

# STANDING OUR HOLY GROUND

A YEAR-LONG LOOK AT **GUN VIOLENCE** & WHAT THE FAITH COMMUNITY CAN DO ABOUT IT

## Study Guide

### The Theological Grounding of Our Gun Violence Policies

#### Timestamps

##### Opening Remarks

[1:26](#) - Common Understandings

[6:16](#) - Panelist Introductions

##### Panelist Presentations

[8:48](#) – Chris Iosso, [Coordinator for the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy](#), PCUSA

[23:06](#) – Jim Atwood, Pastor and [Author on Gun Violence Prevention](#)

##### Q&A

[39:21](#) – Where can we find John Calvin’s commentary on the sixth commandment related to gun violence?

[40:19](#) – Could the panelists provide more scriptural references that ground gun violence prevention work? What would they say to rural Christians who value their gun rights and see gun control as a divisive and ineffective secular political position that the church should not be addressing?

[50:32](#) – Could the panelists elaborate on the tension between the rights of people to have guns and the rights of people to be safe from guns? The rights of the individual versus the rights of the community?

[54:19](#) – Could Jim Atwood provide clarification on the statistics for the number of people killed by gun violence in the US compared to the numbers of service members killed on the battlefield since 1775?

#### Helpful References

[Gun Violence, Gospel Values: Mobilizing in Response to God’s Call](#) (219<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, 2010)

[Gun Violence Prevention – Congregational Toolkit](#) (Presbyterian Peace Fellowship)

[Presbyterian Peacemaking Program](#)

[Presbyterian Peace Fellowship](#)

[Standing Our Holy Ground Webinar Series](#)



## General Questions

1. How did this webinar engage your **mind**? What thoughts came to mind as you heard from the panelists?
2. How did this webinar engage your **heart**? What emotions and feelings did you experience while hearing from the panelists?
3. How did this webinar speak to your **soul**? What spiritual wonderings emerged while listening to the panelists?

## Guided Questions

1. What theological perspectives guide your views on gun violence? Do you know people who have similar or different perspectives?
2. What is your response to the idea that *“the Church should be a truthful place, not a neutral place”*? Do you think the issue of gun violence is an issue that the Church should be addressing? Why or why not? If yes, how can discussions and debates on gun violence be held in a way that is passionate, but without condemning or demonizing anyone?
3. Chris Iosso references theologian Walter Wink’s historical view of America and its relationships with guns. Wink found total romanticism with guns in the American West, but also found that many people in the West were involved in outlawing guns throughout much of US history. In fact, the truth is that *“America is not its guns”* and *“guns have not been the main story about America.”* Do you agree with this statement? If guns are not the primary narrative of America, then what is our narrative? What should be the narrative of our nation?
4. Jim Atwood states that *“for decades we have been timid as a Church about addressing gun violence and gun control, it has been the elephant in the Church parlor that no one wanted to acknowledge.”* Do you agree? Is it easier to talk about these issues in your congregation now than in the past? Why or why not?
5. Both panelists discuss the *“idolatry of guns”* in America. Do you think such idolatry exists? Why or why not? Is there a difference between idolatry and individual rights? Further, Chris Iosso describes a lesson from Paul’s writings in scripture: *“if you insist on a privilege that makes it hard to live in community, that is a kind of selfishness.”* What do you think about this statement in the context of gun ownership and gun violence? Do you agree? Why or why not?
6. A theme throughout this webinar is the tension between the *“right of the individual”* to own and use a gun versus *“the rights of the community”* to safety. Do you think this tension exists? If so, how can we navigate this tension as Americans and as Christians?

