

WEIGHING IN ON TRAGEDY

■ By Michael Ware

I have written this over and over. I have typed and pondered. I have prayed to the Lord and I have wept. This is my 8th revision and I'm still having trouble finding the words to properly express myself clearly and with proper conviction. After searching for the perfect way to make my statement it occurred to me that I'm flawed. I'm human. I'm going to make mistakes. It also occurred to me that I seek to be decent and kind, and even though I'll make mistakes I'll strive to avoid them in the future and not repeat them.

Lives are lost and people are hurting. We're consumed with an emotionally charged issue, and there appear to be no clear answers. This isn't wrong; this is human and very normal.

We're all in this together, America. We have to take a breath, and reflect properly so we can minimize the likelihood of another slaying. Will a ban on weapons make us safer? We had a ban years ago and it had zero positive impact on crime. This was tried and it failed. Did it lead to less crime? Did it deal with the mentally ill? Did it make us better parents? Did it raise the character of Americans? The answers are all NO. It did one thing and one thing well. It provided us with a false sense of security.

Response times by our Police and various Law Enforcement are very good, but even when they have stellar response times of just a few minutes, it isn't enough to stop evil from creating mortality. In the time it has taken you to read to this point, how many lives could be impacted for eternity regardless of the method used? In mere seconds, those bent on destruction of life can accomplish their task, much more so with minutes in which to work.

I'm not asking us all to turn a blind eye to this. Instead I'm asking us all to identify the real problems here and actively participate in our future. Are we going to continue to pretend the mentally ill shouldn't be discussed or don't deserve our compassion or time? It isn't a fun subject, as our hearts ache for many we know in this state, as their condition is almost never their fault. We

have to tackle this as a country. I don't have the answers, but I'm certain we sure won't get them without the tough questions first. Now is the time to educate one another and ourselves.

Are we prepared to lead by example to our youth and one another? We learn of a suspicious van taking pictures at the playground while seated at the supper table. We remember thinking at the time it was odd, as did the other parents. Our intuition was serving us correctly. Instead of putting our smart phones down, we continued playing angry birds or opted to update our Facebook status. Why didn't we use that smart phone to take a quick picture of the van? It certainly wouldn't have cost us a dime, nor would it have taken more than a few seconds. Why didn't we call the authorities and make them aware of the suspicion? If we had taken that picture, why didn't we then ask the person in the van if we could help them, or what did they might have needed?

I truly believe our intuition serves us correct too often to be ignored. However, we could hone that skill a bit at no cost.

Being aware and observant is imperative. Teaching our young to catch that sunset instead of that Youtube video late in the day is a start. Telling your child to observe five things on your walk out of the grocery store

to the car so you can both compare notes doesn't teach them the world is full of boogey men, thus fear. It teaches them situational awareness, and strength. It occupies almost no time, while setting the stage for us to

resist becoming victims. We may or may not sense all that goes on in our midst, but we can certainly recognize when something is out of place, whether that is a person, a situation, or just that feeling. Fostering that sense and strengthening that ethic are responsible, prudent, and wise.

Banning objects adds more people to the defenseless category by creating victims and aids none of them. Getting serious about the real problems and concentrating on personal responsibility in all forms will make a difference. Choosing to be good shepherds over one another and ourselves will reduce victims of all kinds of crimes more than we can all imagine if we would begin... 🙏

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