

Falwell's damage and our response

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I, like many people of faith, am reeling from [Jerry Falwell Jr.'s proclamations](#) to his student body. Falwell encouraged the students of Liberty University (there are more than 100,000 of them) to arm themselves against Muslim terrorists.

His rhetoric reminded me of a bumper sticker I see here in Tennessee: "Only a good guy with a gun can stop a bad guy with a gun."

I went to a Bible school, where students sometimes imagined that they were the good people and everyone else was a bad person. It was a warped view, for sure. But at least we just passed out tracts and tried to get the "bad people" to repeat the "sinner's prayer" after us. We didn't have a college president packing heat in his back pocket, providing free gun training courses, and inciting us to "end those Muslims before they walked in." Falwell has since clarified that he meant Muslim *terrorists*, but that's a very big and telling omission to make as you fire up a hundred thousand young people to arm themselves and kill.

There are the obvious interfaith concerns with this. We work across faithful traditions, because we know that our holy wars have been far from holy. I hope and pray that in the days to come, there will be many voices encouraging love and peace toward our one billion Muslim neighbors.

There is another aspect about the rhetoric that concerns me. I denounced Falwell on Facebook and had a lively discussion that quickly turned to a person's right to defend himself and his family.

These streams represent the lies of patriarchy. For patriarchal ideas assume:

- Men should hold moral, financial, and physical power. Men will protect and provide for women.

- Women should give up some of their freedom, in order to be protected and provided for.

So why would I call it a lie to say that men who carry guns will protect their families from the bad guys?

Fourteen people died in San Bernardino, and each loss of life was a tragedy. But, in response, American men should not imagine that they are now heat-packing heroes, protecting their wives from the enemy. **Because a woman is more likely to be injured by the hands of her partner than anything or anyone else. The presence of a gun in a domestic violence situation increases the risk of homicide by 500 percent.**

These ideas are dangerous, as women in our country can attest.

- Three women are murdered every day by a current or former male partner in the US.
- 18,000 women have been killed by men in domestic violence disputes since 2003.
- Domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women.
- Domestic violence cuts across faith lines. Whether you're a conservative Christian, a liberal Christian, or an atheist, domestic violence can affect you. There has been some interesting reporting linking complementarian views and violence. The one place where faith matters most is that a person who has a strong faith community will be more likely to leave an abusive spouse.

The idea that all Christian men wear white hats, carry guns, and protect their women and children could not be farther from the truth.

It's Advent, and there's another voice calling out among the political pundits and talking heads. It echoes in our longings and liturgies. We have visions of lions and lambs relaxing with one another. We have the dream of beating our swords into plowshares, learning to feed rather than fight with one another. We have Mary, with

swollen ankles and sciatic nerve pain, reminding us all of what it means to bear God. We have that realization that we have been born again by the water-breaking Spirit.

In other words, there is another way to be a civilization. We can be nurturing parents, working together, finding dignity in one another, and feeding one another. Throughout history, we are our best when we strive for peace, fight for justice, and stoke the courage to love.

Squelch the anxious fears. Our guns will not save us. God, who is kicking about within us, who is longing to be flesh in our world, will save us. Nurture peace.