

A Cop Can't Be A Christian

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Two officers drove up on a gang rape in progress and jumped out of their patrol car as the gang members fled in all directions like a covey of quail flushed by two hunters. The officers checked the woman who was physically okay and went after the perpetrators. In the ensuing melee one officer shot and killed a suspect who came at him with a knife. The other officer was involved in a knock-down, roll-in-the-dirt, fight with one suspect in which he finally gained enough advantage to be able to use his night stick to come out victor any way he could. The suspect had to be taken to the hospital semi-conscious with several gashes and bruises.

Both of these officers are quick to proclaim that they trust Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, and both of them are active in their churches. Were they true Christians in this incident in which they killed one person and severely injured another? Too many people would say they weren't being true Christians and that a person cannot be a good cop and a good Christian. Many officers and citizens, both Christian and non-Christian, believe or feel that a basic contradiction exists in the responsibilities of being a cop and a Christian. This belief is based on misunderstandings of what it means to be a cop and what it means to be a follower of Christ, a person who trusts Jesus implicitly.

People often view Christianity as a "goody-goody-two-shoes" religion, though they seldom recognize or express this underlying belief. They believe that Christians must be mild mannered, wimpy, people who are always nice and proper, and this belief is simply false. God says to those two officers, "Well done, good and faithful servants!" He is not confused and isn't putting a false guilt trip on them.

Being nice and never upsetting anyone has nothing to do with being a Christian. In fact, to do so would be failure. "The surest way to be a failure in life is to try to please everyone all the time." We live in a screwed up world with screwed up values, and America is no exception. Screwed up values and thinking equates being a Christian with being nice and not upsetting people. Being nice and proper is not an expression of following Jesus. Loving people and living by love is the prime expression of following Jesus. Sometimes killing a person and sending another to the hospital is the loving thing to do.

Living By Love

The two officers serve their community because they care about people—love them. They do their jobs well primarily because they love people, not because they hate criminals. When they drove up on the gang rape, they did their jobs as police officers and put themselves in harm's way because they loved. Police officers are trained and equipped to protect citizens and bring criminals to justice. Love demanded that they ensure the safety of the woman and do everything reasonably within their power to catch the suspects who harmed her. When the officers killed one suspect and injured another in the course of their duty, they were primarily expressing love for the woman and the community.

If the officers had not followed through as they did and let the suspects get away, then they would not be living by love. If the suspects had escaped, they would be free to harm other citizens and justice for the woman would not have been done, which is critical for a free society. By doing everything they could, the officers showed that they cared for the woman and their community.

Commanded To Love

Religious leaders who were contemporaries of Jesus once asked him which commandment was the greatest. Read his answer.

Mat 22:34 But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they came together. 35 And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question, to test him. 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" 37 And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets." (RSV)

He said to love was the greatest commandment. In fact, he added that to live by love was the basis of and summarized all the teachings about life in the Old Testament. Jesus gave us only one commandment in the New Testament, and it is the only time in the New Testament that we are clearly given a commandment. Read what Jesus said.

Joh 13:34 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (RSV)

The only commandment given in the New Testament is for the people of God to love each other as Jesus loved them—a good summary of the teachings of the New Testament. The entire teachings of the Bible on how to live can be summarized:

- Love God totally, more than anything.
- Love God's people as Jesus loves.
- Love all people as yourself.

The short summary is: Live by love. Living by love doesn't mean being nice and proper. Jesus became furious and drove a bunch of employees out of the Jewish temple with a whip because they were making improper profits through people's piety. Often when referring to the leaders of his nation and church, he openly called them hypocrites. He violated the rules and regulations of his nation and church—though not the scriptures. Referring to religious leaders and lawyers, he openly called them wicked and adulterous to their faces. Simply put, Jesus was not nice and proper. If he had been nice and proper, like so many people think Christians should be, he would never have infuriated the people in power to the point that they killed him. Jesus lived totally by love, but he wasn't always nice and proper.

Love doesn't mean that a person never hurts anyone. Sometimes love demands that we hurt and even kill. The two officers had to hurt and kill to protect the woman and community. They did so out of love, not vengeance. When Pearl Harbor was bombed, many Americans went to war to protect their families, loved ones, friends and country from being conquered by an enemy. Love for families compelled them to go to the hell of war and to kill to protect their loved ones and keep them safe.

Can a cop be a true Christian? The answer is overwhelmingly yes! In fact, it is much better for the force available to police officers to be guided by love than the misguided vengeance and anger that some officers have.

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