

When Christians Weaponize God

Weaponize – verb.

Convert to use as a weapon

A brick is nothing of great importance. It is made out of dirt and can be used for a variety of well-intentioned purposes. Many bricks can build a wall that could be used for safety. A lot more bricks could build an entire house. That house can provide shelter, safety and comfort to a family in need. Lots of good things can come from bricks.

But pick up that same brick, aim it at a person and throw it, and you can cause real damage. Use it forcefully against an individual's head, and *it can be deadly*.

A brick can be weaponized. A knife can be weaponized. A piece of wood can be weaponized. Something that has the ability to serve a valuable purpose can also often be used for more nefarious reasons.

God, however, is not a brick to be thrown.

You have seen it happen. You might have even done it yourself at times. We all have a history filled with (sometimes knowingly and sometimes unknowingly) “using” God for our own purposes.

We will pick up God's name and aim it at individuals who don't agree with us, effectively throwing God at them. We will forcefully use God's name as a way to get what we want. We will attack those who disagree with us and pat ourselves on the back because we thought we were doing God's work. We will use culture as the battleground and God as a weapon against culture.

But God is not a weapon. God is light. God is love. God's kingdom is most often a subversive force always working to

bring about change.

Possibly the most famous verse in the Bible is John 3:16.

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

What is not as well-known is the verse that immediately follows it.

For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

Interestingly, Jesus wanted to make it clear that He was not sent to judge the world, but to save them. Saving them meant embracing the brokenness of humanity and demonstrating what love looked like. Love went as far as *taking ownership* for wrongs it did not commit to create an opportunity for healing to take place.

That's the example He was inviting us to follow.

What does that mean? Before you get to judge another person, you need to go as far as you possibly can to take ownership of that persons fault on their behalf and in doing so you will create an opportunity for *them* to embrace healing. They make not take it, or want it, but you have given them the opportunity.

Does that mean we condone sinful behavior? No, Jesus didn't condone the behavior of the adulterous woman in John 8, but He didn't condemn her either. He put Himself in harm's way on her behalf so that she might have an opportunity to embrace **forgiveness and healing**. Once she had that opportunity, He gave her clear instructions to "*go, and sin no more.*"

That's what love does. It embraces weakness and creates an

opportunity for healing instead of weaponizing at the first sign of fault.

Jesus was really clear about how the world will know we are His disciples.

“By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

If your life is not an example of love, then you have to question which Rabbi (that was what they called teachers of the law in the time of Jesus) you are trying to become like. Is it the Rabbi who walked through Samaria (a place the Jews hated and avoided because of the race of people living there) or the Rabbi who would walk around it? Is it the Rabbi that touched the lepers or the Rabbi who would do everything to avoiding them because they would make him unclean? Would your Rabbi embrace the broken or blog about them? Would your Rabbi declare that He has no place to lay His head or would he expect his followers to build a grand house for him? Would your Rabbi talk about injustice and do nothing or quietly find a way to get to the cross that He might end it?

The western culture has, at times, weaponized God. We use Him as a battering ram, a moral high ground, a manipulative tool, a pointed gun. We bring a sword to kill instead of a scalpel to heal.

“But, Jesus said He came to bring a sword! He turned over tables, rebuked the Pharisees and is coming back on a white horse as judge of the earth!”

Yes, Jesus did. And when you have healed multitudes of sick people, opened blinded eyes, stood up for the adulterous, invited the children, cared for the Samaritan and poured out your life as an example of the radical power of love, you too can have the authority to turn over a few tables and speak boldly against hypocrisy.

Until then, lay down your weapons and demonstrate Jesus through embracing weakness and demonstrating the power of love. The only way we should be weaponizing God is through the subversive, yet powerful, weapon called love.

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