The Media & Your Emotions

Crime is Real, But Be Discerning

Crime is real, and as America's moral foundations continue to crumble, crime seems to be growing, spreading into suburbs, and becoming more senseless and more violent. Recently you may have seen shocking videos of a swarm of hundreds of teens terrorizing people and smashing cars in Chicago for no reason. Every day in the media we consume we see disturbing stories of crime.



I do not want to diminish the reality of crime, or the importance of being wise and cautious. More importantly, I certainly do not want to in any way negate the tragedy and heartbreak of lost lives, victims, or injuries.

Several people have recently told me of their churches, home school groups, and private schools that are amping up security in reaction to the Nashville Christian school shooting and attacks on churches and Crisis Pregnancy Centers.

Being safe is very important and precautions are prudent. Yet, we must also realize that we live in an age of constant media consumption and media manipulation. If it is not intentionally manipulative, there is still an emotional toll that comes with heavy news consumption and we must keep that in balance for ourselves and our children.

School shootings are one of the worst crimes ever, and they are a big media topic now. It is understandable. Every school shooting is a horrific act that should never happen. I believe an automatic death penalty for such a crime is worth consideration as a law.

According to The Associated Press, The Washington Post, and an Ed Week database, there have been 175 people killed in 377 school shootings since Columbine in 1999.

Surprised?

(There are 130,000 public and private K12 schools in America. Some shooting incidents are a bit difficult to quantify. One is too many, but a shooting at an outdoor football game, or in a parking lot after school, for example, is often counted as a school shooting, even if it is a gang-related drive-by act, random bullet, or something else that may not come to mind when you hear "school shooting.")

I say this with some reservation because I don't want my intent twisted. The loss of any child, in any way, is almost incalcuable. But the amount and type of media coverage and the feelings media consumption creates in us, along with the political reactions we see also need to be considered.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, 4,000 people in America die each year from drowning. More children under 5 die from drowning in a swimming pool or bathtub than from any other single cause of death. For children ages 5-18, drowning is the second leading cause of death, second only to automotive deaths. From 2017-2019 there was an average of 389 pool-related deaths, of children under 15 each year. That's over twice as

many child drowning deaths in just one year as nearly 25 years of total school shooting deaths.

I understand that there is a big difference between an accident and an act of evil. But have you ever heard the media, any activists, or President Biden, or any politician ever call for the banning of swimming pools, responsible pool ownership, or pool safety? Has the news of the day ever fueled a discussion you overheard in social settings, the office, or among your friends, about the dangers of water?

It might seem odd in this post-Covid world to mention this. After all, think back a few years to the media hysteria and the fear of the pandemic. Yes, Covid was real, but how many times did we see emotion driven public responses?

It was scientifically known all throughout the pandemic that wearing a blue paper dust-particle mask was useless against a virus. (The information on those packets of masks said as much.) How often in 2020 or 2021 did you see a person, driving alone, with a blue paper mask on? How often did you see relatively young, seemingly healthy people taking walks outdoors, where the risk of Covid infection was almost nil in the open air, also wearing masks? I often thought, there is a person who watches way too much "news."

Media today is designed for reactions. Newspapers and websites profit from internet clicks and views. Headlines are often designed to hook us into clicking to the full story which webmasters track. We need to be discerning in what we read, hear, and consume in the media, continuing to question how it might influence us comparing what we know to be real and true. There is a Bible verse that may apply to this topic. Proverbs 18:17 states, "The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him."

Often, the media seems to thrive on a herd mentality. Issue "X" is to be feared or reacted to in a way that leads to emotional support for solution "Y." Coincidentally, solution "Y" is almost always what leading liberal politicians are proposing.

Being informed is important, but in the Information Age in which we live, for better or worse, we need to always remember that news consumption has a powerful impact upon our emotions, our views, our values, our mental health and how we see the world. For many decades, advertisers, politicians, and reporters have used this powerful influence on us. We need a reminder of this occasionally, especially as parents and grandparents tasked with raising well adjusted, critically-thinking children.

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- Micah Clark, Director AFA of Indiana - 6/23