

Trends

Sad statistics concerning children and divorce:

Half of all children will witness the breakup of their parent's marriage; half of these will witness the breakup of their parent's second marriage.

Among the millions of children witnessing the breakup of their parent's marriage; one of every 10 will also live through three or more parental marriage breakups.

—via *Marriage Success Secrets*

Malachi 2:16: "For the LORD God of Israel says that He hates divorce, for it covers one's garment with violence."

Sentence Sermons

"Divorce is just the most awful thing in the world."

—John Denver

Matthew 19:9: "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery."

News & Notes

Please pray for those mentioned in the announcements after services and others listed on the bulletin board in the foyer of the church building.

Please consider donating funds to Zach & Taya Martin. Zach is a medical student and he and his wife Taya are planning to assist Ron Halbrook on one of his preaching trips to the Philippines. The Martins are worthy of our support. You can contact Zach at: zcmartin30@gmail.com.

Please pray for one another! "comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing." 1 Thessalonians 5:11

Please pray for Ryan & Jennifer and the brethren of the Northern Michigan church of Christ. They are now meeting in their newly purchased building in Roscommon, Michigan.

Please keep sisters Virginia Brown and Wilma Cardwell in your prayers. Their faithfulness sets such a good example and gives encouragement to all! Ditto for Al (our Barnabas!).

Pray for all the lost souls, especially those in the greater Bloomington area. Pray that Westside might be an influence for good in this community.

Pray for the all of our students: elementary, secondary and college. Our young people face many trials and temptations at school.

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Times of Service: Bible Study, Sunday 9:30 AM and Wednesday 7:00 PM; Worship, Sunday 10:30 AM and 5:00 PM

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Please direct questions and comments to the editor.

Words of Life

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"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

John 6:68

Lizzie Borden's unthinkable crimes — the exact opposite of our times.

Melissa Mackenzie

(The American Spectator on-line: <https://spectator.org/20-reasons-mass-killings-happen>)

Lizzie Borden likely got away with murdering her dad and step-mom. She used an ax when procuring poison didn't work. She was acquitted for her crimes, for which there was copious evidence, by a jury of twelve mustachioed men. The whole sordid account is here. The idea that a young woman was an ax-wielding murderess was unthinkable. It just didn't happen. One hundred twenty years later, the case remains unsolved. Wink. Wink.

One hundred twenty years later, murdering mom and step-dad isn't a most shocking thing. Murdering parents, friends, schoolmates, spouses, and children in fits of self-justified rage is no longer exceptional or unthinkable. It's thinkable. It's thinkable and talkable and believable and obvious.

When a 19-year-old man goes to a school, shoots his former classmates, and kills 17 of them, it's thinkable. Certainly, he thought of it. He didn't have to think too hard, either, because other young men before him aired out their grievances through the kick of a rifle. Mass murder is now a lifestyle choice for people who are disgruntled about their current circumstances.

The culture has changed. In the midst of riches that put smart phones into over 77%, the world at their fingertips, there is a blackness of soul sufficient enough that killing as many people as possible seems like a reasonable choice.

Why is this happening?

There are too many reasons. It's like asking why a body gets cancer. All bodies have cancer cells that the immune system recognizes and kills, but sometimes the immune cells don't recognize the threat, or they're tricked or they're tired, and the diseased cells multiply. Some bodies have the genetic code that needs an environmental trigger to turn on and then cells are reprogrammed with cancer genes that multiply unrecognized by the host's defense system. If the cancer isn't recognized and cut out or stopped or if the immune system doesn't wake up, the host can die or become disfigured.

Our culture is horribly disfigured. The cancer has metastasized:

I. Fatherlessness — divorce and remarriage where the kids are not the focus of the parents and children lack a father in the home. Please read Brandon Weichert's

excellent treatment of this phenomenon (Go on-line to original article for various links not included here.).

2. **Untended mental illness** — fewer options for families struggling with a child who is mentally unstable.
3. **Transient families with no social support network** — moving, being alien in one's own community, straight up loneliness.
4. **Working parents** — kids left alone because both parents are out of the home. *Someone* needs to pay attention to the children, but no one is.
5. **Technology with immediate gratification** — no concept of waiting, less patience, less comfort with loneliness.
6. **Less church-going** — no God, no Higher Power, no concept of eternal damnation or salvation from sin, no church community.
7. **Too much busyness, not enough time** — the wrong kind of relentless pressure on teachers, students, families.
8. **Violent imagery in movies, art, comics, books, video games** — it desensitizes all and for those who have trouble with reality, it dehumanizes people in the real world.
9. **News media hyping evil, ignoring the good.**
10. **Narcissism borne of social media & self-worshipping technology.**
11. **Apathetic law enforcement and legal system.**
12. **Lack of consequences for bad behavior, no loving discipline** — parents too harried & selfish to slow down & create boundaries for children.
13. **Throwing out moral absolutes** — there's not right or wrong, there's just feelings.
14. **Undermining authority** — disrespecting the institutional leaders like teachers and coaches, reinforcing rotten behavior, leaders undermining their own authority with bad behavior and setting terrible examples.
15. **Abortion** — inconvenient lives are easily thrown away.
16. **Bullying** — almost all the young people who kill act out revenge after being tormented by classmates.
17. **Medication** — in all recent mass killings by young men, all of them have been on psychotropic medication.
18. **Social stuntedness** — difficulty making friends, inability to carry on conversations with peers and adults, fear of opposite sex social interaction, being unsure of boundaries and social rules/expectations.
19. **Porn** — reducing women to inanimate objects created to please men and the frustration when it doesn't happen.
20. **Satan** — when God is pushed out, evil influences take roost.

Church, God, used to be the center of a family's life. If a kid was mad at his parents, there was a pastor or interested and caring adult who could give moral guidance. People were reminded of their moral structure weekly. Everyone agreed that teaching right and wrong was necessary. Standards were explicitly stated and expected to be met. People feared the consequences of being cross-wise with God. There was *hell to pay*. Now, a mushy emotionalism masquerades as Christianity and Christianity is laughed at and viewed as bigoted and backward.

A cataclysm of divorce fueled by adultery, addiction, and abuse exposes

children to violence, betrayal, and alienation. Children must adjust to their parents' new partners, new homes, lower standard of living, exhausted moms and dads, disorganized environments, feeling rootless (due to horrible custody arrangements), and if abuse or addiction was an issue with a parent, must fend for themselves alone, at the mercy of the unbalanced person. The other parent isn't around to run interference. The child is thrust into scary situations without the resources to handle them. Then, the child must go to school and try to concentrate while all these worries occupy his mind. Far from being a refuge for children, the home is a war zone. No place is safe. And with no church family to support them, there's no salvation outside the home either.

Then there's the community... or lack thereof. Americans are transient, especially families with children. They move in their county, their states, and overseas. Growing up with the same friends and neighbors who know the kids and watch out for them happens less often. Support from extended families doesn't exist. For troubled or stressed nuclear families, parents have insecure support systems and so fend, by themselves, with relational and work pressures. Even in ideal circumstances, a family can be devastated by illness, job loss, a death, or financial pressure and without a support network; these stressors can plunge a family into chaos. It's doubly difficult for single parents who are far from family and cannot move to where there's support due to custody arrangements.

Wrapped in and around all of this is a culture driven by technology and entertainment that glorifies meanness and elevates evil. The news is sensationalized, hyped-up continuous outrage where stories are driven by anger and commentated on by people who are furious. Vulgarity and mayhem are the norm. Human suffering is depersonalized, distant, and helplessness-inducing. Another day, another mass murder — it's impossible to emotionally invest, again, in recurrent pain and suffering. So people tune out to cope.

The answer to a problem like Nikolas Cruz is not easy. Americans need to turn back to God, heal the breeches between them, become less selfish, and rebuild their families and communities. Neighbors, teachers, and police must work harder to connect and take more seriously the distressed and disturbed. They must be willing to care. Everyone must slow down and pay attention.

These days, no jury would be surprised by Lizzie Borden. They're not surprised by the messed up family dynamics. They're not surprised that teachers, police, and the FBI knew and did nothing. They're not surprised that the family and neighbors are surprised. (It's always a shock!) They're not surprised by nihilistic violence. None of this is surprising anymore.

Nikolas Cruz will face severe consequences for his actions and deservedly so, but his evil didn't mysteriously happen. It grew and was observed and reported and ignored and dismissed and it didn't go away. Seventeen young people, full of promise, died because a cultural cancer grew unchecked. Until the dysplasia growing in America is cut out and the body heals in spirit, heart, and soul, Nikolas Cruz won't be the last mass murderer.

In a post-Christian, post-family, post-community nihilistic America, Nikolas Cruz is the beginning, not the end, of many sorrows.

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