

# Guns for Jesus: Churches fill their pews with weapons giveaways

What would Jesus shoot?

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Some churches in Kentucky and in upstate New York are doing what it takes to get people into the pews to hear the word of God — and in their neck of the woods, that means giving away guns.

The flier for the raffle at Grace Baptist Church, in Troy, N.Y., shows an AR-15 — an assault rifle altered to make it legal in that state — with a quote from the gospel of St. John, “My peace I give unto you.” It isn’t spelled “piece,” but it could have been.

The church's pastor, John Koletas, [told the](#) Albany Times Union, “I’m just trying to be a blessing and a help to the gun owners and the hunters and give away a free AR-15. It’s the right thing to do.”

In Kentucky, where gun giveaways happen in some churches just about every week, a [free raffle of 25 guns](#) by Paducah's Lone Oak First Baptist Church got about 1,300 people into the church hall for a steak dinner and a pep talk by a gun fancier named Chuck McAlister who’s been hired by

Kentucky's Southern Baptists to help boost congregations by evangelizing — in this case, about guns and sin and Jesus.

A good number of those 1,300 may not wind up in the pews on Sunday morning; a lot of them go to other churches. And there was no Sermon on the Mount, with its remark about the blessed peacemakers, to generate big applause; it was McAlister displaying his grandfather's gun and saying, "There's no government on the face of this Earth that has the right to take this gun from me."

Sunday school teacher [David Keele](#) told NPR that the church was accomplishing two things: "One, we're going to talk about the 2nd Amendment to bear arms. But that isn't the primary thing. The primary thing is who Jesus is.": And Jesus, in the form of a stack of Bibles, is right there alongside the display of donated guns — but the Bibles, as NPR pointed out, will cost you money.

Tom Jackson isn't a regular churchgoer, but he showed up for the Kentucky raffle, saying what many say when they're asked about why they need guns: "If somebody kicks your door down, means to hurt your wife, your kids, you — how do you turn the other cheek to that?"

But there are a lot of things to defend your family against, and a lot of other ways to defend them apart from what comes out of the barrel of a gun.

There's defending them from illiteracy and sickness. So are there churches in New York or Kentucky, or churches anywhere, raffling off a year's worth of healthcare coverage, or \$500 savings bonds for a child's education?

Eighty-nine years ago, an adman named Bruce Barton, who co-founded the renowned advertising company BBD&O, wrote a book that proclaimed Jesus to be "the world's greatest business executive," and "the founder of modern business." That Jesus would have understood the principle behind getting people in the door — by loaves and fishes, but probably not by Smith & Wesson.