

# Cross calls Christians to trust in God, not guns, prof says

November 19, 2013

ABILENE—Christians who advocate gun rights on grounds of self-defense have lost sight of the radical nature of Jesus' message, a [Hardin-Simmons University](#) professor told a student-initiated forum on gun violence.



Panelists (left to right)

Jeffrey Key, Melissa Madeson, Lex Tan and Rodney Taylor participate in a forum on gun violence sponsored by the Hardin-Simmons University International Student Fellowship. (PHOTO/ David Tappert)“Americans have a deep love of salvific violence, the idea that with the use of force—the use of deadly force—against the right kind of people, we can make things turn out OK,” said [Rodney Taylor](#), assistant professor of theology at HSU. “I think the cross, however, says something very different. What we see in the cross is the overcoming of violence, not through resistance, but rather through trust in God.”

Speaking on “God and Guns: The Way of Jesus in a Violent World,” Taylor critiqued the argument of self-defense as a natural right by comparing and contrasting it to Christian beliefs about premarital sex. To non-Christians, a

prohibition against sex outside marriage seems like a “strange command,” he noted.

“But there are a lot of other strange commands there that Jesus gives us that seem counterintuitive,” he said. “I think the problem with the natural right of self-defense is that it loses sight of the kind of radical message that we see in the gospel—this radical approach that Jesus gives us that is counterintuitive, that doesn’t really seem to fit.”

Taylor participated in a panel discussion at the on-campus forum, organized by HSU’s [International Student Fellowship](#).

### **An addiction**

Panelist Melissa Madeson, assistant professor of fitness and sports sciences, compared gun violence to drug addiction. With any addiction, she noted, the threshold for pleasure increases with time.

“So, is more gun control the answer, or stricter laws? Or should we continue to blame video games, TV shows, mental illness or Hollywood for creating a violent atmosphere?” she asked. “As with any addiction, there are no easy answers.”

The so-called “gun culture” is part of a wider culture of fear and consumerism, said panelist [Jeffrey Key](#), professor of political science.

“One of the elements of the gun culture is a culture of fear,” he said, noting fear sells guns.

Key defended the American constitutional right to keep and bear arms, but he compared it to freedom of speech. Over time, he noted, Americans have accepted limits and rules about how and when freedom of speech is exercised.

“What we are all in agreement with here, I think, is that the culture needs

to change,” he said.

### **Fascination with guns**

Lex Tan, a senior public relations major from Malaysia, offered what might be called an outsider’s perspective, noting with curiosity Americans’ familiarity and fascination with guns.

“I am not a person with a lot of answers here,” she said. “I am a person with a lot of questions.”

Following the panel discussion, many of the 80 students who attended the forum voiced questions and strongly held opinions, particularly in support of gun ownership.

“I think the students did a great job putting it together, and it was nice to hear passion from the audience,” Madeson said.

The forum provided no consensus and no conclusion, some participants noted, but at least it prompted conversation.

“It’s a good thing that people were introduced to ideas that they hadn’t been exposed to before,” said David Tappert, senior computer science major, and president of the International Student Fellowship. “It broadened their understanding and scope on the subject.”

*Ethan Tan is an editor of The Brand, the HSU student newspaper, and a member of the International Student Fellowship.*