

The Biblical Question of Self-Defense

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By Dave Havir

BIG SANDY, Texas—Through the years, I have exchanged books with family and friends. Recently, my brother gave me a book about self-defense, titled *Take Cover: Finding Peace in God's Protection*. The book was written in 2018 by Philip De Courcy—a pastor and a former police officer in the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) in Northern Ireland. The hardcover edition has 124 pages.

At this time, I want to give a brief review of the book.

Introduction

In the introduction, Mr. De Courcy discussed faith. He wrote the following statement: "Security is not the absence of danger but the presence of God."

Following are four ideas that Mr. De Courcy mentioned in the introduction.

- "I learned to use the constant threat of death as a motivation to live wisely and well."
- "I learned to leave the Final Act of Justice and Judgment to God."
- "I learned God is not the enemy of my enemies, for God is not even the enemy of His enemies."
- "Finally, I learned during my days in the police in Northern Ireland that genuine security is not found in the absence of danger, but in the presence of God."

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 is titled "Get on Your Knees—Taking Cover in a Life Guarded by God's Peace Through Prayer."

Mr. De Courcy mentioned the following ideas.

- Paul discouraged panic.
- Paul promoted prayer.
- Paul promised peace.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 is titled "Keeping Your Balance—Taking Cover in a Life Guarded by God-Centered Worship."

Mr. De Courcy mentioned the following ideas about Psalm 73.

- Asaph's reflection
- Asaph's remonstrance
- Asaph's restraint
- Asaph's recovery

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 is titled "Don't Be Surprised—Taking Cover in a Life Guarded by a Proper View of Suffering."

Mr. De Courcy mentioned the following ideas.

- Peter encouraged realism
- Peter encouraged rejoicing
- Peter encouraged reliance

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 is titled "The Real Enemy—Taking Cover in a Life Guarded by a Knowledge of the Enemy."

Mr. De Courcy mentioned the following ideas.

- Time to sober up
- Time to square up
- Time to stand up
- Time to suit up (with the "Armor of God")

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 is titled "The Beginning of the End—Taking Cover in a Life Guarded by the Hope of Jesus' Glorious Return."

Mr. De Courcy mentioned the following ideas.

- The picture Jesus employed
- The particulars Jesus explained
- The preparedness Jesus emphasized

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 is titled "Send for the Police—Taking Cover in a Life Guarded by Lawful Government Protection."

In this chapter, Mr. De Courcy wrote: "The state is God-ordained, but it is not sovereign; God alone is sovereign. Consequently, we must always obey God and His word before the statutes of human government or civil authorities . . . The Christian's obedience to the state is contingent and limited. We report to a higher throne first and foremost."

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 is titled "You Are Responsible—Taking Cover in a Life Guarded by Self-Defense."

In this chapter, Mr. De Courcy wrote: "The question of self-defense is an important one and a pressing issue for several reasons."

He listed the three reasons.

- It is a biblical issue.
- It is a practical issue.
- It is an American issue.

In this chapter, Mr. De Courcy wrote about his personal view.

On page 97, he wrote: "It is my own conviction [that] one can make a solid biblical defense of self-defense. I do not believe the Bible instructs the Christian to be a pacifist in the face of criminal actions and murderous intent. I do believe it is possible to kill a bad guy and remain a good guy. Owning a gun for the purposes of self-protection is not, as far as I can determine, unchristian."

Mr. De Courcy continued his comments with his emphasis on polite disagreement among Christians.

On page 97, he continued: "That said, I hasten to add this theological hot potato requires balance and humility. On one hand, we must all agree this is a liberty of conscience issue. On the use of firearms in the matter of self-defense, we must learn to disagree with each other agreeably."

Shortly thereafter, Mr. De Courcy gave a caution to Christians who believe as he does.

On page 97, he wrote: "Those who advocate for the rightness of self-defense must be careful to speak with restraint. The freedom to take another life in the preservation of one's own is a grave liberty. It should never be presented in a cavalier manner. Candidly, in defending self-defense, we must not come across as 'gung ho,' as if we are itching to shoot someone. Gun advocates must be

quick to acknowledge guns are a necessary evil to combat evil, guns are an ugly fact of life, and someday Jesus will remove them (Isaiah 2:4; Joel 3:10).”

Under the Scripture question, Mr. De Courcy mentioned the following verses to explain his position.

- Exodus 20:13
- Genesis 14:12-16
- Exodus 22:1-3
- Esther 8:8 to 9:19
- Proverbs 24:11 and Psalm 82:4
- Luke 11:14-22
- Luke 22:35-38
- 1 Timothy 5:8

For the record, Mr. De Courcy was aware of how some Christians use verses in the Sermon on the Mount to disagree with his conclusion, and he discussed his view of the Sermon on the Mount on pages 105-108.

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 is titled “Keep Calm and Carry On—Taking Cover in a Life Guarded by an Unshakable Trust in God.”

Mr. De Courcy mentioned the following ideas about Psalm 46.

- The refuge (verses 1-3)
- The river (verses 4-7)
- The rest (verses 8-11)

Conviction and compassion

No matter what you personally believe about the subject of self-defense, I recommend that Christians become familiar with the material in this book.

Individual Christians who choose to buy their own copy may contact Salem Books at Regnery.com. (For the record, I receive no remuneration if you buy the book.)

Some congregations might be able to consolidate a group order and receive a discounted price.

Other congregations may simply decide to purchase only one copy of the book that can be placed in the church library.

In my circle of life, I have friends who believe both ends of the self-defense spectrum. More important, I have friends who disagree about this issue based upon conviction and who yet show kindness based upon humble compassion.