

Decoding the Nashville School Shooter's Tragic Message

"I'm planning to die today."

That's how 28-year-old Audrey Elizabeth Hale began a private Instagram message to her friend Averiana Patton on Monday morning of this week.

"THIS IS NOT A JOKE!!!!" Hale continued. "You'll probably hear about me on the news after I die. This is my last goodbye. I love you. See you again in another life."

When Patton replied, begging her friend to get help, Hale wrote a few more words: "I don't want to live. I'm so sorry. I'm not trying to upset you or get attention. I just need to die."

A few minutes after Hale sent that grim message, she drove to Covenant School in Nashville, Tennessee, where she had attended classes as a child. Wearing a red baseball cap flipped backwards, and carrying three guns, Hale shot through the glass doors of the school's entrance, walked slowly through hallways and killed six people, including three nine-year-old students and the head of the school, Katherine Koonce, age 60.

Police shot and killed Hale to stop her from claiming more victims. Nashville's police chief, John Drake, said Hale was "prepared to do more harm than was actually done." He also said Hale had written a detailed manifesto about how she wanted to attack the Christian community. She left the document on the scene before she died.

After the incident—which was the 12th mass shooting on a school campus in 2023—politicians including President Biden called for stricter gun control laws. But most of us know

there is something much deeper going on here than easy access to guns. Why would a young woman walk into a Christian school and arbitrarily kill young children, along with a teacher, a janitor and the school's director?

There are three important factors we should consider if we want this senseless violence to stop.

1. We have a serious mental health crisis in this country.

Sources close to Hale's family said she was autistic, although she was considered highly functioning. Recently she began using he/him pronouns, and she went by the name Aiden, saying that she was transgender.

There is a huge movement in our country today to normalize and even encourage transgenderism. Young people who feel some level of gender confusion today are pushed to take puberty-blocking drugs and seek expensive surgeries (including double mastectomies, hysterectomies and castration) so they can try to look like the gender they identify with. And educators and psychologists warn parents that if they don't "affirm" their child's preferred gender identity, they might harm themselves.

None of this was happening a few years ago, yet today it's an epidemic. (It's also making boatloads of money for pharmaceutical companies and doctors.) The notion that a person can defy biology and change their gender is being fueled by what author Abigail Shrier calls "social contagion." She warns in her book "Irreversible Damage" that if we continue to allow political correctness to dictate gender policy, an entire generation of Americans could be permanently marred.

2. Dark spiritual forces are working behind the scenes. Some skeptics doubt the existence of Satan or demons, as if hell or evil spirits are just superstitions. But more people today are becoming convinced that the devil is real. Why would a young, artistically talented woman like Audrey Hale concoct a master

plan to shoot up a Christian school? I can promise you an idea like that didn't originate with her.

The fingerprints of Satan are all over the Nashville school shooting. Already we've seen increased incidents of violence and vandalism aimed at churches because Christians oppose abortion or sexual immorality. And the federal government hasn't always intervened to protect churches from such attacks. Increasingly, Christians are viewed as the enemy because we believe in God's moral law.

3. A national spiritual awakening is our only hope. We can put Band-Aids on this problem, but our culture will continue to spiral downward unless we acknowledge our desperate need. We pay an awful price when a nation rejects God. Paul wrote that when people refuse to acknowledge the Creator, they become so depraved they are "filled with all unrighteousness,  greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving and unmerciful" (Rom. 1:29-31).

Our only way to escape this spiritual disaster is to seek an emergency spiritual solution. We must storm heaven with our prayers. Pray that our nation will turn to the Lord. Pray that hard hearts will soften. Pray that closed minds will open to the truth of God's Word. Pray especially for the many people like Audrey Hale, who right now are so depressed, confused and hopeless that they feel tempted to do the devil's work. May the Lord have mercy on us, and deliver us from evil.

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