

He who practices deceit shall not dwell within my house;
He who speaks falsehood shall not maintain his position before me.
Every morning I will destroy all the wicked of the land,
So as to cut off from the city of the Lord all those who do iniquity.

Psalms 101:7-8

A large, three-dimensional, metallic-style word "STOP!" is centered on the page. The letters have a dark brown or reddish-brown hue with visible texture and highlights. A large exclamation mark is positioned to the right of the word.

A FEW YEARS AGO the owner of the land to the south of our property began clearing some trees in the timber. My neighborly questions put to him were met with enigmatic evasion. So when he wasn't there, I walked into the timber to see what he had been doing. I discovered that he had been methodically cutting a meandering truck-width trail through the trees. Here and there he had cleared space off the trail for someone to park a pickup truck, and, up near our fence line at the top of the hill, he had cleared a large turn-around for a truck to circle back downhill. It was all rather mysterious—and troubling to two people who cherish the quietude of their country land.

Soon, however, the mystery was solved, for on my next trek through the woods I discovered several tree stands erected for deer hunters. Here in Iowa, the shotgun season for deer hunting is typically limited to two weekends in December, but the bow season is considerably longer, spanning several months before and after the shotgun season. Shotgun enthusiasts hunt on foot, and favor the open, just-harvested fields. But bow hunters perch halfway up a tree on a small platform. There they will wait for the deer to happen by. It was obvious now that our neighbor had cleared access for hunters to drive into his woods, and was permitting them to erect their tree stands for bow hunting.

Linda and I are not hunters. Indeed, the idea of killing a living thing for sport is abhorrent to us. But we have no say over what people do on their own land. All we can do is post signs to make it clear that hunters are not welcome on our land.

Subsequently I set out with hammer and nails and a stack of shiny new metal signs to post around the perimeter of our land. And most I deployed at the south fence, affixing to the trees on our side glaring red and black declarations that this was "Private Property: No Trespassing" and "No Hunting." I wanted to make it crystal clear that the killing would stop at the fence. The hunters could go no further.



Against what else do I post an unequivocal “No” at the border of our land? In the face of gun-wielding hunters straying onto our land I have been known to be unthinkingly fearless. It is less bravery than blind primal rage. In that moment my own safety doesn’t even occur to me. Years ago I was dressing in my upstairs bathroom when I noticed a car slowing on the road that borders our front field. To my alarm, the driver braked, pointed a shotgun or rifle through his window, and fired at something in our field—and in the direction of our house! This driver not only ignored the No Hunting sign posted right in front of him, but was breaking the law by firing from his car. Half-dressed, I ran from the house, crossed the front lawn, and screamed at the gun-toting miscreant who had gotten out of his car to retrieve whatever he had just shot at. I can happily report that he did not turn the gun on me, but returned to his car and drove off.

But against what else do I demonstrate such uncompromising conviction? To what else do I stand at the border of my property and declare, “You will go no further!”



We live in an homogenized society. Sharp distinctions are frowned upon; firm convictions are ridiculed. The very idea of standing strong against just about anything, saying “No!” with a firmly set jaw, is fast becoming archaic. But if we are unprepared to take this stand at the point where society ends and our family begins, then where else?

Are we, as wives and mothers, ready to brace ourselves against what our children are being taught in public school? Will we ensure that not everything they hear outside the home will become the accepted template for their thinking? Will we envelop not only our children but our husband with a true and holy love that blots out the more twisted version they observe elsewhere? And will we teach those under our care that God is in His heaven, and that our home belongs to Him?

Are we, as husbands and fathers, ready to stand in the gap, to take our position at the gate of our home to protect those we love? Will we, as did Christ, be ready to sacrifice our well-being, our comfort—our very lives, if necessary—to protect our family from those who would wish it harm? Will we be what God meant us to be: the kind of father to our family that God the Father is to His?