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One of the most provocative Scripture passages I use in my work is Acts 19:8. It describes the apostle Paul’s work in Ephesus: “He entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, arguing and pleading about the kingdom of God.” Now, if you know anything about the missionary journeys of Paul, you know that he got around! Every time the wind blew, it seemed, the apostle Paul wanted to go to another city to tell people about Jesus. But he spent three whole months in Ephesus “arguing and pleading” about the kingdom! Paul knew that you need considerable time to debate and argue and plead with people about such a large topic as the kingdom of God.

Gun violence, I would argue, stands deeply in opposition to everything the kingdom of God means. We need a significant amount of time to consider how to prevent it. It, too, is a large topic. Once, when I was invited to speak to a sociology class at a university in Kansas, the professor introduced me by asking the students, “If you wanted to thoroughly research the problem of gun violence in America, what academic disciplines should you consult?” The students filled the entire whiteboard with their answers: sociology, history, psychology, psychiatry, criminal justice, law, philosophy, statistics, African American studies, biblical studies, military science, political science, literature, urban studies. Those students had a sense of how wide-ranging the answers to the problem of gun violence really are.

