

Do UK Riots Reflect Europe's Spiritual Poverty?

Rioting across the U.K. last week led to the arrests of over 1,500 people in a matter of days.

The shocking hours of looting and criminal activity erupted out of a peaceful protest on Saturday, Aug. 6. The protest was hijacked by others with a more violent agenda against the police.

According to the *Guardian*, peaceful protests turned into violent criminal attacks involving petrol bombs, bricks and makeshift weapons.

Violent London riots have been raging since the police shooting of 29-year-old Mark Duggan on Aug. 4. Police were attempting to arrest him in Tottenham, a city with a familiar history of riots.

In the next three days after the Aug. 6 events, many other coordinated attacks—allegedly organized via Facebook and Twitter—were made throughout entire streets, spreading to several spots throughout London. “Copy-cat” crimes were mimicked in other cities across the U.K., including Birmingham and Liverpool.

The chaotic week of criminal behavior represented a time of destruction, confusion and heartbreak for the United Kingdom. As things have settled down over the past few days, residents are asking why?

British authorities have distributed information on how to cope with the disasters, but the U.K. Director for Grand Rapids, Crossroad Bible Institute, Matt Savage, knows the issue goes deeper than government advice will convey.

"I think that the U.K. riots reflect really spiritual poverty that we see across the U.K.," Savage notes. "Those involved in the violence and the looting are of course the minority, but in them, I think we're getting a little microcosm of what's happening in the nation as a whole. These selfish beliefs that people hold come to the surface."

Savage says the society-wide selfishness is reflected in the popular adage, "look after number one." Savage says, "I believe that the evident decline of morality ultimately stems from the post-modern lie of relativism: that truth and morality are relative and not absolute."

Despite the depraved mindset that has been reflected in the actions of hundreds over the last week, however, Savage says the entire incident has ironically opened doors for truth to come in. Christians have not only been linking arms in prayer, but the upheaval has given them opportunities to share the hope that there is to be found.

"That's a door of opportunity, really, that's opened up for Christians, in order for us to be the truth of Jesus' message in our actions," agrees Savage.

And Christians aren't just talking about the week's events; they're getting involved.

"On the very practical side, many Christians have gotten involved in the clear-up operations in those [riot-affected] streets and towns," says Savage, who adds that believers are "providing shelter and support to those in distress, things like visiting people who've been affected—people who've lost their homes."

CBI, an outreach to prisoners on every continent, has not been directly affected by the violence but hopes that as Christians begin to respond to the hurting people around them, they might also recognize the needs of those who've committed the crimes—many of whom are now in jail.

“I do hope that it really brings to light the need for Christians to get involved in these areas of our society which are most abandoned, really—people like those in prison,” notes Savage. “[Pray] for people really to have an increased passion and concern for those that society would rather sideline or be without.”