



By Dr. Richard Youngblood

Question: How would Jesus suggest that we need to feel and react toward violent shootings like the one that happened in Arizona? (Part 2 of 2)

Last week we discussed how some people react to reports of incidents like the Tucson shootings by becoming fear-driven. Still others respond with indifference as if this is just another of the many fictional depictions of violence we view everyday on TV. Both of these reactions are inappropriate for followers of the compassionate Jesus who were told that they “did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father’” (Romans 8:15).

In addition, many people react with strong feelings of anger at such acts of evil. Something is wrong with our sense of morality if we do not have a sense of outrage at injustice and senseless violence. Even Jesus was angry because of the Pharisees who criticized him for doing an act of good by healing a man on the Sabbath (Mark 2:5). In a quote from Psalm 4, the apostle Paul wrote, “Be angry, and *yet* do not sin” (Ephesians 4:26).

Contrary to what we might expect, anger is not necessarily an inappropriate response. But we must be sure to control our anger and express it in appropriate ways. For example, one of the Psalm writers prayed that God might “break the teeth of the wicked” (Psalm 3:7). By taking his anger to God, he was able to express it without sinning. Instead of taking matters into his own hands, he expressed faith in God to handle his enemies.

Finally, we can also use our feelings of anger to motivate us to become part of the solution to violence and evil in our world by doing something constructive about incidents like the Tucson shootings. We should follow in the steps of the “Prince of Peace” by committing ourselves to be peace-makers in a violent and vengeful world (Isaiah 9:6; Matthew 5:9). For example, we can become advocates for civility in public politics. Help our fellow-citizens understand that it is possible to disagree on issues facing us without using inflammatory words or attacking the character of those who may disagree with us.

Another way to be part of the solution might be by volunteering to help troubled young people who sometimes act irrationally because of their anger and frustrations in life. Many of the shootings of recent years have been by teens and young adults who have felt rejected, mistreated or neglected in some way. Some of

them may have been the objects of bullying. By identifying these individuals and offering social and emotional support in their lives, we may make a difference in their lives and in our entire world.

Whatever we may do with our anger, we must channel our energy into meaningful and appropriate behavior. With faith in God, we do not need to become fear-driven, indifferent to what is happening around us or react with uncontrolled anger. With the help of the Spirit from Jesus, we can become lights in a dark world.

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