

Sen. Paul Ryan Condemned When Calling for Prayer After Texas Shooting

After news broke about the shooting in Texas last Sunday, Speaker of the House Paul Ryan tweeted, “The people of Sutherland Springs need our prayers right now.” The reaction on his Twitter feed was ferocious:

- Someone going by the name “Count Ziggenpuss” replied, “What they need is meaningful gun control. Your prayers to the made-up invisible being in the sky aren’t helping stop these repeated massacres.”
- “5 AM RISE N SHINE” tweeted, “they dont need prayers they need gun control. A prayer won’t do [obscurity]. This happens every week now in this country.”
- “Gv89” added, “They were literally in a church. Clearly prayers do absolutely nothing.”

Mr. Ryan responded to his critics: “It’s disappointing. It’s sad, and this is what you’ll get from the far secular left. People who do not have faith don’t understand faith, I guess I’d have to say. And it is the right thing to do is to pray in moments like this, because you know what? Prayer works.”

Is American Christianity Under Attack?

Ridiculing Christianity began at the beginning of Christianity, when skeptics at Pentecost mocked the Spirit-filled believers and accused them of drunkenness (Acts 2:13). But slandering American Christians has clearly escalated in recent years.

Those of us who defend biblical sexuality are now branded as homophobic. People who oppose same-sex marriage are accused of hating gay people. Pro-life supporters are allegedly waging a

“war on women.”

When Christian columnist Rod Dreher opposed same-sex marriage in his *Dallas Morning News* column, a campaign of harassment culminated in the newspaper hiring off-duty police officers to guard his home and family. When Chick-fil-A’s charitable foundation made donations perceived as hostile to LGBT rights, activists called for protests and boycotts.

Last year, *Saturday Night Live* mocked Christians in a parody of the film *God’s Not Dead 2*. Earlier skits likened Jesus to a movie character who murders his enemies and ridiculed Tim Tebow for his faith. *The Atlantic* recently reported on the growing use of zoning laws to prevent religious groups from obtaining building permits.

As the Christmas season approaches, we can expect more atheist billboards ridiculing church attendance and the Christian faith. Unsurprisingly, 63 percent of respondents in a recent survey believe that Christians are facing growing levels of persecution.

Why Now?

Since Darwin, it’s been fashionable to believe that creation doesn’t require a Creator. Since Freud, many have contended that our belief in God is a mere projection of our father image. Postmodernists claim that all truth is personal and subjective (except for their claim that truth is personal and subjective, of course).

In this view, the Bible is just a diary of religious experience and all roads lead up the same mountain. Tolerance is the supreme value of our day, unless you believe in objective truth and biblical morality—then your beliefs must not be tolerated.

While the tide of secularism and skepticism has been rising for years, a recent invention is turning it into a flood:

social media.

Today, anyone with a cell phone and an internet connection can publish anything they want. They can hide behind a fictional name like “Count Ziggenpuss” to avoid personal accountability for their words.

When enough people say enough blasphemous things about Christianity, a herd mentality emerges. Since our brains tend to perceive patterns in random phenomena (a propensity known as “apophenia”), we can decide that the apparent popularity of skepticism must make the skeptics right.

How should we respond?

1. Don't be surprised when lost people act like lost people.

Scripture teaches that “all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Tim. 3:12). One reason is that a non-Christian “does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14)

To non-believers, praying to Jesus for victims of violence is useless. We would feel the same way about praying to Zeus.

Rather than responding in vindictive anger, let's see skeptics as people who need the life-changing grace we have experienced. We were once just as lost as every lost person we know. Christians are beggars telling beggars where they found bread.

2. Fight fire with faith. Responding to animosity with animosity only breeds further animosity. If you “love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matt. 5:44), your compassion becomes a powerful witness to a skeptical culture (John 13:35).

3. Learn from our critics. Social media can be used to demean

our faith, but it can also be used to promote it. Popularity enhances the status of skepticism but also of holiness. Roman roads were used by Imperial soldiers to enslave nations and by Christian evangelists to liberate souls.

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