

C. Praying For "Senseless" Tragedies

Taken from "Praying for Senseless Tragedies"
by Sandra Higley & Lani Hinkle, Nov/Dec 1999

When we hear about another random act of violence, our first response is usually to pray away the pain or pray that this will never happen again. But how can we pray beyond the fear and shock, beyond the most obvious needs, for the issues of the kingdom? Below are prayer points that were originally written by "Pray!" staff the morning after the September 15, 1999 church shooting at Wedgwood Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas.

Once again, as a nation, from a human perspective we are unable to make sense of the horrific situation we are in. We hope that these points will act as a springboard for your own prayer in the wake of tragedies that defy human understanding and are becoming more frequent.

Praise

- Though it is difficult, start with praise. Focus on God's character.
- Praise God that He is sovereign, that He has ultimate control over all, and that nothing takes Him by surprise (Isaiah 45:5-7).

Petition/Intercession

- Ask God to use this situation to bring unprecedented spiritual openness to people affected by the tragedy, and ask Him to show His face to them.
- Ask God to bless the ministry that will be thrust upon the church or community affected by the tragedy. Ask Him to empower them with a powerful witness when they are called upon to speak about or reflect on the situation.
- Ask God to stand against the enemy's attempts to make families experience unresolved anger or guilt over the loss of loved ones.
- Ask God to focus the minds of public officials on the need for prayer and to provide people who will continue to pray for the situation.
- Ask God to equip leaders who will be called upon to mentor and minister to people in the aftermath of tragedy (Hebrews 13:20-21).
- Ask God—for yourself and others—for a passion and love for Christ that drive out fear (1 John 4:18).

Thanksgiving

- Thank God that the enemy has made a tactical error, since martyrdom and persecution have always strengthened the church, and that God will use for good what Satan has intended for harm (Genesis 50:20-21).
- Thank God for the people who will be drawn to seek God's face because the overwhelming nature of the tragedy leaves them nowhere else to turn (John 2:1-9).
- Thank God for a vivid reminder of your own mortality and vulnerability, asking Him to prepare your heart and spirit for a faithful response when you are faced with tragedy.

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God (Martin Luther)

A mighty fortress is our God,
A bulwark never failing;
Our helper He amid the flood
Of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe
Doth seek to work us woe—
His craft and pow'r are great,
And, armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.

Did we in our own strength confide,
Our striving would be losing,
Were not the right man on our side,
The man of God's own choosing.
Dost ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus, it is He—
Lord Sabaoth His name,
From age to age the same,
And He must win the battle.

And though this world, with devils filled,
Should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed
His truth to triumph through us.
The prince of darkness grim,
We tremble not for him—

The Spirit and the gifts are ours.
That word above all earthly pow'rs,
No thanks to them, abideth;
Through Him who with us sideth
Let good and kindred go,
This mortal life also—
The body they may kill;
God's truth abideth still:
His kingdom is forever.