

Mass Shootings Have Led to Mass Numbness

Half a million kids plan to wake us up.

Can we find solutions by seeking the interests of others?

Even in the painful aftermath of the February Parkland, Florida school shooting, the gun debate has gone nowhere. The reoccurring cries of proponents and opponents of gun control continue to rise again. Instead of seeking a policy solution, Americans seem numb. From Columbine to the present, we have failed to find meaningful solutions to reduce mass shootings at schools through gun control.

This weekend's March for Our Lives, with its expected turnout of at least 500,000, hopes to jolt Washington out of the cycle of rhetoric, soundbites, and inaction.

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2018 Mass Shooting Deaths, By the Numbers

According to the [Gun Violence Archive](#), as of March 21, 2018, America has had 48 mass shootings. Those shooting led to 63 deaths and 189 injuries. The Archive defines mass shootings as four or more killed or injured, not including the perpetrator. The Parkland Shooting remains the most devastating mass shooting this year, 17 deaths and 17 injuries.

Known for its unyielding fight in the right to bear arms, The National Rifle Association (NRA) is a leader in firearms education training. The NRA website includes more than 125,000 certified instructors that train more than 1 million gun owners a year. The group began as a firearms training and education association for marksmanship. It has strengthened its focus to defend Second Amendment through the years. With the "right to bear arms" central to its cause, has the NRA become numb to its roots?

"Ineligible" Voters, but Eligible Voices

For nearly two decades, the NRA has fought challenges to gun control legislation at the federal and state level. The NRA faces its toughest test in the survivors of the Parkland Shooting. These survivors, the students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, show no signs of letting up, though most of them are ineligible to vote. Through social media and mass protests across the nation, these survivors demand support in forcing national and state legislatures to pass meaningful laws to reduce gun violence.

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Although these survivors are ineligible to vote, they do have a window of opportunity to make change. According to the independent [Quinnipiac University National Poll](#), American voters support stricter gun laws 66-31 percent. This represents the highest level of support conducted by this organization. In addition, the Quinnipiac University National Poll cited support for universal background checks as 97-3 percent among gun owners, 67-29 percent for a nationwide ban on the sale of assault weapons, and 75-17 percent that Congress needs to do something to reduce gun violence. Twenty-two years ago, Australia banned rapid-fire guns after 35 people were killed in Port Arthur. According to a [2016 Journal of American Medical Association article](#), Australia has not had a mass shooting incident, a single incident in which five or more people are killed, since. Could the United States reap the same benefits if we banned rapid-fire guns the way Australia did, or are we content remaining numb?

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Serve the Interests of the Vulnerable

In light of the Parkland Shooting, [The Giffords Law Center To Prevent Gun Violence](#) identified three policy solutions that relate to this incident: prevent access to guns by enacting laws for safe storage, raise the minimum age from 18 to 21 to buy semiautomatic weapons, and disarm dangerous people. From a biblical perspective, I found our motive and policy solution to reduce gun violence in Philippians 2:3-4, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interest of the others." In considering the victims family and the survivors, I support conducting universal background checks. We should require training for anyone who wants to purchase a gun, at age 21 years or older. I also support banning rapid-fire guns as they did in Australia, and enacting laws for safe storage. It's hard to be numb when you look out for the best interest for others, more than yourself.

Very Present Help For Your Personal Storm

Message Magazine's Online Devotional for Friday, February 17, 2017

[Listen to "Thoughts in Worship 02.17.2017" on Spreker.](#)

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

"Let's be practical!"

"I don't want to hear that right now!"

"People are hurting!"

There are times in each of our lives when we feel that things cannot get any worse. We feel like we are the only ones facing trials even though we know we are not. We are sad and discouraged because society seems to have lost its collective mind. The problems we have cannot be solved with two pills and seeing the doctor in the morning. They cannot be resolved if we throw more money at them. They will not suddenly disappear if we rally, march, or manifest civil disobedience in the public square. That is not to say we don't

try, with everything we have to find comfort amid turmoil; strength amid struggle; comfort amid conflict. Yet, all of our human efforts fall woefully short of their target—to create the peace for which we long.

If God's Word is not practical, in the grand scheme, what is? If we close our ears to the One who can provide true comfort and peace as we await the Coming of our Lord to what or whom will we listen, and to what end? If in our pain we cannot find solace in the One who is acquainted with our sorrows and grief, in whom will we find solace?

The apostle Paul understood affliction, trials, pain, and overwhelming conflicts. He understood shipwreck, abuse, running for one's life, physical maladies. He understood disenfranchisement, marginalization, and being castigated for no reason except that he existed. Yet, it was Paul who said, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:17–18).

He's also the one, when God would not give him the answers to his prayers he initially desired, who said, "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:9–10).

Thus I ask you to do yourself a favor: ask God to give you new perspective today. Ask Him to show you how to manage when things are not going well in your life or larger society. When you are weak, distrustful, upset, and in pain you have access to a God whose strength is magnified in your weakness. He is still a very present help during our troubles. Troubles won't last always, and while you struggle through yours, God is prepared to give you strength as you cope.

Hard Questions For Black And Blue Lives

This Isn't Going Away

1. Our Last Breath

It will be years before people forget, if ever, the live stream of Diamond Reynolds calmly reciting her account of the shooting death of her boyfriend, Philando Castile. He slumped to her side, apparently breathing his last breath. Nor will we forget the video of Alton Sterling being wrestled to the ground in Louisiana by two police officers with guns drawn while he struggled beneath them. This is just before they shot and killed him.

One reason we won't forget is that they have been enshrined on the Internet. They've been seen by millions on Facebook, shared countless times, linked to

scores of news stories. But another reason is that as Americans continue to wrestle with race and policing, these videos present what many see as the disturbing truth. Black men receive disparate treatment during police encounters.

Implicit Bias At Work

The Washington Post reported that 505 people were killed by the police in 2016 as of the week of July 4th. Of those, 24 percent were black. Considering that blacks comprise only 13 percent of the nation's population, their deaths are disturbingly disproportionate.

Robin Wright of the Kirwan Institute at Ohio State University, who specializes in implicit bias, told the *New York Times* that the problem is the way society stereotypes black people.

"If you see a black person with a weapon, you don't assume that it's legal," Wright said.

The Sniper's Deflection

People also will not easily forget – nor should they – the killing of five police officers after a peaceful protest in Dallas, Texas. The protestors exercised their constitutional rights to express concern about the police killings of Castile, Sterling and other black men. But the sniper – identified as 25-year-old Micah Xavier Johnson of Mesquite, Texas – apparently was engaged in a murderous, racist, anti-police rampage. Before he was killed by police after negotiations failed, Johnson reportedly said that he wanted to kill white people. He wanted to shoot white police officers in particular.

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Seven other officers were injured during the shooting spree. Investigators believe he was the lone shooter, but aren't convinced he actually was working alone.

So where does all of this killing leave us? No better off than we were before, unless we decide that the actions of several police officers – whose motives, in fairness to them, have yet to be established in a court of law – or one sniper and his shadowy cohorts will not define the American experience for us.

Black lives matter. Blue lives matter, too. They matter equally to their families and colleagues, and are guaranteed the same protections under our nation's constitution.

Time To Ask The Hard Questions

And because they matter, we should ask the hard questions that can lead our nation to accountability for how our citizens are treated – those who wear the badge and those who don't.

Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton did just that after the killing of Castile. "Would this have happened if the driver were white, if the passengers were white?" Dayton asked during a press conference. "I don't think it would have."

President Obama also raised questions at his first press conference from Warsaw, Poland, which was held long before the Dallas sniper attacks occurred.

"What if this happened to someone in your family?" the president asked. "How would you feel?"