

Rockets and Murder

BY GREG PARSONS

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The contrasts couldn't be starker.

In May 2020 we saw the best and worst of humanity here in the U.S. We launched men into space. We saw a man die needlessly at the hands of those appointed to “serve and protect.” We have seen both before, but both were also different this time.

The *rocket* which propelled two astronauts to the International Space Station was produced by a private company (with government funding) that used new technology, redesigned from the ground up, including a booster rocket that returns to earth to be reused.

Amazing to watch!

The *murder* of a black man by a white police officer has created a broader outcry from police officials around the country. One police chief said to her department, “If you believe that the treatment of the officer in that video is acceptable, turn in your badge.” I expect that the vast majority of police officers were horrified by what they saw also. They deeply desire to serve with honor and deserve our support to receive better training and different administrative systems so these incidents are rarer every day.

A horror to see!

What happened to George Floyd was *painful* to watch. We know it happens globally—out of the views of cameras. Yes, it *is* systemic in several ways. At the core: when people take power and authority on their own terms, not God's way, it

will end badly. That is clear throughout the Bible, from Eve and Adam down to us today.

We can't solve these kinds of problems by only “teaching our kids differently.” We know that things like this will happen again. It seems that while we can advance technology and use it to literally get off the earth, we can't change peoples' hearts.

So, beyond the need for spiritual transformation, what do we do? I have all kinds of ideas, backed by experts (or so I think). But instead, below are a few of my reflections that might give a bit of hope and perspective.

God-Ordained Authority

When you look at human-on-human evil in the world, much of it is caused (or not prevented) by police or military. Using their official capacity, they either 1) abuse those under their control, or, 2) don't resist evil done by others.

This is a crucial area of God's truth we must get right and teach. The Scriptures from Daniel to Romans 14 (among others) teach us that *God puts authorities in place*—Christian or not, from the top leader to, in this case, the police and military. They wield God's authority when they do their job. With this comes a *serious* responsibility and accountability *to God*—even if they don't believe He exists, someday they will give an account of what they have done!

Training to De-escalate

You do what you have been trained to do. A former police officer and detective whom I know served in

a major city on the east coast. When they were training in firearms, they were told to hold their shells as they fired and dispose of them when they are done. After all, the logic went: keep the firing range clean, make it quicker and easier to reset for the next group. The only problem is that when the officers finished training and were in real-life situations using their weapons, they did as they were taught. As a result, in those tense and emotion-filled situations where they were fired upon, officers were getting injured or worse!

So, they had to re-train them. Everyone went back to the firing range and were told “let shell casings fall to the ground.”

So what kinds of re-training are needed? Here is one idea:

A family we know has a son diagnosed with major emotional issues and it is a painful story. When they were living in the U.K, their son ran off in the middle of the night. When they called the local police and the “bobby” (or officer) arrived, he did not even *have* a gun. But he had skills and was trained in de-escalating situations. That night, he helped to find and calm down their son and bring the situation under control without any shouting or shooting.

It got me to thinking: do I need retraining for how I think and act related to those different from me? We all have God-given authority through the Spirit. How do we use it? 