

# Christians and War

**I thank God that my father, my uncle and other relatives enlisted in the military.**

“Tell me one place where Jesus told people to raise an army or to arm themselves,” the talk-show host screamed at me. I soon realized this friendly interview had switched to attack-dog mode and that I was the unsuspecting victim. “You call yourself a minister!” the person sneered. “I know that it makes you feel good being in meetings with the president.”

The telephone call had become so insulting that I simply hung up. Don’t worry; I didn’t stoop to the level of the host.

After the conversation, though, I began to think about Scriptures I could have used to explain the Bible’s teachings on military involvement and warfare. As I thought about how often self-righteous people with no biblical framework attempt to critique our faithfulness to Christ’s teachings, it occurred to me how truly difficult balanced, Christian living can be.

Romans 13:4 says that believers should obey their government and the laws of the land. Paul’s reasoning is clear: “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” (NASB).

From the Old Testament to the New Testament, we see God supporting one army over another. He often intervened on behalf of Israel or God-fearing Israelis who were engaged in battles and civil wars.

Don’t get me wrong—I am not advocating a Christian jihad or some type of civil movement. I am saying that when evil raises its ugly head, it must be addressed. Most rational people

today would say that Hitler was sinister and his military agenda had to be stopped. I thank God that my father, my uncle and other relatives enlisted in the military and fought for freedom.

I am thankful also for the brave young men and women who fight for us today. They are heroes even though some of our political figures may seem to have mixed motives and strange perspectives about the war.

In Luke 22:36 we read that Jesus tells His disciples to go and buy a sword. They quickly return with two swords, and He tells them that the two weapons are sufficient.

Jesus is later arrested by a mob directed by Judas and his co-conspirators. Peter, who was known for reacting before thinking, asked Jesus if he should use his new sword. Unfortunately, Peter struck the man before he got an answer.

Matthew records that Jesus replaced the ear of the high priest's servant. And He told Peter: "'Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?'" (Matt. 26:52-53).

Talk about mixed signals! Peter presumed Jesus was in favor of swords because He told the men to purchase two of them. Yet our Lord did not advocate living as a servant to violence.

What the Lord is looking for is wise stewardship of all earthly power including political, monetary and military. Peter was impulsive and controlled by his emotions, even though he was a servant of God.

My prayers are with President George W. Bush, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, our military leadership and every American soldier in Iraq. I trust that we will discern evil with the help of the Holy Spirit and stand for the righteous

causes God calls us to champion.

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