



# Weekly Devotion

## Self defense, according to scripture

Do Christians have the right to use physical force to defend themselves?

The short answer is: Yes.

But where is that principle found in Scripture? Where does the Bible tell us that it's okay to use physical force to defend ourselves against legitimate physical threats?

One place is in the book of Proverbs, where Solomon teaches his son that he is free to defend himself against someone who is attempting to do him bodily harm.

In Proverbs 3:29-30, Solomon instructs his son with these words: "Do not devise harm against your neighbor, while he lives securely beside you. Do not contend with a man without cause, if he has done you no harm."

Christians have a moral responsibility to voice our disagreement with irrational and evil people. But as Solomon makes clear, we are never free to initiate the use of force against another human being. No matter the circumstances.

Regarding the use of force, philosopher and novelist Ayn Rand said it best: "Men have the right to use physical force only in retaliation

and only against those who initiate its use... The principle is: no man may obtain any values from others by resorting to physical force."

That's the same ethical principle Solomon taught in these verses. We must never initiate physical force in our dealings with other people. Instead, we should be the kind of people who know how to get along with our neighbors who live securely beside us.

We should be the type of people our neighbors can trust. Trust is an essential element of a healthy society. Trust breeds fellowship and fellowship leads to brotherhood. Brothers work together. They cooperate. They trade with each other. They protect one another and live in harmony. Unwarranted violence stirs up animosity. But respect, trade, and peace foster a productive community.

That being said, a person is well within his rights to defend himself against anyone who breaks that social trust and initiates harm against him. Solomon said as much when he told his son, "Do not contend with a man without cause, if he has done you no harm." If you flip this verse around, Solomon gives

his son the greenlight to contend with any man who gives him cause by initiating harm against him.

His point here is clear: No person has the right to violate the rights of another person. But every person has the right to defend his or her own life.

Per Solomon's instruction, any uncivilized thug who initiates force against you deserves force in return—not as vengeance, but in rational self-defense. Once again, I quote Ayn Rand: "The necessary consequence of man's right to life is his right to self-defense. In a civilized society, force may be used only in retaliation and only against those who initiate its use. All the reasons which make the initiation of physical force an evil, make the retaliatory use of physical force a moral imperative."

Our lives are valuable because God values our lives. If we want to honor God, then we must meet our moral responsibility to protect all those valuable things—including our own lives—that He has put under our care.

*Bro. Colin Trisler*

*Pastor, Pleasant Grove Baptist Church*

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