

Can 'Thoughts and Prayers' Stop the Next Shooting?

In the aftermath of the Las Vegas massacre, Mark Kelly, husband of former Congresswoman Gabby Giffords, herself a shooting victim, said, "All we're hearing is thoughts and prayers. Thoughts and prayers are important. They are not enough. Your thoughts and prayers aren't going to stop the next shooting." Is he right? Yes and no.

Allow me to explain.

First, Mr. Kelly has every right to speak out against gun violence, since his own wife was almost killed by a demented gunman. I do not minimize his convictions.

Second, I agree that praying and taking action go hand in hand, and that if our laws need changing, we should change them.

Third, when we say "our thoughts and prayers" are with the victims and their families, it is often meaningless, just a trite expression without much behind it. "My thoughts and prayers are with you," we say, and then we go on with our normal business. Of course this will not bring about significant change.

But what *will* bring about significant change, far beyond what any law can do, is if we really got serious and called for a national day of prayer and fasting, a day in which the government shut down its normal operations and schools and businesses were closed (wherever possible) and multiplied tens of millions of us fasted and prayed and repented and sought the favor of God.

What *will* bring about significant change is not merely saying, "My thoughts and prayers are with you" but rather praying like

the fate of the nation hinged on our prayers since, in many ways, it does.

What we need is a solemn assembly, an urgent call to the nation, a time when the president will get on his knees and spend hours before God in soul searching and prayer. A time when Christian leaders will set an example of humility and repentance. A time when life will not go on as usual for 24-hours in America. That will certainly get the attention of heaven.

Looking back in American history, William Federer wrote in 2010, "To punish Massachusetts for the Tea Party, King George III decided to destroy its economy by blockading Boston's harbor on June 1, 1774.

Thomas Jefferson drafted a Resolution for a "Day of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer" to be observed the same day. It was introduced in the Virginia House of Burgesses May 24, 1774, by Robert Carter Nicholas and supported by Patrick Henry, Richard Henry Lee and George Mason, passing unanimously:

"This House, being deeply impressed with apprehension of the great dangers, to be derived to British America, from the hostile invasion of the City of Boston, in our sister Colony of Massachusetts ... deem it highly necessary that the said first day of June be set apart, by the members of this House as a Day of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer, devoutly to implore the Divine interposition, for averting the heavy calamity which threatens destruction to our civil rights. ... Ordered, therefore that the Members of this House do attend ... with the Speaker, and the Mace, to the Church in this City, for the purposes aforesaid; and that the Reverend Mr. Price be appointed to read prayers, and the Reverend Mr. Gwatkin, to preach a sermon."

George Washington wrote in his diary, June 1, 1774: "Went to church, fasted all day."

Could something like that happen again? If it does, God will respond to our fasting and prayers and tears and repentance, and it could be the spark that helps ignite a great awakening. He may humble us, but He will also lift us up.

To repeat a simple message: America can only be great if America is good, and America can only be good with the help of God. We turn to Him, or we suffer the consequences. He remains ready to help and to heal.