

Roots in Ripon

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Are Guns the Problem?

To follow up on last week's article, "A Look at the 2nd Amendment", I posit the question for serious consideration: Are guns the problem?

The knee-jerk reaction that has been inculcated into the American psyche for the last several decades is that guns in and of themselves are evil. If this can be proven, then I will be the first to shout for the strictest gun control imaginable.

As I have taught my daughters, and subsequently my grandchildren, guns are only as dangerous as the person who handles them.

In previous articles in the past, I mentioned that my father was a member and instructor with the National Rifle Association (NRA). He had numerous guns and enjoyed handling them as well as instructing and engaging in recreational shooting. My brother, sister and I knew about guns from the time we were very small. We were taught to respect all weapons. When I was barely five, I remember the story in our neighborhood of two brothers who were playing around with a BB Gun. Tragically, the one brother shot the other in the eye, causing the eye to be permanently damaged.

Such horsing around will always put someone at risk, but when proper instruction and respect for weapons, particularly guns is made available to children early on, there is far less of a chance of such accidents occurring. Many of you, like me, remember when guys would drive their pickup trucks to high school with a gun sitting prominently on a rack placed squarely in the rear window. No one messed with it because you simply did not do such a thing. I attended five high schools from 1962-66, from Dallas, Texas, to Oslo, Norway, to New Milford, Connecticut, to Wellesley, Massachusetts, to (finally) Pacific Palisades, California. In all that time and in all those places, I never once heard of someone abusing or indiscriminately handling a gun on campus or anywhere else.

Do we need more gun control laws? How many are there anyway? Well, there are many gun control laws on the books at the federal, state and local levels. I'm not sure anyone really knows just how many there are. I have researched this question with little to show. It is safe to say there are hundreds of such laws all across the nation at every level – quite possibly in the thousands. The danger with more and more gun laws begs the question, "Where does it stop?"

When the Founding Fathers of our nation included the 2nd Amendment, it was not an afterthought. It was primary to the rights of all Americans to be able to

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defend themselves against a government that had overstepped its bounds. In Europe at that time in history, the masses of people were considered to be too dense to take on the responsibility of self-protection. A cursory review of European history will clearly reveal that monarchs and despotic leaders routinely trampled on the God-given rights of the people. James Madison and others understood this and did everything in their power to ensure that this new nation, the United States of America, would not make the same mistakes many of our Founders had experienced in Europe prior to immigrating to America.

Governor Matt Bevin of Kentucky wrote in a Tweet following the horrific Las Vegas massacre, "To all those political opportunists who are seizing on the tragedy in Las Vegas to call for more gun regs . . . You can't regulate evil . . ."

The Governor is absolutely correct. The human race is in a fallen condition. We obviously cannot fix ourselves or we would have done so by now. As a follower of Jesus, I believe in his sacrificial death on the cross to save me (and you) from a life that, left unchecked, is fully capable of committing the worst deeds imaginable.

The current death toll from January 1, 2017 to October 16, 2017 states that there were 9,067 people "murdered by gun" thus far. That's a lot of people, equivalent to half the population of Ripon, my home town. But how does this number compare to other deaths? Well, so far this year 26,673 people were killed by drunk driving. Another 33,746 were killed by suicide. How about the flu/pneumonia? 43,572. Here's a kicker: Hospital Associated Infection has left 78,107 dead. This next one will make you squirm. Medical errors: 198,387. And that's only sixth on the overall list. Number five is Obesity with 242,211. Number four is Tobacco with 276,137. Number three is Cancer with 466,829. Number two is Heart Disease with 484,700. And the number one cause of death in America for the past 44 years is Abortion with 861,561. What? No outrage?

With a population of 319 million people in America as of 2016, and 9,067 deaths by gun (which includes roughly 2/3rds in self-defense, equivalent to 6,000 deaths), then deaths by gun equates to 0.00002842 percent of the population, or 25 deaths a day in the U.S.A.

Make no mistake! Each death by gun is a tragic loss. But to listen to the gun control crowd you would think people were dropping like flies every day. That is often the perception of foreigners about America. And that's a shame.

Duly trained and licensed gun owners are a deterrent to crime. In fact, they are a force multiplier for law enforcement. Bad guys do not want to have someone shooting back when they are committing their crimes.

A well-armed society is a safe society. Our Founding Father's knew this. That's why they wrote the 2nd Amendment. And it is the 1st Amendment: freedom of religion, speech, assembly and the press, that is protected by the 2nd.

Man, I love this country!