



## ***Being a Community Watchman*** **Christian Self-Defense**

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When it comes to the topic of self-defense, there are two crucial questions that must be answered: What is self-defense and whose responsibility is it?

Is self-defense karate, tae kwon do, kung fu, or some other ancient martial art system...or something else? And is it the responsibility merely of law enforcement and security entities such as guards in gated communities, upscale apartment buildings, office buildings, malls, etc., or should individual citizens play a role?

In addition, when it comes to self-defense from a Biblical, Christian perspective, should we look at self-defense differently from the world?

### **What is Self-Defense?**

Self-defense can be defined as anything that keeps you safe from an attack or physical harm committed against you by another person. It may come as a surprise to you, but training in ancient or modern day forms of “martial arts” is not necessary to defend oneself against such an assault.

Simple physical defense techniques that allow you to break free of an attacker, combined with a defensive or offensive weapon such as pepper spray, batons, sticks, stun guns, and knives -- and firearms should a greater level of force be required -- is really all that is necessary for effective self-defense. *(Be sure to check your local laws and ordinances regarding carrying weapon for self-defense purposes, as they vary around the world.)*

As we will cover shortly, even a cell phone can be used to protect you and your community!

### **Whose Responsibility Is It to Protect and Defend?**

Many people leave protection and personal safety to law enforcement and security. After all, we are the experts and this is what we get paid for. While there is an element of truth to this, the reality is that safety and protection is really an individual's responsibility, and so you are full accountable for YOUR own security. Each able-bodied person, male and female, young and old, should be actively involved in his or her own safety. As diligent as law enforcement and security may be, we simply cannot be every place at all times, **nor should we need to be.**

As a police sergeant, you may wonder why I make such a statement, but as Christians, we must consider self-defense from a Biblical perspective. I have been practicing martial arts for 30 years, and am proficient in many of its disciplines; and I have been a police officer for more than two decades. But as a Christian, I firmly believe that each one of us who calls Jesus our Messiah not only has a **right** to defend him or herself from harm, but that we have a Biblically-mandated **responsibility** to do so for ourselves, our loved ones, and even our community.

Matthew 5:13-14 tells us we are “salt and light”, therefore we are to be (1) a preservative for a decaying world and (2) illumination into all areas that are in darkness due to ignorance and evil. In other words, we are to make a positive difference in the world, which includes helping to provide safety and security for not just ourselves, but other people.

At a minimum, this means being, as Ezekiel put it, a “watchman on the wall”, sounding the alarm when a potential threat exists. This could be as simple as picking up your cell phone and calling the police if you see a strange car casing your neighborhood, or suspicious people entering your neighbor’s home when they are out. If we see someone being threatened with physical violence or actually being attacked, that we would speak up by yelling for them to stop and then calling the police. For those who are bolder and have taken the time and effort to prepare themselves through self-defense training, which can include weapons, you may choose to physically get involved in the situation. Of course, each of us must weigh the risks to our own personal safety, but for God’s people the sanctity of human life is at the core of our beliefs.

According to John 13:34, the world will know us by our love. Placing oneself at personal risk to help another is a demonstration of love, and Jesus tells us in John 15:13 that there is no greater act of love than to lay down one’s life for another. Again, this is not to say that every follower of Christ is to commit to this extent, but for those who have a burden and the inclination for this, it is a Biblical principle.

With respect to the police, government has its role and is appointed by God, as we learn from Romans 13:1; however the Church/Body of Christ is God’s ordained institution to dispense His love and demonstrate His concern for people. God created the world and all that is in it, and people are His masterpiece (Ephesians 2:10), therefore when it comes to caring for people, God says that is the job of the Church, and government is merely a supplement.

Many of us remember the Guardian Angels of New York City who rose to the height of their popularity in the early 1980’s. Well, I believe in a similar concept, citizens helping to protect citizens, but from a Biblical heart and motivation, and with a different operational method. Although I commend Curtis and Lisa Sliwa for their efforts to safeguard the citizens of New York, the concept I am sharing does not include a formal group with uniform attire, recruiting members and forming organized patrols. What I envision is simply God’s people going about life as usual, but being intentional about having watchful eyes, along with hands and feet committed to getting involved in some capacity in times of danger.

Just think, a major metropolitan city in the U.S. such as Fort Lauderdale, Florida has about 350 police officers total for all shifts, but it has over 165,000 citizens who are around 24/7. What if only 10% were Christians committed to be watchmen, watch-women, and even watch-children in their communities? That would be more than 1600 sets of watchful eyes, almost five-times the number of police officers, prepared to do something to help safeguard the life of another should it become necessary. Again, our first responsibility is to protect ourselves and our families, and then if this vision is one you can grasp, to consider living out your faith in this manner of service and watch Christ be glorified.

I Peter 4:10 teaches, “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” Regardless of the role you choose, whether it’s notifying the police if something seems wrong, or becoming directly involved in a situation, be bold and courageous, because the Lord your God is with you. If your efforts to safeguard your life and the lives of others is your act of worship to God, He is with you in the fight, and I firmly believe that your efforts will be blessed.

As violence becomes more prevalent in our world, this demonstration of God’s love will also become more greatly needed. As His people, we must be prepared to address the various needs in our culture as we continue to be His active Body, and a witness of the sacrificial life of Messiah to the whole world.

As Christian statesman Edmund Burke said, “All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.”

Let’s take back our communities from the bad guys. Don’t abdicate your responsibility to play your part. Ask God how he wants you to be a watchman, watch-woman, or even a watch-kid, and then perform your service boldly unto Him!



**Sgt. Eric Lawrence became a police officer in Boca Raton, Florida in 1989, and served as a road patrol officer, a Public Information Officer, a Youth Services Officer instructing the Drug Abuse Resistance Education program, the Gang Resistance Education and Training program, and the CHOICES after school program for the youth.**

**He has extensive training in a wide range of martial arts, and has police instructor certifications in the following: Expandable Baton, Defensive Tactics, Firearms, Taser, and Chemical Weapons/Pepper Spray.**

**He has been exercising regularly since age 9, and gave his life to the Messiah at age 13.**

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