

To keep and bear arms: what and why

As an author, columnist, radio talk show host, and pastor who is outspoken in my support of the Second Amendment, I often receive inquiries from people asking for my personal preferences regarding firearms. This column will be devoted to sharing my thoughts on the various types of firearms in an attempt to help readers who may be new or even foreign to the use of firearms. I trust that some of these remarks will inspire people to become more familiar with the different types of firearms that are available and, hopefully, motivate people to take a closer look at those firearms that might be beneficial to them personally.

I'm sure this column will not provide anything new for the firearms aficionados out there. But we are living in a violence-prone society, and more and more people (especially ladies) who never paid much attention to guns before are sensing the need to arm themselves but don't really know where to start. This column is designed to help those people.

Plus, there are many Christians reading this column who have been brainwashed by pastors who promote the idea that, on Biblical grounds, they don't need to own a gun and even might be sinning if they did. I trust this column will give these folks some food for thought that will cause them to at least study the issue for themselves.

First, let me emphasize that I am NOT a firearms expert. And I strongly urge you to receive as much instruction and training from a firearms professional as possible. It is also critical that, no matter which firearm you decide to purchase, you practice with it. The firearm you purchase is no better or worse than your ability to handle it.

Second, when it comes to a discussion of which firearms are preferable, the suggestions are as varied as the people who proffer them. These are my suggestions:

I believe every man and woman should be proficient with the following firearms: a handgun in .38 caliber or above, a .22 rifle, a centerfire, bolt-action hunting rifle, a semi-automatic rifle, and a shotgun. But don't think you have to know everything about all of these firearms at once, of course. Start simple, and go from there. You don't have to be an "expert" to be able to protect yourself and your family. But a basic working knowledge of these firearms is extremely valuable and will give you much confidence.

My personal preference for a self-defense handgun is a Glock pistol in .40 Smith & Wesson (Model 22 or 23), .45 ACP (Model 21 or 30), or 10mm Auto (Model 20). Of course, the 1911 .45 ACP (I prefer Colt or Springfield Armory) has been proven to be an extremely effective self-defense sidearm for over a century. But I don't recommend the 1911 for beginners.

And as much as I love to shoot the 1911 (NOTHING "feels" like a 1911), I hardly ever carry one for self-protection. Not because there is anything wrong with the gun. There isn't. But not being an "expert," I just don't trust myself to be able to proficiently handle the 1911 in a high-stress situation.

In addition to the aforementioned pistols, I will also admit to sometimes carrying a 9mm Glock (Model 19 or 17) or a Smith & Wesson .357 Magnum revolver. My two favorites in this caliber are the Model 66 with a 2½-inch barrel and the Model 586 with a 4-inch barrel. My wife prefers to carry a Smith & Wesson .38 Special revolver in the snub-nose, J-frame configuration. But this is primarily due to the reduced weight of these weapons for carry purposes. If needed, she could make a good accounting of herself with the Glock 19. And, yes, I also carry a J-frame .38 Special sometimes—either as a backup or when deep concealment is necessary.

I prefer the .38 Special to the .380 ACP, although the modern .380s are very concealable—and for that reason, I sometimes carry a .380 in a Glock 42. My main complaint with the Glock 42 is it has a stiff trigger pull—around 9 pounds, whereas, most Glock pistols have a standard 5.5 pound trigger pull. (I have found that a lighter trigger pull makes accuracy easier.) When I do carry a J-Frame revolver, it's usually a S&W 340 M&P, which is built for the .357 Magnum, but, of course, the .357 can also fire the .38 Special, which I prefer when using such a small, lightweight revolver. The .38 Special and 9mm Luger are comparable in power. For deep concealment, I also like the Glock 43 in 9mm (although, it's not as concealable as the Glock 42). But most of the time, I'm carrying a Glock 23 in .40 caliber.

As you can tell, I'm quite the Glock fan. I believe the Glock pistol is the best place to start for people who are new to handguns. Plus, Glocks are the preferred handgun for many of the most experienced shooters as well. I would guess that more police officers carry Glocks than any other handgun. And in much of Europe, Glock pistols are the handgun of choice for many military personnel. Glock pistols are as simple as revolvers to operate, reliable, and almost indestructible. Plus, they provide increased magazine capacity and are safe. They are also very easy to disassemble and clean. And they go "bang" when you pull the trigger.

But, yes, for some people a revolver might still be the preferred handgun. It has no external magazine to worry about losing; it is very dependable and reliable; it is easy to clean; and it is simple to operate. And, in reality, most self-defense shootings are resolved in less than three seconds, and the good guy normally fires three shots or less; so in most real-life situations, the increased firepower of a high capacity pistol magazine doesn't even come into play—unless, perhaps, when one is confronted by a crazed, would-be mass-killer or multiple assailants. (That's where a

Glock would shine—and I confess that in today's environment, I WANT the increased capacity of a Glock or similar pistol, which is why I'm usually carrying one.) But in a revolver, my suggestion would be either Smith & Wesson or Ruger.

Of course, in dangerous game territory, you will need the power of a .44 Special, .44 Magnum, .45 Long Colt, or even a .454 Casull (these four calibers are all chambered in revolvers). These calibers are not for the limp-wristed, but when one is facing a brown bear, it is what one will need to survive. Plus, when your life is on the line, you'll never feel the recoil. But, truthfully, I would hate to face a Brown Bear (includes the Grizzly and Kodiak) with a handgun of any caliber. These creatures are the fiercest and most formidable animals on the North American Continent (along with the Polar Bear, of course). Against a Brown Bear, I would hope I had a big game rifle or 12-gauge shotgun.

I live in bear country, of course, and when I'm in the woods, I'm either carrying a Glock 20 in 10mm or a Smith & Wesson Model 629 with a 3" barrel in .44 Magnum. To be honest, the .44 Magnum gets heavy after several hours in the woods, which is why I usually carry the Glock 20. Plus, I feel better with 15 rounds of 10mm than 6 rounds of .44 Magnum. But I hope and pray I never have to test my theory for real. In a real encounter, you can bet that my rifle will be the first line of defense and my handgun (whichever one it is) will be the very LAST.

For a .22 rifle (which is great for hunting small game), I really like the Ruger 10/22. A Marlin tube-fed .22 is also very effective. The CZ bolt-action .22 just might be the most accurate factory .22 on the market. My all-time favorite .22 rifle is a Remington Nylon 66 in Mohawk Brown (which hasn't been manufactured in a long time). But that's because of sentimentality. It was my very first rifle. My dad gave one to me for my 12th birthday, and over the next many, many years I probably fired over 50,000 rounds through it. I finally sold

it (which I have regretted to this very day). But I found one in EXCELLENT condition at a Montana gun show last year, and the joy it brings me is indescribable. But truly, from a practical standpoint, the Ruger 10/22 stands alone at the top of the heap.

For a big game hunting rifle, my suggestion is either a .270 or .30-06 bolt-action rifle, a .30-30 Winchester or a .45-70 Government lever action rifle. I like the Marlin Guide Gun in .45-70. (Here in Montana, the .300 Winchester Magnum is also very popular.) I usually hunt with either a .270 or .30-06. I prefer the Remington Model 700 BDL (in .270) or Browning X-Bolt (in .30-06), but there are several fine rifles in this configuration by numerous manufacturers. Some ladies may find that a .243 Winchester rifle is much more pleasant to shoot. It's a great first hunting rifle for young people, too. And on deer-size game, it has plenty of power. Most major gun manufacturers make rifles that come in .243.

For a semiautomatic rifle, I suggest an AR-15-style firearm in 5.56 caliber or a Springfield M1A in .308 caliber. As I've gotten older, I've come to appreciate lighter weight rifles. Hence, my personal choice here is the AR-15. Plus, the versatility of the AR-15 platform is virtually without limit.

However, the rifle I almost always keep in my truck is the venerable .30-30 Winchester in a Marlin 336. Yes, everybody needs a "truck" gun.

For a shotgun, a 12-gauge in any configuration is the premier close-range weapon. Nothing equals it. In a pump shotgun, I prefer a Winchester Model 1300, which is not made anymore. So, you'll probably have to choose between Mossberg and Remington. In the semi-auto configuration, Mossberg is currently making some fine shotguns. For smaller ladies, however, a 20-gauge shotgun is probably a better choice, and at "bad breath" range (where a shotgun shines, anyway), it is just as lethal as a 12-gauge (against two-legged predators, of course). And for

home defense, do NOT overlook the double barrel shotgun. And while I often use a .410 shotgun for small game, I do NOT recommend it for self-defense.

Again, whatever you choose, practice with it to the point that you are able to use it proficiently. And be sure to get as much professional firearms instruction and training as you can. And stock up on ammunition (good luck finding .22 ammo). A gun without ammo is reduced to being either an expensive club or a cumbersome paperweight.

Go to your local independent sporting goods or gun store (I don't recommend the large national chain stores to do your firearms shopping), and get to know your hometown firearms dealer. Most of these people are kind and helpful folks who will be more than happy to assist you in finding exactly what type of firearm is suitable for you and your family.

I hope some of these suggestions are helpful. And always be sure to follow all of the safety rules for your firearm. The last thing any of us wants is an accidental discharge of a firearm that results in the injury or death of a loved one or friend. So, always remember that safety is job one.

I realize that there are many pastors and Christians who try to impugn the necessity—much less desire—to own a firearm. These people are famous for saying things such as “God will take care of you; NO ONE needs a gun.” Of course, these same people always condone police officers carrying guns and shooting people in self-defense. I never understood why it is that Christians who are not policemen are supposed to “trust God” to take care of them and, therefore, not bear a gun, but Christian police officers are somehow exempt from this same spiritual notion. I guess they think policemen don't need to trust God.

I also want readers to know that there have been FOUR instances in my personal family where the presence of a

firearm in the hands of someone who knew how to use it potentially or directly saved the lives of my family members. So, yes, God took care of us, and He used a firearm to do it.

Beyond that, many pastors teach that Christians are obligated to obey civil authorities who demand that we surrender our firearms. They even try to quote Scriptures to prove this ludicrous position.

For these reasons, my attorney son and I collaborated on a book that takes the Scriptures (Old Testament and New) to prove that self-defense is not just a right under our Constitution, but it is a moral obligation given us by our Creator. In the book, we show that Christians who are unwilling to defend themselves and their families have actually denied the faith. We show that nowhere does the Bible teach God's people to remain defenseless or to surrender their means of self-defense to ANY civil authority.

In the book, we look at the Scriptures that the "no gun" preachers use to support their "no one needs a gun" lunacy and show how unbiblical these positions are. We go through both testaments and show that our Creator has given us the obligation to defend the life He has given us. We also put to rest many of the distortions of Scripture that anti-gun preachers use to turn Christian men and women—who are created to be providers and protectors—into sheepish slaves of the state.

Yes, keeping and bearing arms is a spiritual DUTY. Defending oneself or family is as "spiritual" as praying or reading the Bible or any other "spiritual" exercise.

The title of our book is "To Keep Or Not To Keep: Why Christians Should Not Give Up Their Guns." To order the book, [click here](#).

It is not only important to be armed; it is even more important to understand the moral and spiritual underpinnings

of WHY we should be armed. And that is exactly what our book attempts to do.

If you are challenged by this column, I encourage you to highlight what resonates with you, and then take these suggestions to your local independent firearms dealer (again, not a national chain store) who can further explain the various nuances of what to look for in a gun for your unique and individual needs and can also direct you to the services of a professional firearms instructor. When you do, you might find that the preferences of these men differ from mine, but the basics are the basics, and at least you have my suggestions as a starting point.

And if you are one of those people who just don't "like" guns, when you actually become familiar with firearms and begin shooting under the supervision of a knowledgeable instructor, you might find yourself REALLY enjoying it. But even if you don't, there are many things we adults do that we don't enjoy but that we know are necessary. I would put the proficient use of a firearm in that category.

Good shooting!

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