

Do Christians Hate?

We're living in a world of hatred and violence. The violence continues to intensify. Almost daily, it seems, we hear of conflict and bloodshed not only in wars but in otherwise peaceful nations. Shootings and other violent crimes take place not only between gangs in the cities but even the workplace, schools, and more and more in places of worship. Even some who profess to be Christians get caught up in the use of force and even violence.

A lawyer from New York stated that "the anti-abortion movement in the United States follows up ... with violence." Abortion opponents, most of them professing Christians, regularly picket abortion clinics and otherwise protest the destruction of the unborn. Doctors and workers at abortion clinics have been killed by anti-abortion activists. In this case pro-abortionists are blaming conservative Christians. Christians often get accused of "hate crimes."

Should true Christians be guilty of violence because they practice the Biblical view of family and marriage or because they believe that an unborn child is a real person, created by God, for a purpose in this world? Certainly Christians should be known as those who love others, even those they disagree with. Jesus taught: *"Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you"* (Matthew 5:44).

Because of this Scripture and others, we know it is sin for a Christian to hate others or to mistreat them. Hate is never right, no matter how wrong the other person is. True Christians do not get abortions because they know that the Bible teaches the sanctity of life in the womb. *"For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb"* (Psalm 139:13). Christians abstain from all forms of immorality, including fornication (premarital), adultery (married people), and homosexuality. Christians teach and practice moral purity. *"Now the works of the flesh are . . . adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred ... they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts"* (Galatians 5:19-21, 24).

Christians can expect persecution from a world that is anti-Christ. However, we must be careful not to bring accusations against ourselves by disobeying God. The Bible teaches Christians to suffer wrong and not retaliate. *"Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good"* (Romans 12:17- 19, 21).

If Christians take this Scripture seriously they will not harm people, even their enemies. They will not become involved in any type of coercion or force against others. This includes trying to prevent workers, even at abortion clinics, from doing their work. Sadly, Christians who feel

they must use force, even “nonviolent” resistance, are missing the way God has planned for the church to reach an ungodly world. Using coercion and political influence to make people stop doing wrong does not change their hearts. By such methods Christians tend to make enemies instead.

The crux of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is to bring change to people’s hearts. Without changed hearts, immorality, abortion, murder and a host of other sins will not be dealt with. The Bible teaches Christians to, first of all, live out their faith as examples among the ungodly. Secondly, Christians are called to expend their time and efforts appealing to people to take God’s way, through His Son Jesus Christ. Thirdly, the church needs to encourage and teach those who have become Christians. If the churches or our world would take this approach seriously, more could be done to change people than could ever be done through political means, demonstrations, or force.

When churches start using political means or coercion, they open themselves to retaliation in kind. Political force against the church increases.

So what shall Christians who are concerned about our world do about immorality, violence, abortion clinics, the drug and alcohol problem? Let us be examples right living first. Then, on a one-to-one basis we can point people to the better way of obedience to the Bible. We can also share Christian literature that teaches God’s way. We cannot force people to follow Jesus. Transformed lives can and will make a difference in our world. They will bring hope to men and women now and, more importantly, forever.

~ Roger Berry