WHY FOLLOWERS OF JESUS SHOULD OPPOSE CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

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Some Preliminary Assumptions

The death penalty’s continued existence in the United States is inextricably tied to notions that God demands it.
Some Assumptions

The erroneous conclusion driven by this erroneous use of Scripture is:

To go against the death penalty is to go against God.
Forty-four (44) absolute, non-waive-able, non-negotiable, non-compromise-able elements of procedural and substantive law required by the biblical death penalty.

We are instructed in Exodus 23:7 that we should not have any part in the execution of an innocent person.

In the U.S., we don’t apply the death penalty to any of these 44 legal requirements. **We are Zero for Forty-four.**
In constitution of the U.S., there is no overriding right to not be executed just because you are factually innocent.
The Disneyland Death Penalty

We want to believe:

• That the death penalty kills neatly and quietly without horrendous botched executions,
• that causes no harm to the innocent family of the condemned and the staff who must kill him or her,
• that it is just and equitable without reference to race or wealth,
• that only those who are guilty are convicted,
• that is only attached to the worst of the worst and
• that it only costs a fraction of life imprisonment

It’s just not true. That Disneyland Death Penalty does not exist.
Prosecutors in the United States have been using biblical quotes to obtain death sentences from juries for years.

The most popular scripture quotes used by prosecutors are those involving vengeance as justice.
The Naked Truth

The modern United States death penalty is a Bible-belt phenomenon. Bible belt states (plus Oklahoma and four slave holding border states) have held 86% of the 1,516 state executions in the US since 1976:

Texas 570
Virginia 113
Oklahoma 112
Florida 99
Missouri 90
Georgia 76
Alabama 67
No. Carolina 43
So. Carolina 43
Arkansas 31
Louisiana 28
Mississippi 21
Tennessee 13
Kentucky 3
The death penalty in the Bible has nothing to do with the death penalty used in the United States.

Yes, the Bible permits a death penalty.

The death penalty is not required by God but is only permitted.

The question of the U.S. death penalty is one of policy.
The Naked Truth

As a policy issue, the use of the death penalty should be driven by data.

• Executions cost multiples more than life imprisonment without the possibility of parole
• The U.S. death penalty is hopelessly biased on race and wealth
• There is no positive return to society or the family of the victim but does harm those affected by its use.
The Naked Truth

The facts against the death penalty are so damning against its use that supporters have no choice but to argue God demands it.

They argue that no one has any personal responsibility for this killing because God requires it.
An eye for an eye only ends up making the whole world blind.

Mahatma Gandhi

The Misuse of the Mosaic Law
The Misuse of the Rule of Blood

“Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall that person’s blood be shed; for in his own image God made humankind.”

Genesis 9:6
Problems with using the Rule of Blood to justify the death penalty today:

1. Such attempts in our time are limited to first-degree murder
2. Such attempts have not explained why other portions of the blessing do not also continue to be binding as law
3. If this is indeed God’s command, then it must be God’s desire that anyone who kills another human being must be executed.
The Misuse of Romans 13

“But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for (government) beareth not the sword in vain; for (government) is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.”

Romans 13:3-4 (Authorized KJV)
The Attempt to Blame Our Killing on Jesus Christ
Conclusion

Join us in proclaiming:

• I never liked the death penalty.
• I was always afraid we would kill an innocent person.
• If I don’t have to support it for God, I don’t support it.

Hear the Good News: God does not demand these killings.
Resources

• www.IWasInPrison.org

• **Books by Dale S. Recinella:**
  
  • *The Biblical Truth about America’s Death Penalty* (Northeastern University Press, 2004)
  
  • *Now I Walk on Death Row: A Wall Street Finance Lawyer Stumbles into the Arms of a Loving God* (Chosen Books, April 2011)
  

• Visit [NBAcares.org](http://NBAcares.org) for our educational resources about Prison & Jail Ministries. You’ll find past webinars, helpful articles, and the slides and additional handouts from this webinar.
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