

Deliver Us from the Spirit of Lawlessness

Read Time: 4 minutes 36 seconds

If you type in the words “Walmart brawl” or “Waffle House fight” on YouTube, you’ll find hundreds of videos of bizarre altercations between angry customers. They are throwing punches, hurling expletives, kicking each other, pulling hair and even brandishing weapons, near checkout stands or next to hot ovens. You’ll also find videos of fights recorded inside Target, CVS, Walgreens, Dunkin Donuts, WaWa and multiple airports.

There’s even a video of a 2022 brawl inside a Golden Corral restaurant, where people threw food and chairs at each other. What’s going on here?

Our country is officially unhinged. Welcome to the era of lawlessness.

I don’t know when this epidemic of lawlessness started. Some observers claim the COVID pandemic pushed people over the edge. But one of the most obvious signs that people don’t respect rules anymore is that retail theft has skyrocketed. Forbes magazine announced a few weeks ago that organized retail theft is currently costing retailers \$100 billion in losses.

“The kind of theft that’s mostly happening isn’t run-of-the-mill shoplifting. It’s organized crime,” said Mark Mathews of the National Retail Federation. The trend is so bad that Walmart announced in late 2022 that the rise in theft will result in higher prices and that some stores will close. The CFO of Target, Michael Fiddelke, said a 50% rise in theft in 2022 has resulted in a \$400 million loss for his company.

In California, where shoplifting has been rising dramatically, some cities have stopped fighting it. Thanks to bizarrely lenient legislation passed there, thieves who steal \$950 or less in merchandise are only guilty of a misdemeanor—and they are rarely charged. This is why we now see videos of people brazenly walking into stores, filling garbage bags with merchandise and walking out without paying.

Police rarely respond to calls for help in these situations. And many storeowners are afraid to confront thieves because they fear retaliation. In 2021, an employee at a Rite Aid store in the San Francisco area was shot and killed when he tried to stop two thieves. (The employee, Miguel Pentalosa, 36, had just given his two-week notice to resign because he didn't feel safe at work.)

This spirit of lawlessness has been on full display in my home state of Georgia during the past two weeks. A group of militant protesters who don't want the city of Atlanta to build a new police training facility attacked a Georgia State Trooper on Jan. 18. After one of the militants fired a shot and wounded the trooper, the assailant was shot and killed. In response, a larger group of militants—almost all of them from outside Georgia—marched through downtown Atlanta on Jan. 21.

Wearing black masks and hoods, the protesters threw rocks, broke windows, spray-painted buildings and set a police car on fire. Thankfully six of the terrorists were arrested. It was later revealed that many of them were hiding explosives. Governor Brian Kemp, a Republican, and Atlanta Mayor Andre Dickens, a Democrat, announced that such crimes won't be tolerated.

It's interesting that what the hooded protesters in Atlanta object to is a police training facility. They don't want cops on the streets because they don't want law and order. (You would think they'd want police to be better trained.) They want criminals to be released from prison; they prefer softer

sentences, no drug enforcement and no consequences for crime.

This is the spirit of Lucifer himself, who comes to “steal and kill and destroy.” Jesus warned us of this dark agenda in John 10:10, and it’s interesting that stealing is mentioned first in Satan’s job description. We may not think of theft as being as serious as murder or mayhem, but Jesus listed stealing as a violent and diabolical act that the devil inspires.

Jesus also warned us that people won’t respect the enforcement of laws in the last days. He said in Matthew 24:12: “Because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold.” Satan uses lawlessness to spread chaos, confusion and hopelessness. Lawlessness is what unravels a culture until it collapses.

What should our response be? Conservative Americans say we must stop being soft on crime, and elect leaders who believe in strict law enforcement. On the flip side, liberal Americans say we must apply compassion by addressing the problems of poverty and family breakdown that lead youth into crime.

✘ The truth is we must address this problem from both sides of the political divide. But ultimately we will never solve our crime problem until we pray and work for a spiritual revival. America is unraveling because we need Jesus. The spirit of lawlessness will only be defeated when the Holy Spirit changes hearts from the inside.

We need some desperate prayers. I’m praying like this: “Lord Jesus, our nation seems to be slipping into an abyss. Forgive us for our rebellion against You. Save us from ourselves and deliver us from the evil of lawlessness. Let Your justice roll down like waters, and let it touch every community and every race. Send a visitation of Your Holy Spirit to awaken us. Instead of hatred, racism, cruelty, crime, violence, sexual immorality and family breakdown, give us peace in our streets, love in our homes and the healing of families. Amen.”

Bring *Charisma* magazine home with a subscription today!

J. Lee Grady was editor of *Charisma* for 11 years and now serves as senior contributing editor. He directs the Mordecai Project ([http://www.mordecai.org](#)), an international ministry that protects women and girls from gender-based violence. His latest books are "Follow Me" and "Let's Go Deeper" (Charisma House).