

Hey, America's still talking about gun control!

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

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Here's some good news: despite our short collective attention span, despite the fiscal-cliff debacle dominating the headlines shortly after the Newtown shooting, the U.S. scourge of gun violence is still part of the national conversation.

Now, every time I hear a public official mention Newtown and Aurora but not Chicago—which experienced [a startling spike in gun homicides in 2012, mostly in poor, black neighborhoods](#)—I'm ashamed at the implication that some killings deserve more shock and outrage than others. Still, whatever it takes to motivate people to take on the pro-gun lobby, I'm grateful to see it happening.

Yesterday [the Post reported](#) that the vice president's gun-control working group is looking to go big, or at least medium sized, in its proposals. And last night, former Rep. Gabrielle Giffords—who has a certain moral credibility on the subject—[announced that she's launching a pro-gun-control lobbying group](#).

What do Christians think? [A CNN Radio story](#) out today asks that question. It includes comments from *Century* executive editor David Heim, who points out that love of neighbor is the proper starting point for all Christian ethics—and that Americans' weapon stockpiles don't seem to be helping us do a better job of it. Countering David: Mark Rogers of the website [Christian Gun Owner](#), who insists that the next would-be mass shooter is already out there planning an attack—an intent Rogers calls "irreversible." The only way to stop this person is thus to be there, to pack heat and to draw faster.

I didn't need CNN to tell me that Christians disagree about gun control, but Rogers's comments disturbed me. "Irreversible"? So there are some people whose hearts are so evil that they can't possibly be changed, can't be healed? That's not what I believe; nor, for that matter, is it what I was taught in my conservative-evangelical family of origin, home church or grade school. It is, however, probably the single idea that upsets me most when I hear it from professed followers of Jesus.

As a side note, this is also the main reason that there's one issue on which I'm more of a (small-"f") fundamentalist than any other: the death penalty. I may have gone liberal and gone mainline and started reading Catholic social teaching as a young adult, but I didn't need to do any of this to be suspicious of Christian support for capital punishment. Because if being an evangelical doesn't include believing in the absolute power of God's grace to transform human hearts, then the folks who brought me up in that tradition must have been doing it wrong.

Anyway, Mark Rogers is a guy with a website, not a spokesperson for all pro-gun Christians. Still, anyone meeting the latter description should wrestle with [the point David made recently](#): a biblical ethic starts with care for neighbors, not individual freedom. I can maybe understand the argument that confiscating every civilian firearm in the country has the potential to inhibit one's ability to protect a neighbor. I can't, however, see that case against the kinds of reforms Biden and Giffords and others are looking at. Whatever it is to be opposed generally to restrictions and regulations of individual rights, it isn't biblical.

We American Christians disagree about all manner of things. But we ought to be able to agree that the right to arm yourself to the teeth is not worth the bloody price we've been paying for it.