

Michael Brown: Guns Are Not the Real Issue Behind Mass Shootings

In the last few weeks, it seems as if, almost every day, there has been a mass shooting in America. That's why this headline didn't surprise me at all: "The US has reported at least 45 mass shootings in the last month."

Yet as tragic as this news is (and it is horrifically tragic), I don't believe that guns are our biggest problem—and I write this as someone who is neither a gun owner nor a member of the NRA. Instead, I write this based on common sense.

For those of you who have followed my writings or radio broadcasts over the years, you know that I do not major on Second Amendment rights. They are simply not a focus of mine, regardless of their importance. And I have frequently decried the Christian call to prepare to take up arms against the government. (Most recently, see [here](#).)

I'm also open to discussion as to what can be done to improve background checks. And I have no problem with people debating whether all types of guns should be made available to the general public. So, I'm not your typical "God and guns" conservative.

My point in writing this article is simply to state the obvious: We have always had guns in our country, but we have not always been this violent. And when there are streaks of extreme violence, we need to ask what is behind these spikes. Why now? Why these recent months? What's causing this?

Some would point to an increase in mental health issues (which others would dispute).

Some would point to the absence of fathers in the homes (which others would again dispute).

A skeptical post on the Snopes website noted that, "In August 2019, as the topic of mass shootings again gripped the United States after back-to-back massacres, numerous pundits and social media users attempted to suss out the reason why such attacks keep happening. Some blamed gun-control laws and a rise in white supremacy, while others laid the blame on mental illness, video games, a lack of thoughts and prayers, gay marriage, and fatherless households."

I've even heard the opinion (aired on social media) that the Democrats are paying these shooters to pave the way for a crackdown on guns. (Are they paying the shooters to kill themselves too? Really!)

Whatever the specific cause, the fact remains that we have always had guns in our country, yet mass shootings were much rarer in our past.

Growing up in New York City and then Long Island, I was not around guns myself, nor were any of my friends hunters or gun users. But I've been to other parts of the country where colleagues tell me how they would bring their rifles to school, store them in a locker and then afterward go hunting. And without exception, their schools were without gun violence.

What, then, is the problem today? Why these tragic spikes?

I do believe there are larger cultural causes, such as fatherless homes, which inevitably lead to breakdowns later in life. And we certainly have a culture that feeds on violence, from TV to movies to video games and more. For many of us, watching violence, even extreme violence, has been our daily diet since childhood. That certainly will have a desensitizing effect.

But why the recent spikes in mass shootings? Aside from suggesting an increase in demonic activity, which is certainly something to consider, it seems that a major factor is that we are on edge as a country, partly because of the lockdowns, partly because of the divisions and tensions.

More and more Americans are pent up and agitated. More and more feel threatened and under attack. More and more feel angry and ready to lash out. More and more have lost income and live under constant pressure. And in an environment like this, it doesn't take much for a conflict to erupt.

Soon enough, families are in mourning and shock as they hear the news that one of their loved ones has been murdered in cold blood or is being rushed to the hospital in critical condition.

Or perhaps they get the news that one of their loved ones is the shooter himself.

We are a nation on edge right now, getting angrier and more frustrated by the minute. And it seems that everything around us, from the news to the circumstances of daily life, is conspiring to make us angrier still.

Perhaps, while pundits debate what can be done to reduce these horrible tragedies, all of us who know the Lord can pray for His mercy to be poured out and for the root causes of our troubles to be revealed. And perhaps, for whatever it's worth (and it is certainly worth something), all of us can do our best to be ambassadors of reconciliation and grace, offering hope and a better way of life.

That certainly cannot hurt, and perhaps, it might just help.
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