

How Will the Holy Spirit Prompt Christians to Respond to the Orlando Massacre?

All of America, and especially those of us who live in Orlando, are reeling from the massacre at the nightclub on Saturday night.

When I moved here 43 years ago, I never envisioned this growing, family-oriented city would be the scene of the worst mass shooting in our nation's history.

I came here as a reporter with the *Orlando Sentinel*. When I awoke last Sunday morning and saw some of the reports from the *Sentinel*, I thought about how if I still had been covering the police beat as I did years ago, it would have been my job to cover this story in the middle of the night.

On Monday, I learned that the daughter of one of my staff and couple of her friends had been at the nightclub and left about 1:30 a.m., shortly before the carnage began. That brings it close to home!

I talked to a pastor who had five people in his church who knew someone in the club. A young man who had been in the club and escaped came to the altar Sunday morning.

By phone, I talked to another pastor who was literally in the hospital with the families of some of the victims as they were told what had happened to their loved ones. He and others from his church prayed with those who wanted prayer and tried to minister however they could. This included forming a human shield in order to avoid the media when the family members had to go to their cars.

Media are crawling all over Orlando looking for a story. The

main north-south street in Orlando, Orange Ave, is blocked off. Earlier today, I could not drive down Orange Avenue when I was in that part of town. I could see the huge satellite dishes down the street as I turned at the detour.

When my wife and I were first married, we lived about a mile from where the carnage took place.

Several of the city's Christian leaders met Monday morning to talk about the proper Christian response to the tragedy. I discovered plans were already in place, including a memorial service this morning at Rollins College and a prayer gathering at First Baptist Church of Orlando Tuesday night. Christians are only now beginning to figure out what's going on and asking themselves the question, "how do we respond?"

In a way, it reminds me of when Trayvon Martin was killed in nearby Sanford in 2012. After that made national news, it took the Christian community a week or so to determine how to respond. Today, I reminded the group of the way Christian leaders came together in Sanford to help provide healing as well as avert what could have been a very sad and volatile situation.

Of course, the circumstances here are entirely different. The controversial Sanford incident was the tragic death of one young man. The Orlando shooting was a massacre carried out by an Islamic extremist who reportedly called 911 shortly before the shooting began to let everyone know of his allegiance to ISIS so that there would be no confusion as to why he did this or what he was trying to achieve.

We are at war with extreme Islamic terrorists. Yet our president and others on the left try to make these terror acts sound as if they are the actions of "lone wolf," misguided and mentally disturbed extremists who aren't a part of a bigger plot. And they try to say it has to do with gun control. But France has very strict gun control, and look what happened

there. This is a debate that will go on for a long time. We have to wonder how often terrorism has to occur and how many have to die before our nation wakes up to what's truly happening.

Many Muslims are peaceful, including a couple of families who live on my street. They are basically liberal Muslims who don't adhere to a strict understanding of Islam's doctrine, which includes world domination and the establishment of a Caliphate. I saw news today that Omar Mateen was a "soldier of the Caliphate in America."

While the politicians mull over policies on how to contain ISIS and how to protect our citizens, the Christian community has to respond in love.

Our city and segments of the nation are grieving and have to process this and understand exactly what it means. And we must do as the Bible says, " ... to grieve with those who grieve" (Rom. 12:15).

Charisma News reported this horrible massacre soon after it happened Sunday morning. We have continued to cover it and will cover it in the days to come. I recorded a podcast about this tragedy, which you can listen to [here](#). As appropriate, I will share my own perspective as a leader in this city.

I ask that you pray for the families and friends who lost loved ones.

Pray for me and other leaders as we discern what the Holy Spirit is saying about how to respond. {eo}