

When Tragedy Occurs: The Unasked Question

Whenever a tragic event occurs, such as happened here in Indianapolis last Thursday night (04-15-21), or anywhere or anytime else in the recent past for that matter, everyone wants answers... or someone(s) or something(s) to blame. “Why didn’t *the authorities* do something to avert this tragedy?” “Why don’t we have *laws* to prevent it?” “*Who* ignored the warning signs?” “*Who else*, beyond the assailant, is to blame?” “Why did this individual have access to *guns*?” “Why didn’t he have access to the *mental healthcare* he needed?” I have heard all of these questions asked when something like this occurs, and likely you have also. But there’s one thing, one very important thing, we never hear asked...

“Why didn’t he have access to *good parenting*?” Let me be clear: **I have no knowledge** of the parenting, or lack thereof, in this particular case. His parents may have done everything within their power to raise a decent, responsible, and upright son. And, he could have gone against everything he was taught as a child. **I do not know** the particulars of his rearing in this case, nor am I assuming that it was necessarily lacking.

But I do know that for about two or three generations now:

- Children are increasingly raised by one parent rather than two as God intended. If the single-parent home was the model for childrearing that God intended: He wouldn’t have made procreation a two-parent process; He wouldn’t have given instructions to *fathers* (Eph.6:4) and *mothers* (1Thess.2:7) regarding their care and raising; and He wouldn’t have enjoined *honor* and *obedience* upon the children to “*your parents*” (Eph.6:1-3). But He did all three of these. “Yes,” a single-parent can rear a child or even children into decent, honorable, and even godly adults, but understand how much more difficult it is to have to do so alone. Unless there is substantial assistance from grandparents or other capable sources, a child raised by one parent is likely getting about half of the input God intended. Now that you’ve thought about all the children raised in not-so-capable single-parent homes, multiply that by two or three generations and think about what has been missed in their rearing.
- Parenting is increasingly “out-sourced” to daycare and primary and secondary education facilities. All of which, to greater or lesser degrees, have taught them: that Evolution is responsible for their existence, not God; that they get to decide what is “right” and “wrong” for themselves, rather than God; and that this life is all there is, rather than an eternity in heaven with God or in hell with Satan. Additionally, and to be fair to our education system, it has all the while been saddled with more and more responsibilities to “parent” the children (to *nurture*, *provide for*, and teach them *life lessons* that the parents should be providing) rather than “educate” them.
- That even when both parents are in the home, proper “parenting” is not the priority it should be. Do yourself (and your children!) a favor: go back and carefully, perceptively, and introspectively read Deut.6:4-15. How many “mass murders” had parents who cared enough to do these things for their children? Perhaps it wasn’t how they (the parents) were raised, so they didn’t raise their children that way. Now again, multiply that by a few generations. Put your phone down. Turn off the video/online game, and the television. “Parent” your children. What does that

mean? “*And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,*” Eph.6:4. Generally, it takes nine months to “have” a child, and about 20 years to “raise” them. If you’re not willing to put forth a couple of decades worth of diligent, hard work providing for them (1Tim.5:8) and teaching them “*everything pertaining to life and godliness*” (2Pet.1:3), do us all a favor and just get a dog. But if you have a child or children (sorry, dogs don’t count), be their parent. They aren’t accessories; they’re the future, and will influence everyone else’s future also.

- Finally (and since I’ve stuck my neck out this far), for the last few generations we’ve invented more than one way to “abuse” and “neglect” children. Overdosing them with self-esteem through excessive or unwarranted praise, making excuses for their mistakes and failures, and never disciplining and holding them accountable for their attitudes, decisions, and actions can be just as damaging as “*abusive speech*” (cf. Col.3:8), *beating*, and/or otherwise *neglecting* them. We’ve produced successive generations that are becoming more and more self-centered, self-indulgent, and entitled. We did that, not them.

Mass killings used to be mostly carried out by governments fighting “wars.” In the last few generations, we’ve “privatized” them. We can blame *whoever* (education, welfare, society, government, etc.) or *whatever* (diet, entertainment, guns, etc.) we want, but until we admit that **as parents**, we’ve produced (by not *raising!*) a couple of generations of people who largely: don’t know how to get along with other people; don’t know how to constructively deal with their own emotions; don’t have the regard they should for human life- including their own; and, think that everything and everyone should revolve around them, things will only get worse. When we traded God’s plans and intentions for the family and raising children for those of Dr. Benjamin Spock, we began a great social experiment that has failed miserably... and mass murder, once largely unheard of in the private sector, continues to rise year after year. (Philip C. Strong; Southport Church of Christ; 7202 Madison Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46227; online at southportcofc.org)