

**Evil**  
by  
**Raymond E. Muth**

*North Hills News Record 9/25/99 - Community Columnist*

I had just finished breakfast when the telephone rang. "Today I am going to a better world," said my friend Merle over what sounded like a public phone booth. I couldn't believe what I was hearing. My knees buckled because I knew Merle was capable of actually killing himself. "Merle, wait," I pleaded. Click. Merle hung up the phone.

It was only one month earlier when Merle put a clip in a gun and much to my horror, showed me how he was going to kill himself. Despite my calls to the police, despite my calls to suicide prevention centers, despite my urging him to get help and despite prayers that were too few, Merle blew himself away one morning in front of the building where we worked. It was something I hope to never witness again. It was beyond awful.

As terrible as that day was, there was a sense of relief that no one else got hurt. But there was also a personal sense of dark sadness, frustration and failure. It was Merle's choice to end his life but was there anything more I could have done to prevent this?

I suppose some could offer a sound psychological explanation for what happened to Merle. But the torment that I saw raging within him was something so diabolical that it defied even the good science of psychology. It was total darkness wrapped around despair. It was chaos feeding confusion. It was an insurrection of the soul.

In the aftermath of the recent shooting atrocities, news shows continue to search for plausible explanations as to why a disturbed person would murder innocent victims, especially children. This of course presumes that there is an answer to this kind of horror. But perhaps there is nothing within our real world by itself that can explain this evil because this kind of evil has been wrought by something completely illogical and unworldly.

When I watched the news accounts of a minister being interviewed hours after the recent tragedy in a Texas church, my mind raced back to a conversation in a college classroom. "What can possibly be the point of innocent children suffering?" our philosophy teacher asked. "What kind of God would allow someone that has done nothing wrong, to suffer so cruelly?" he continued. That professor made us all uncomfortable. Rational and logical rules did not apply to these questions.

"I don't know but I accept this is God's plan," said a Bible believing student matter-of-factly. As a fellow believer, I was embarrassed by that answer. I felt as though my faith was being misrepresented by a short-circuited robot. That answer was a lazy spiritual cop out, a call to stupefaction instead of action. I always believed faith and reason sharpened each other walking hand in hand and it was folly to leave the brain out of the equation. True, our finite minds can't always understand "why" but dismissing confounding evil so

cavalierly is a huge impediment when we are confronted with preventing such evil personally.

My answer then was the same as it is today - grapple with it . When we make time to wrestle with these disturbing questions honestly, we are forced to cross over from the intellectual dimension and into the spiritual realm and vice versa.

For a believer, prayer guides us to see and help those around us in trouble. And when we see it, we must get involved. No, we may never recognize the despair of a Unabomber hidden in Montana. But we at least might begin to recognize people around us that are desperately hurting. We have to begin to recognize that loneliness is the greatest poverty in this country today. If there is a war that should be waged, it is that. Evil is having a field day in the minds of those who are tortured by an anger within that feels unloved, unwanted and unimportant.

Evil has finally become so disturbing that we have no choice but to walk down the road with faith and reason as partners in a call to action to defeat the true enemy. It's tough stuff but through it, hope springs eternal.



[E-Mail Ray](#)

[Home](#) | [About Me](#) | [Family](#) | [Critters](#) | [Work](#) | [Articles](#) | [Archives](#)