

“End Those Muslims!” – A Response to Jerry Falwell Jr.



The following is taken from an interview with Dan conducted by Reagan Schrock.*

Three years ago Jerry Falwell Jr., president of Liberty University, the largest Christian Evangelical University in America, said,

“If more good people had concealed carry permits, then we could end those Muslims before they go out trying to kill us...Let’s teach them a lesson if they ever show up here.”¹

The context for his statement was in regard to the San Bernardino shooting that was currently in the news at that time, in which two Muslims entered a holiday party in California and shot a number of people. That incident followed a string of other terrorist attacks that had been going on in the United States and other Western countries over the last several years. Liberty University often comments on current events and this was a reaction Falwell gave as a means of instruction to his students.

The motive that I see driving statements like this is fundamentally a widespread concept among many Christians about the nature of America. In the book “The Myth of a Christian Nation”², the author discusses the idea of America being designed as a Christian Nation: for Christians, by Christians, Christian’s running the government, Christians participating. There is a lot of fear among people that have this view because they feel like this idea is gradually being pushed out as America becomes a more pluralistic society and more people arrive from other countries. They have a sense that America is being threatened, and we need to protect ourselves; that, as Christians, we need to stand up for what we have and for our rights.

I believe that comments like Falwell’s are motivated by a core idea that the rights of Christians in America are under threat and being trampled on by leftists, Muslims, and others. If it takes physical force to defend against those opposing forces, then that’s what they are prepared to do. Falwell intended to direct his statement towards Muslims who were involved in terrorist attacks and not all Muslims in general, but whatever the case, he was speaking about ending the lives of souls that God created. I would say the majority of those who identify as fundamental, evangelical Christians would have supported Jerry Falwell or been in a similar way of thinking, though certainly not across the board.

There are people at various levels in their response to Muslims and their responses as to how much they want to interact with them. Fear is definitely prevalent among the evangelical Christian community, and possibly parts of even more mainstream Christianity. So now we ask the question: How would Christ respond? When reading the New Testament, you will see almost exactly the opposite of what Falwell prescribed. Jesus made statements such as “love your enemies”, (Matthew 5:44 “resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.” (Matthew 5:39-40)

There is one constant message that Jesus gave: The people who treat us badly are the people we are supposed to treat the best. It is very counter-cultural and counterintuitive, but that’s absolutely the message that Christ gave to His people here on earth. The Anabaptist story is about 500 years old now, and throughout their history the Anabaptists have been an oppressed, persecuted people who have said, “We will stand up for our beliefs in Scripture no matter what it costs. Even if it means death by fire, drowning, stoning—we are willing to suffer and die.” However, times have changed and now the majority of conservative Anabaptists live in America with comfortable lifestyles and little persecution.

So how do we respond to terrorism and Islam? I fear that sometimes we are too affected by our neighbors and friends who would spread fear and make us want to respond in defensive ways by saying, “This is our country. We don’t want to let you in.” As Anabaptists we should never feel proud or superior in our understanding of Scripture, but the way of Christ is always the way of love. We have a tremendous opportunity to follow Jesus’ teachings and respond in nonresistant love when facing opposition or persecution. Jesus said very clearly that we are not to fear those that are able to kill the body, but to fear him [the devil] who is able to destroy both body and spirit in death. (Luke 12:4-5)

Obviously, as humans, we do have some fears and I think God understands those, but He’s encouraging us that what we should really fear is spiritual failure and spiritual death. Fearing people and certain groups that may have the potential to harm us physically isn’t really the point. We may take some precautions, but our chief goal is not to preserve our lives. This concept involves a radical change of thinking. We’re here only for a few short years anyway, and if we can get that mindset, it changes everything. Jesus is teaching us a way of peace, love, and forgiveness, and that’s a powerful message to any enemy.

*name withheld for security reasons [Return to context↩](#)

¹Botelho, Greg. “Liberty University president urges students to be armed.” CNN, Dec. 5, 2015, <https://www.cnn.com/2015/12/05/us/liberty-university-urges-armed-students/index.html>. [Return to context↩](#)

²Boyd, Gregory A. The Myth of a Christian Nation: How the Quest for Political Power Is Destroying the Church. Zondervan, April 29, 2007. [Return to context↩](#)