

Why I'll Keep Sending Thoughts and Prayers

Over the last few weeks, we have witnessed an overload of gut-wrenching tragedy and suffering.

Beginning with the hate filled shooting that shattered the joy of a new baby celebration at the Tree of Life Synagogue, soon followed by the senseless Thousand Oaks shooting, and then now, the tragic fires engulfing California, the 24-hour news cycle has been dominated with horror and grief. The pictures and interviews have been heartbreaking.

Just weeks before, our storm-ravaged friends in South Georgia and the Florida panhandle were the focal point of nonstop media attention. And although the media attention has ceased, many suffering ones, still in shelters and motels, eating MREs, have been forgotten.

In our social media universe, we can each speak our expressions of horror and sorrow for every happening. Many posts, coming from well-meaning folks, perhaps wondering how to help, express sincere sentiments such as “prayers,” “love and prayers,” “thoughts and prayers.”

Contrasting the social media kind words comes the increasingly hostile posture of mainstream broadcast and print media.

For many of us, each evening at 5:30, in glorious black and white, we were wide eyed and believing when Chet, David and Uncle Walter told us what was going on in our world. History now tells us they were quite selective in what they told us.

Now, in the new media reality, many of our esteemed news clarions are not merely selective in their coverage, but full-fledged antagonists.

No longer restrained by mannerly Judeo-Christian protocol, this hostility is directed to people of faith. Specifically, toward those who would dare refer to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And the mention of His Son, Jesus Christ, gets the secular scream meter pushed to the frenzied setting.

Just the other night, in pathetic chorus, two different networks broadcast unthinkable spewing responses targeted against people sending “thoughts and prayers.”

Feeling the ignorantly clueless Christian minions were dodging the “real” issues, they were offended by “thoughts and prayers.” Their remarks weren’t mere disagreements of opinion; these calloused snips landed squarely in blasphemous territory.

CNN’s cartoonish “Ted Baxter wannabe,” Chris Cuomo, piously pontificated, “You mock those who lost loved ones when you offer thoughts and prayers ... And prayer? You think leaving it to God is the answer?”

Soon after, MSNBC’s hyper mouthpiece, Chris Matthews, barked out, “You mean thoughts and prayers? I’m sorry, I mean, that should be outlawed.”

Folks, we have officially entered hostile airspace. Sad, huh?

Who would have thought? In America, we would be ridiculed about “thoughts and prayers”?

Here’s my take.

With each of these tragedies, while watching the interviews and heart tugging stories, I have often found myself speaking to the TV, “O, Jesus! Please hold those people. Comfort their hearts. Bring peace. Make a way, where there is no way!” This was not some pious religious-sounding pity moment; it was the cry from an experienced, needy person.

Back when many of us were still rocking and reeling from the

mess left by that destructive lady, Katrina, and although we were still numb and glassy-eyed at the time, words of love, comfort and faith-filled encouragement were so appreciated and helped us get to the next day.

As time passed, but not our struggles, we became aware of another phenomenon across the news platforms: ear fatigue. I've heard this same sentiment from some of the New York victims of Sandy, and I'm sure our friends in Houston could chime in. Ear fatigue is real.

After a few weeks, the unaffected viewers had heard enough, and their attention moved to other things. Many had grown deaf to the repeated news. Others perhaps thought, "Well, this have gone on for a few weeks, and these guys need to get it together."

The news coverage waned, the audiences were voting and the networks were going to the next event. But in most of these tragic instances, although the cameras left, the suffering continued.

It was during one of those times, when a call, a prayer, even a check said, "We have not forgotten. You are in our thoughts and prayers." It felt so good. It was a God smile-moment.

Sometimes, the best thing you can do with someone who has been going through a prolonged struggle is to simply let them know they are not forgotten, and they are still in your thoughts, your love and your prayers. It feels good to both parties. We've been wired that way.

We, as humans, are going so fast, sometimes we need to work on the compassionate, sympathizing part of us. We've been given an assignment, we are to "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep" (Rom. 12:15).

Backed by the Word of God, I am a confident believer in the power of the sent Word! "He sent out His Word and healed them

and delivered them from their destruction” (Ps. 107:20).

In fact, in our deepest physical needs and darkest emotional moments, the Creator Himself is leaning in, bathing us in love and prayers. He knows how it feels. “For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses [with the feeling of our infirmities]” (Heb. 4:15a).

Last January, our Congressman, Steve Scalise, a big-time baseball lover, was shot on the ball field by a deranged hater. For those first few hours and days, the real story of his grave condition was kept close. But, God!

Today, our Congressman can literally recite 17 answers to prayer that led to his survival and ongoing healing.

In his great new book, *Back in the Game*, he speaks about the real power of thoughts and prayers. “I could feel it. Even before they told me ... Not immediately, not all at once, but as I woke up and became slowly more aware of my surroundings, those thoughts and prayers mattered. Even the ones that came from people I’d never met before ... Maybe especially from people I’d never met before ...(I’m) trying to explain just how much those prayers mattered, how powerfully I felt them “

Yes, Congressman, sending thoughts and prayers is truly powerful.

In 2018 America, the immediate rules. And with the well-documented narrowing of our attention spans, our “at the moment” interests and compassions seem to have expiration dates.

But if I read the Word correctly, we must always keep those in need close to our hearts, and we are to never stop sending our prayers. Even if it rattles some pompous anchor bully.

And yes, to both Chrises, since you asked, leaving it to God *is* the answer!

Thoughts and prayers, guys! {eoa}

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