that it was said,
'Eye for eye and tooth for tooth.' ...
But I tell you, love your enemies
and pray for those who persecute
you.
–Matthew 5:38,44

Christians and War:

A Call to a Biblical Counter-Culture

Identity & Doctrine Series



CANADIAN CONFERENCE
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Faith and Life

Christian opposition to war: Some biblical perspectives

Christians by no means stand alone in their opposition of war. Many people have seen the devastation caused by war, are troubled by the influence of arms manufacturers and no longer believe war is an appropriate way to resolve international differences.

This raises several questions. With whom should Christians cooperate in opposing war and militarism? How should Christians respond to corporations that build weapons? What kinds of anti-war activities are appropriate for Christians? How much energy should they devote to such activities?

Expressions of protest need to be examined in the light of Christ's own example and a pattern of biblical ethics. Some kinds of protest are acceptable; some should be avoided. Living Jesus' way is in itself a form of public protest. Helping rather than hurting, building rather than destroying; and loving rather than killing, done in the name of Jesus Christ, communicate both a biblical faith and commitment to peace. By modelling love in all relationships, Christians reject violence and war.

Whether in peacetime or war, a Christian's commitment to do good also includes challenging evil in the established order, provided such activity is done in God-honouring ways. Jesus' ethic of love, peace

and righteousness means that we cannot be neutral about personal or institutional evil.

Christians may carry out their protests with people who hold different beliefs, so long as they agree on the objectives and the means. Their stance ought to be to work with others when they are right and part from them when they go wrong. At all times, they should boldly witness to their identification with the way of Jesus and the gospel of salvation through Christ.

In times of war, Christians...

...love even their enemies

...practise Christian
citizenship

...help victims regardless
of their citizenship

Spoken and written opposition to militarism and war can be powerful expressions of love and concern for our fellow human beings. The state may, of course, reject anti-war statements and go as far as to prosecute those who make them. Some people escalate their protests, even to the point of engaging in acts of destruction. Such action undermines the Christian message of peace.

While Jesus' teaching stands in opposition to all evil, he and his disciples rarely challenged institutional evil directly. Jesus did use force in the cleansing of the temple (John 2:15-16), but

fundamentally he dealt with evil by going to its source, to the heart and will of people. Thus while Jesus appears not to have challenged Zacchaeus, a corrupt tax collector, directly, his repentance led to the restitution several times over of the money he had fraudulently gained (Luke 19:2-10). Jesus practised an ethic of peace, but we do not read that he told the Roman soldiers to leave their profession. We read that he healed members of their households (Matthew 8:5-13). Likewise, the Apostle Paul did not tell Philemon to abandon slavery when he wrote to him to accept the return of his runaway slave, but he did tell him to accept Onesimus "no longer as a slave, but... as a dear brother" (Philemon 1:16).

Some Christian Responses to War

1. Pray for peace and for people in government.
2. Make every effort to obey the law; however, do not accept military service that involves training in how to kill fellow human beings who are also made in the image of God.
3. Join a relief organization to serve unarmed in war zones; provide aid to the victims of war.
4. Do not avoid dangerous assignments while doing good; Christians are not cowards.
5. Even in honourable professions and businesses, do not exploit the tragedy of war for personal gain.
6. Make a living by producing goods and services that sustain life; refuse jobs associated with killing and destruction.
7. Be willing to accept the penalties the state may impose for those who refuse to

participate in military action.

8. Witness to the conviction that Christians who believe Jesus taught his followers not to kill cannot serve as soldiers but willingly serve their country in constructive ways.

9. Urge the peaceful resolution of all disputes while recognizing that leaders of countries are part of this world's system and do not, therefore, rule in full accord with the biblical principle of peace.

10. Share the good news of salvation even in time of war. ■

Let us not become weary in doing good, ... Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.
—Galatians 6:9-10

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.
—Romans 12:18

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
—Matthew 5:9