

Hunting – What Scripture Says

From [Kathy Dunn, SAGC Shepherding All God's Creatures](#)

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As we approach the hunting season once again in Minnesota, USA, as well as in other parts of the USA and around the world, it is time to ask ourselves as Jesus followers if hunting is something we should be doing. What does the Bible say about hunting? Richard Dunkerly, evangelical Christian, teacher and writer, in a timeless letter to ACC ([Animal Christian Concern](#)), writes on the topic as follows. This letter can also be found in [Roslyne Smith](#)'s book, [Animal Welfare: Through The Cross](#). (For more information on the Bible and hunting, see [this](#) video from [Creation Care Church](#))

The small sparrow clung with intractable grace to the TV antennae wire just beneath the gable of our neighbour's house. He seemed to be soaking in the aureate splendour of the twilight of this summer day's ending. He took no notice of me hidden behind the tree, air rifle poised skyward. Peering around the edge,

I carefully swung the barrel in-line with unsuspecting bird, bracing it against the side of the trunk. I took a deep breath, as deep and silent as a five year-old might take, and placed the small, fawn-coloured body on top of the crude sight. Satisfied, I pulled the trigger. Thwack! The small copper BB smashed its mark and the bird fell to the porch, lying motionless, silent.



Photo by [Miriam Fischer](#) from [Pexels](#)

Elated, I ran into our house to tell my mother of my success. She looked at me in dismay. “You what?” she said. “Come see! Next door!” In my excitement I was oblivious to her state of mind. We knelt beside the small body. I picked him up – warm in my small hand. The BB hit the bird behind his beak, under his left eye. Death was instantaneous.

“Did you ever think,” my mum began, “that this bird might be a mother-bird returning home to feed her babies? Or, perhaps a father, and his family is waiting for him?” My mother went on, as eloquently as she could with her five-year-old son, to explain that what I had done was wrong. She explained that hunting was for food, not for fun. That animals and birds mated, and had young ones to care for the same as people. That in taking this small life, I had irrevocably changed the lives of creatures whom I would never see and never know. She told me to think about this the next time I wanted to shoot another creature.



[Photo by Leif Blessing from Pexels](#)

Thirty-eight years later, that day and my mother’s words, are still indelibly imprinted into the folds of my memory. I lost all desire to hunt the same day I had acquired it. Four years later, in a small Baptist Sunday School, I became a Christian and learned that His eye was on the sparrow as truly as mine had been that summer evening.

But people hunt. All over the world they hunt. Many Christians hunt. Some for subsistence; others for trophy or sport. Does the Bible say anything about it?

Recently, a Southern California Christian radio station asked me to participate in a hunting debate on one of its talk programs. The station had scheduled a Christian pastor on the east coast who enjoys hunting and feels strongly that the “dominion” passage (Gen. 1:28) provides the inviolability his “hobby” demands. I was eager for the discussion.

The debate never materialized as they were unable to locate the pastor by air time (we were both on the phone at the station). The show’s host decided to wing it by questioning me on my views of hunting relative to what the Bible says. What followed was extremely educational for both him and the audience, as well as myself, as I was forced to deal with elements about an issue I had not spent much time studying.

Does the Bible have a verse saying, “Thou shalt not hunt”? No. The Bible does not deal with every issue that explicitly. But it does deal with issues in other ways, rewarding those who are willing to look. Often Scripture uses models, types or contrasts to make its case.



[Photo by Alex Andrews from Pexels](#)

“I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets” (Hosea 12:10).

There are four hunters mentioned in the Bible: three in Genesis and one in Revelation.

The first hunter is named Nimrod in Genesis 10:8-9. He is the son of Cush and founder of the Babylonian Empire, the empire that opposes God throughout Scripture and is destroyed in the Book of Revelation. In Micah 5:6, God’s enemies are said to dwell in the land of Nimrod. Many highly reputable evangelical scholars such as Barnhouse, Pink and Scofield regard Nimrod as a prototype of the anti-Christ.

The second hunter is Ishmael, Abraham’s “son of the flesh” by the handmaiden, Hagar. His birth is covered in Genesis 16 and his occupation in 21:20. Ishmael’s unfavourable standing in Scripture is amplified by Paul in Galatians 4:22-31.

The third hunter, Esau, is also mentioned in the New Testament. His occupation is contrasted with his brother (Jacob) in Genesis 25:27. In Hebrews 12:16 he is equated with a “profane person” (KJV). He is a model of a person without faith in God. Again, Paul elucidates upon this model unfavourably in Romans 9:8-13, ending with the paraphrase of Malachi 1:2-3: “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.”

The fourth hunter is found in Revelation 6:2, the rider of the white horse with the hunting bow. Some scholars have also identified him as the so-called anti-Christ.

Taken as a group, then, hunters fare poorly in the Bible. Two model God’s adversary and two model the person who lives his life without God. In Scripture, the contrast of the hunter is the shepherd, the man who gently tends his animals and knows them fully. The shepherds of the Bible are Abel, Jacob, Joseph, Moses and David. Beginning in the 23rd Psalm, Jesus is identified as “the Good Shepherd.”



Good-Shepherd - dreamstime.com/free pictures Jesus

As for hunting itself, both the Psalms and Proverbs frequently identify it with the hunter of souls, Satan. His devices are often called “traps” and “snares,” his victims “prey.” Thus, in examining a biblical stance on the issue of hunting, we see the context is always negative, always dark in contrast to light.

Having explored this aspect of what the Bible illustrates, where does that leave the Christian relative to hunting? Is it truly wrong? Will hunters be stripped of their salvation? Certainly not. But Christians who participate in hunting should re-examine their motives for doing it. They need to ask, “Why am I taking this animal’s life? Is it necessary for my well-being? What is the purpose of this killing?”

One argument will be tradition. The grandfather took the father hunting and the father takes the son. Nature, the outdoors, fresh air. Yet all of the positive aspects of what it means to go hunting can be experienced without ending an animal’s life.

In his book, ‘Straight Talk to Men and Their Wives’, Dr. James Dobson devotes an entire chapter to the times his father awakened him long before sunrise and then drove him into the woods.

Once there, they would hide quietly in a thicket. After an hour or so, they observed in wonder and silence as white-tailed deer, raccoons, and other creatures came down to drink from the stream that flowed between them. The memories of those mornings are permanently embedded in Dobson’s mind. Yet no animal had to be killed to cap the experience.

Therein lies the rub of hunting; premeditated killing, death, harm, destruction. All of these are ramifications of the Fall. When Christ returns, all of these things will be ended. Isaiah 11:9 provides both the promise and the reason behind it:

*“They shall not hurt nor destroy . . . for the earth shall be **full of the knowledge of the Lord**, as the waters cover the sea.”* (Emphasis mine)

Of all people, Christians should not be the destroyers. We should be the healers and reconcilers. We must show **NOW** how it will be **THEN** in the Peaceable Kingdom of Isaiah 11:6 where “the wolf shall lie down with the lamb . . . and a little child shall lead them.”



A Little Child Shall Lead Them

We can begin now within our homes and churches by teaching our children respect and love for all of God’s creation . . . by teaching them.

Authored by: Richard Dunkerly, California, USA, Winter 1992. Richard is an evangelical Christian, teacher and writer. In a letter to ACC, Richard also writes:

“With the increasing focus on the environment, ecology and nature, the coming years will be the most crucial time in the history of the Christian Church, especially in America. There are many calls here to abandon Christianity and embrace a religion with a greater ethic towards the earth . . . such as the concepts that Native Americans held. But before that happens; if it happens, we need to discover that Jesus communed with animals in the wilderness during the forty days of temptation. He spoke to trees. He claimed that rocks could praise Him. We must dig deeper and find out what He meant in doing and saying those things. Was He being facetious, or was He quite serious? We need to find out.”