

On a recent visit to Zimbabwe, I took my family to visit the site of the old Elim mission station in the Vumba. As so much of my mission work is spent helping persecuted Christians, I wanted to show my children an example of how Christians suffer persecution. I also thought that it might help explain why I must travel away from home so often to serve those suffering for their Faith.

On 23rd June 1978, Marxist terrorists of Mugabe's ZANLA murdered 9 British missionaries and 4 young children, including a 3 week old baby, at the Elim Mission station. I showed my children the school buildings and we walked onto the field where the missionaries and their children had been herded, then tortured and bayoneted to death.

My point in explaining this atrocity was to illustrate the vicious hostility of communism for Christianity. However, the reaction of my children was quite different from what I had expected.

*"Why didn't the daddies protect the mummies and the children?"* asked my oldest daughter, Andrea.

*"Well these people were pacifists – they believed that they could never use any force to defend either themselves or their families,"* I answered.

*"Then they couldn't have been Christians!"* declared my younger daughter, Daniela

*"No, Daniela, actually these people were very sincere Christians,"* I explained. *"They were very brave people who died courageously – even praying for the terrorists that they would be converted. They died as martyrs for Christ."*

Andrea was horrified *"How could any Christian father stand by and refuse to defend his own*

children? The Bible commands fathers to protect their family!"

"You are right, Andrea. They were very wrong not to fight to protect their children. But they were sincere Christians all the same!"

"Well I don't think they acted like Christians!" Daniela was adamant.

A long discussion over parental duties, self defence, what constitutes a true Christian and all the related issues continued for days afterwards. Although Andrea was only 8 years old at the time and Daniela was 6, they were more concerned over the passivity of the parents than over the wickedness of the communists. Even our 4 year old son, Christopher, was deeply offended and genuinely horrified that there could exist any father who would fail to do everything necessary to defend his wife and children. "*But if the bad people tried to hurt us you would shoot them wouldn't you, Daddy?*"

"Yes, Christopher", I assured him, I most certainly would.

We discussed some of the Scriptures that clearly teach a man's responsibility to provide for the protection of his family: "*If anyone does not provide for his relatives and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.*"

1 Timothy 5:8

Obviously I, as a husband and father, cannot only provide my wife and children with housing, food, clothing, education and medical care. I must also provide spiritual guidance, love and protection." "*If a thief is caught breaking in and is struck so that he dies, the defender is not guilty of bloodshed* ."  
Exodus 22:2 "*Like a muddied spring or a polluted well is a righteous man who gives way to the wicked.*"

Proverbs 25:26 Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord Who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes." Nehemiah 4:14 From these and other Scriptures, it is clear that God holds men responsible for being armed and prepared to protect his family. In fact our Lord Jesus taught: "

. . . *if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one.*

" Luke 22:36

Pacifist beliefs do not stand up to the harsh reality of our fallen world. Nor can pacifism be reconciled to the clear teachings of Scripture. "*There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death* ." Proverbs 14:12