

# How the Vicious Responses to ‘Thoughts and Prayers’ Messages After Mass Shootings Fuel More Hatred

*“[We] are fervently lifting up in prayer the children and families in the horrific shooting in Uvalde.”*

That simple tweet from Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) this week in the wake of the deadly school shooting in Uvalde, Texas, predictably sparked a litany of angry responses dismissing prayer and demanding legislative action.

Now, I don’t care much about people’s opinions on Cruz or his political postures, and this piece isn’t about the gun control debate. What I’m concerned with is contemporary culture’s overwhelming confusion about the purpose and power of prayer.

The “thoughts and prayers” mantra has become a convenient target for those feeling the emotional toll of gun violence. The immediate, guttural reaction is to lash out at conservatives and Christians—the vast majority of whom are authentically offering compassion to victims and their families—and mock or belittle their invocations.

*“Your thoughts and prayers do nothing!”* is the common rebuttal.

The immediate assumption is that offering prayer after a mass shooting is somehow an “awe shucks” moment in which conservatives lazily shrug while simultaneously hoping some magical fairy pops up and casts a spell imploring sadistic people to stop engaging in unfettered violence.

Sure, Christians would love nothing more than for changed

hearts and minds to abound, but that's not why people offer invocations after events like the horrors we just witnessed in Buffalo, New York, and Uvalde, Texas.

Critics fail to understand why people pray amid tragedy—why Christians turn to the Almighty on behalf of others. When I say things like, “Pray for Texas,” I’m thinking of...

- *The parents and loved ones of the 19 students and two teachers whose lives were tragically snuffed out.*
- *The first responders who were forced to witness and handle the aftermath of the unthinkable.*
- *The children in the room who survived and will forever be forced to deal with the images of evil and suffering that a maniac seared into their minds.*
- *The school staff who made it out and are struggling with survivor's guilt and terror over what could have been.*
- *The nation so desperately in need of the only solution we keep pushing away and ignoring.*

My list could go on ... and on. But the pertinent point is: people are praying for peace, strength and resilience. These prayers are compassionate and selfless acts, and the people offering them are taking the time and devoting themselves to seeking God on behalf of the bereaved.

This is a topic I spoke about in 2018 (see below) and it remains stunningly evergreen.

Even atheists should be able to appreciate these prayerful acts of kindness—a quest to see beyond the self and seek the peace of others. Yet, our toxic and anger-fueled culture misunderstands peoples’ purposes and seeks to use calls for prayer for political score-grabbing.

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