

JULY-AUGUST 2018

THE

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# REAL TRUTH™

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING



## AMERICA'S UNBRIDGEABLE POLITICAL DIVIDE

**Get Ready for a Surge of  
Gambling Addiction**

**When Mountains  
Explode**

**Iran and Israel's  
Mideast Showdown**

**Education Lost  
*The Fight to Keep Teaching***

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VOL. XVI | NO. 4 | JULY-AUGUST 2018

A R T I C L E S

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■ **ERUPTION IN PARADISE:** Residents and members of the media watch as fissures from the Kilauea volcano continue to spew lava near Pahoehoe, Hawaii (May 24, 2018).

PHOTO: GEORGE F. LEE/HONOLULU STAR-ADVERTISER VIA AP

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**The Real Truth**  
1000 Ambassador Drive  
Wadsworth, OH 44281  
[rcg.org/realtruth](http://rcg.org/realtruth)

**PUBLISHER/EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**  
DAVID C. PACK

**EXECUTIVE EDITOR**  
JEFFREY R. AMBROSE

**MANAGING EDITOR**  
EDWARD L. WINKFIELD

**SENIOR EDITOR**  
BRADFORD G. SCHLEIFER

**ASSOCIATE EDITOR**  
SAMUEL C. BAXTER

**CONTRIBUTING WRITERS**

DAVID C. PACK  
JEFFREY R. AMBROSE  
SAMUEL C. BAXTER  
RYAN L. CASWELL  
ANDREW J. HOLCOMBE  
GREGORY E. KAIDANNEK  
DAVID J. LITAVSKY  
KENNETH M. OREL  
GARRICK R. OXLEY  
JAMES F. PASTOR  
BRADFORD G. SCHLEIFER  
NESTOR A. TORO  
F. JACO VILJOEN  
VIDAL N. WACHUKU  
EDWARD L. WINKFIELD

**EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS**  
DAVID J. LITAVSKY  
AISHA WILSON

**ART/GRAPHICS**  
JODY E. LYDICK  
PAULA C. RONDEAU  
SARAH O. VIDAL  
EILEEN M. WILLARD

**WEBSITE SERVICES**  
BRADFORD G. SCHLEIFER  
ANGELA K. BAXTER  
AMANDA B. DODD  
SARAH A. WILLARD

**INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**  
TIMOTHY C. WILLARD

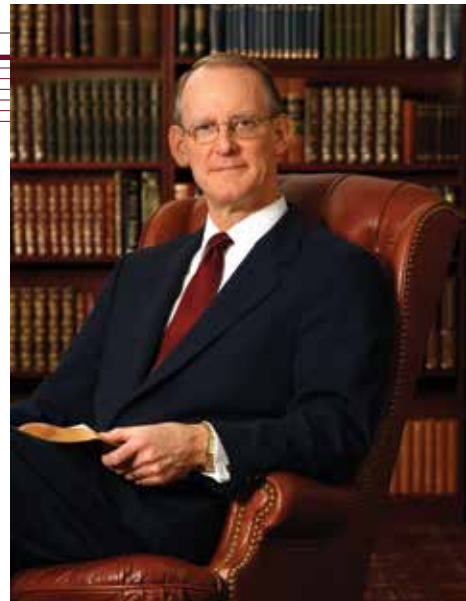
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## PERSONAL FROM

David C. Fack



# Do Christians “Just Show Love”?

**M**OST PROFESSING Christians speak endlessly of the “love of God.” Modern preachers speak just as endlessly about the need for Christians to “love their fellowman.” Aren’t Christians merely those who “show love”? If so, what is it? How can one show love if he does not know what it is?

Let’s consider several verses—and remove all confusion!

The apostle Paul wrote, “...because *the love of God* is shed abroad in our hearts *by the Holy Spirit* which is given unto us” (Rom. 5:5). When a Christian receives God’s Spirit, he receives some (a very small amount at first) of the love of God. Over time, through actively exercising it, the depth and amount of love *grows*. It is actually one of the nine “fruits of the Spirit.”

God’s Way is practiced by exercising these FRUITS: “LOVE, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness [or humility, the opposite of vanity and pride], temperance” (Gal. 5:22-23).

There are two different ways of life. One is the GIVE way—the way of love and outgoing concern—God’s way! The other is the GET way—the way of *selfishness* and *self-concern*—the way of this world.

Most people are interested in enjoying pleasures and the accumulation of physical things. One man observed, “Life is about seeing who can die with the most toys.” That may be true of this world, but it is not true of God’s Way and the way of a Christian.

Jesus Christ taught, “It is more blessed to GIVE than to receive” (Acts 20:35). Practicing *this* way of life leads to abundance, peace, prosperity, supreme happiness and joy. Christ likened God’s Spirit to a river flowing out of each person. Notice: “If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believes on Me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly *shall flow rivers of living water*. (But this spoke He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive...)” (John 7:37-39).

The fruits of God’s Spirit are to be visible and abundant to all who view God’s true people. But it was only through and *after* Christ’s resurrection that He could send His Spirit to be present and active in each Christian. Continuing in verse 39: “...for the Holy Spirit was not yet given; *because that Jesus was not yet glorified* [resurrected].”

Carnal minds cannot obey *spiritual* laws. It is impossible! One must have and utilize the power of the Spirit of God (II Tim. 1:7) to be able to keep God’s spiritual Law—or to demonstrate real love.

Now read the Bible definition of love: “For this is the love of God, that we KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS: and His commandments are not grievous” (I John 5:3). Many people who *claim* to have love believe that the Commandments *are*, in fact, grievous. God says they are not. He calls His Law “holy, and just, and good... spiritual” (Rom. 7:12, 14).

Through Paul, the Bible explains that the *Commandments* and the *Law* are the same: “Love works no ill to his neighbor: therefore LOVE IS THE FULFILLING OF THE LAW” (Rom. 13:10). God’s Word reveals that love is “the fulfilling of the law.” Keeping the Commandments is fulfilling the Law—and doing this “WORKS NO ILL TO HIS NEIGHBOR.”

### Did Christ Change the Law?

Did Christ bring a new definition of sin? Did He alter God’s Law in some way? And did it relate to the subject of love?

Christ declared, “*Think not* that I am come to *destroy* the LAW, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill” (Matt. 5:17). He also taught that the New Testament Church is built, in part, on the prophets of the Old Testament, where the Law of God is first given. Notice: “And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and *prophets*, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone” (Eph. 2:20). The Law of God is not done away.

Immediately after Matthew 5:17, Christ examined several of the Ten Commandments. He magnified and strengthened each one He referenced.

Concerning the Sixth Commandment, He explained that not only is *killing* your brother a sin, but it is also a sin to *hate* him. Regarding adultery, He said that even *lust-ing* after a woman violates the Seventh Commandment.

Violating the *spirit* of the Law is sin—and all sin is against God (Psa. 51:4). God’s spiritual Law governs every action in life. It is best described in a single word—LOVE. It is outgoing concern for others. The way of this world is incoming, not outgoing. It

practices the GET (for self) way of life. But the first four commandments teach how to *love* God and the last six how to *love* our neighbor (Matt. 22:36-39).

Jesus said, “I have *kept* My Father’s commandments” (John 15:10)—and He expects us to do the same thing. Christ’s obedience to God’s Law did not somehow take us off the hook. This same verse explains, “If YOU keep My commandments, YOU shall abide in My love.” This means you.

If you want to “show love” to others, OBEY GOD!

### God’s Law—a Mirror

God’s Law shows how to have a right relationship with Him and with our neighbors. Think of it as a spiritual mirror. Here is James’ description: “But be you *DOERS* of the word, and *not hearers only*, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass [mirror]: for he beholds himself, and goes his way, and straightway forgets what manner of man he was. But whoso *looks into the PERFECT LAW OF LIBERTY*, and continues therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a *DOER* of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed” (1:22-25).

Do you ever hear preachers describe God’s Law as a “perfect law of liberty”? Almost certainly not! Yet it is, for those who practice obedience to it.

Like any mirror, God’s Law must be used. While it cannot wash your face, it will expose the dirt that is there. Remember, Paul wrote that “by the deeds of the law is the KNOWLEDGE of sin,” and that “by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight.” The Law will not remove the dirt. It simply notifies you that dirt is present.

The Law also has no power to forgive sins. Only Christ’s sacrifice can do this. But, at conversion, Christ’s blood only forgives *past* sins. The Law points out how to obey God in the future, but it has no inherent ability to forgive sins that are past (or for that matter, future sins).

Notice what Paul wrote: “Being *justified freely by His GRACE* through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through *faith in His blood*, to declare His righteousness for the remission of *SINS THAT ARE PAST*, through the forbearance of God” (Rom. 3:24-25).

Christ’s blood, and nothing else, covers past sins.

Of course, some conclude that since the Law cannot forgive sins, we do not need to keep it. This is like saying that, because the mirror cannot *remove* dirt, there is no need to ever use one to *find* it. No one would say this about a mirror.

This is why Paul stated, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? GOD FORBID. How shall we, that are dead to sin, *live any longer therein?*” (Rom. 6:1-2).

Once you have been forgiven, you are “dead” to the penalty of sin. It no longer has any effect on you. But God did not send His Son to die for you so that you could go right back to practicing what brought His death in the first place. Regarding sin, we are not to “live any longer therein.”

A few verses later, Paul is even plainer: “What then? *Shall we sin*, because we are not under the law [under its death penalty], but under grace? GOD FORBID. Know you not, that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are to whom you obey; whether of sin unto death, or of *obedience unto righteousness?*” (vs. 15-16).

Allow no one to twist this verse into stating that we are no longer “under” an obligation to keep the Law. The Bible’s answer to such deceit is “God forbid.” But the newly forgiven is clearly now no longer under the Law’s penalty. Would you throw away a mirror because it exposed dirt on your face? Or would you appreciate it because without it you could not have seen the dirt—either accumulated from the past (and now to be covered at conversion) or future dirt that will periodically be seen during the rest of your Christian life? (To learn more read our booklet *What Is True Conversion?* available at [rcg.org/witc](http://rcg.org/witc).) □



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# IRAN AND ISRAEL'S MIDEAST SHOWDOWN

Tensions between Iran and Israel are heating up, and time to find a peaceful solution seems to be running out. The past foreshadows a future answer to this conflict.

BY NESTOR A. TORO

**I**T WAS THE worst face-off to date between Israel and Iran. Israel fired dozens of missiles at what it said were Iranian positions in Syria early on May 10—hours after Israeli forces in the Golan Heights were allegedly targeted by Iranian rockets.

What ensued the next day was a war of words. Israel's defense minister Avigdor Lieberman called on Syria's President Bashar Assad to rid his country of Iranian forces—warn-

ing their presence will only cause more trouble to the already war-ravaged country.

Mr. Lieberman's comments were followed by threats from an Iranian cleric that Tel Aviv or Haifa would be in danger if Israel did "anything foolish."

Speaking at the Herzliya Conference, an annual security gathering north of Tel Aviv, Mr. Lieberman warned that Israel would respond fiercely to any further Iranian actions. "We will not let Iran turn Syria into a

forward base against Israel," he said. "If we get rain, they'll get a flood. I hope that we ended this chapter and that everyone understood."

In a statement issued as Israel's security cabinet met, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the strike sent a "clear message" that "whoever attacks us—we will attack them sevenfold and whoever prepares to attack us—we will act against them first."

Iranian state television announced the Israeli strikes, sourcing the information to Syria's state-run SANA

news agency, and described the Israeli attack as “unprecedented.”

With each inflammatory comment and threat of military response, both sides become more committed to the exchange. Iran cannot back down, or it risks no longer being taken seriously in the region. And Israel cannot relent, or it may be seen as a sign of weakness, which would encourage more acts of aggression from neighboring nations.

As both countries continue at each other’s throats, concerns exist that Syria could be the ground for a showdown. Already, a shadow war is essentially being fought there and tension has been building. An airstrike on a military base in Syria in April, which Iran and Russia blamed on Israel, killed seven Iranians. In

and Saudi Arabia, Iran’s regional rival.

Iran’s supporters in the region include Hamas, the Palestinian militant group in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and a range of Shiite militias in Iraq that have close ties to the political leadership.

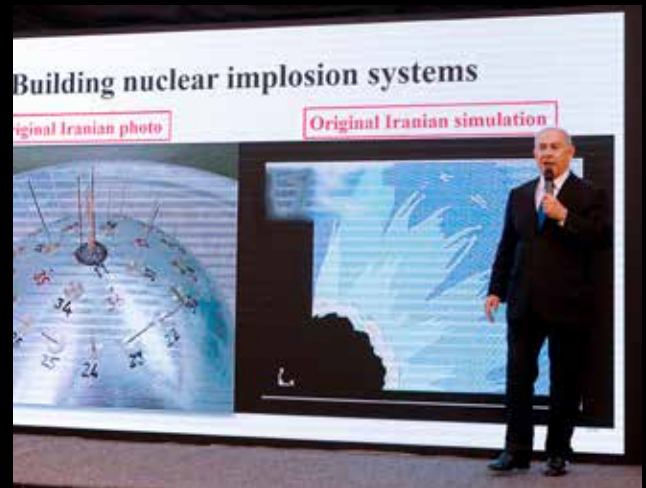
The Houthi rebels fighting in Yemen’s civil war are also backed by Iran. The Houthis are fighting Saudi-backed government security forces, and the war, now in its fourth year, is practically a proxy war between Riyadh and Tehran. Saudi Arabia has accused Iran of providing the missiles that Yemeni rebels fired toward the Saudi capital.

Notch by notch, the two sides escalate, and a positive outcome—for any involved—drifts farther from view.

favor of President Assad, Israel—which saw him as the lesser of two evils compared to Islamic hard-liners among the rebels—is now finding that his victory has brought Iran closer to its borders.

Israel sees Iran’s military presence and Iranian-backed militias in Syria as a threat to its security. Israeli officials have said that 80,000 Shiite fighters in Syria are under Iranian control, including forces of Lebanon’s Hezbollah and Iraqi and Afghan fighters.

Iran officials and allies have spoken of securing a corridor from Iran to Lebanon through Syria and Iraq. Israel fears that would allow Tehran to more easily transfer weapons to Hezbollah and reinforce the militant group’s influence over the region. It



February, Israel shot down an Iranian drone that entered its airspace, triggering a clash in which an Israeli warplane crashed after being struck by Syrian anti-aircraft fire.

If such encounters continue, the region could face one of its worst cross-border conflicts in decades, one that could potentially drag in the United States, a major ally of Israel, and Russia, which is Syria’s mightiest ally. Although Iran may not be a match for Israel’s military power, it has a variety of allies and ways to hit back if cornered by the U.S., Israel

### Incendiary Triggers

A trio of provocative circumstances have exacerbated Iran-Israel relations. Each is its own spark in the Middle East tinderbox: Iranian involvement in Syria’s civil war, the U.S. backing out of the Iran nuclear deal, and the U.S. Embassy’s move to Jerusalem.

First is Syria. Iran has sent massive military help to its ally, Syrian President Bashar Assad, to protect his rule from an armed rebellion during that country’s seven-year civil war. With the war winding down in

is believed Israel carried out hundreds of airstrikes on weapons shipments in Syria during the civil war.

■ **FACE-OFF:** Opposite page left, Iran’s President Hassan Rouhani speaks in the city of Sabzevar (May 6, 2018). Opposite page right, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu speaks about Iran during a joint meeting of U.S. Congress (March 3, 2015). Left, Iranians burn Israeli and U.S. flags during a rally in Tehran (June 8, 2018). Right, Benjamin Netanyahu delivers a speech on Iran’s nuclear program in Tel Aviv (April 30, 2018).

PHOTOS: IRANIAN PRESIDENCY OFFICE VIA AP (OPPOSITE LEFT); ALEX WONG/GETTY IMAGES (OPPOSITE RIGHT); AP/EBRAHIM NOROOZI (LEFT); JACK GUEZ/AFP/GETTY IMAGES (RIGHT)

Second is the Iran nuclear deal. From the get-go, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was a sharp critic of the agreement. On April 30, Mr. Netanyahu unveiled what he said was a half-ton of Iranian nuclear documents collected by Israeli intelligence, claiming it proved Iranian leaders covered up a nuclear weapons program before signing the deal with world powers in 2015.

Now, with President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw from the deal, Mr. Netanyahu may be emboldened to pursue his confrontation with Iran.

Tehran, meanwhile, is under pressure from the U.S. and Western allies to negotiate a new deal, one that goes beyond restricting the nuclear program to curb Iran's military power in the region. Iranian officials have rejected any new accord.

Tehran has not completely walked away from the nuclear deal since co-signing member nations of the European Union are still participating. But if it completely collapses and the U.S. imposes heavy new sanctions on Iran, prospects for major fallout with Israel are higher.

Third is the U.S. embassy move. Iran's President Hasan Rouhani said Muslim nations should consider "revising" political and economic ties with the U.S. and called on the international community to cut ties with Israel and boycott it through trade.

"If Israel faces a united front of Islamic nations, it will never be able to continue its crimes," Mr. Rouhani said. He cited the example of the "new and young generation of Palestine who is aware of their rights and has no intention to withdraw or compromise."

### War Drums

The potential collapse of the Iran nuclear deal may be the spark with the greatest possibility of bursting into full-blown conflagration. A top adviser to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has proposed the nation resumes its uranium enrichment in the wake of the U.S. withdrawal from the nuclear deal.

Ali Akbar Velayati was quoted by *Tasnim News Agency* as saying Iran is "capable to spin centrifuges for enrichment" to higher levels should it choose to do so.

Mr. Velayati said Iran should also accelerate production of nuclear propulsions and research on advanced centrifuges. He claimed this would not violate the nuclear deal, which put limits on Iran's atomic program in exchange for lifting economic sanctions.

In the wake of President Trump's decision to pull the U.S. out of the deal, several Iranian officials have indicated Tehran could resume its nuclear program.

According to the *Times of Israel*: "An Iranian nuclear energy official... repeated a warning from earlier this year that his country is able to create highly enriched uranium in 'two to three days.'

"Behrouz Kamalvandi, spokesman for the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, told Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting that officials should be prepared for a possible resumption of nuclear activities, which were suspended under the nuclear deal... In March, Kamalvandi told the Iranian Arabic-language al-Alam TV network, 'If we want to enrich uranium to the 20-percent level, we can do it in less than 48 hours.'

"Uranium enriched above the level of 20 percent is considered highly enriched and could theoretically be used in an atomic weapon, though most nuclear bombs contain uranium enriched to higher than 80%."

Shortly after this news came out, remarks from a chief of Israel's intelligence agency were released claiming Prime Minister Netanyahu had given an order in 2011 for the military to prepare to attack Iran within 15 days.

Tamir Pardo, who served as head of the Mossad from 2011 to 2016, told Israeli *Keshet TV*'s investigative show *Uvda* that the order was not given "for the sake of a drill," according to excerpts of the interview released ahead of the broadcast.

"When he tells you to start the count-down process, you know that he isn't playing games with you," Mr. Pardo is quoted as saying. "These things have enormous significance."

On May 30, Mr. Netanyahu said Israel "will not allow Iran to arm itself with nuclear weapons. We will continue to act against its intentions to establish itself militarily in Syria beside us, not just opposite the Golan Heights, but any place in Syria."

Former Prime Minister Ehud Barak, who served as Mr. Netanyahu's defense minister in 2011, has previously claimed Mr. Netanyahu sought to bomb Iran in 2010 and 2011, but was opposed by senior Israeli officials. Israel never did carry out a strike on Iran in 2011.

### Vicious Cycle

Israel and Iran must walk a fine line to avoid all-out war.

Israel wants to garner the Western world's support before resorting to military action. But the nation likely cannot ignore the threat of an Iranian attack for too long.

On the other hand, Iran desperately wants to be a regional leader, a status it would secure with proven nuclear-weapon capabilities. To most quickly achieve this, it must avoid an attack from the West.

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Daniel Yergin summarized what the standoff means for the region in his book *The Quest: Energy, Security, and the Remaking of the Modern World*: "An Iran with nuclear weapons would change the balance of power in the Gulf. It would be in a position, to borrow a phrase that Franklin Roosevelt had used prior to World War II, to 'overawe' its neighbors. It could assert itself as the dominant regional power. Iran could directly threaten to use the weapons in the region—or actually use them—although the latter would likely trigger a massive and devastating response. But such weapons would also provide it with a license to project its power and influence with what it might regard as impunity throughout

Please see **IRAN**, page 28



# AMERICA'S UNBRIDGEABLE POLITICAL DIVIDE



Political and ideological stances in the U.S. are more entrenched than ever before. How long can the nation survive if most everyone is unwilling to listen to opposing voices?

BY SAMUEL C. BAXTER

**W**ASHINGTON, JEFFERSON, Lincoln and Roosevelt. These four men have been memorialized, lionized, *mountainized* in the Black Hills of South Dakota.

At Mount Rushmore, these presidents' faces stand 60 feet tall, carved into granite, and they loom just as large in the minds of Americans. George Washington is known as The Father of His Nation. Thomas Jefferson is the Apostle of Democracy and Man of the People. Abraham

Lincoln is Honest Abe and the Great Emancipator. Theodore Roosevelt is the Hero of San Juan Hill and simply The Lion.

The actions of these men are the stuff of legend: Washington crossed the Delaware River and set the example for presidents after him by leaving office after two terms. Jefferson's words in the Declaration of Independence are burned into the national psyche, "We hold these truths to be self evident..." and he secured the Louisiana Purchase from France. Lincoln led the country through its darkest hour, the Civil War, and ended slavery with the Emancipation Proclamation and 13th Amendment. Roosevelt did more to preserve the nation's natural wonders than any other president and oversaw the construction of the Panama Canal. The list could go on.

Yet what tends to be glossed over in all of this is the fact that these presidents were also politicians. This means they disagreed with other legislators on what was best for the United States—and how to make the nation better.

Clashes even occurred among the Founding Fathers. *The Wall Street Journal* reported: "In the American imagina-

tion, the founding era shimmers as the golden age of political discourse, a time when philosopher-kings strode the public stage, dispensing wisdom with gentle civility. We prefer to believe that these courtly figures, with their powdered hair and buckled shoes, showed impeccable manners in their political dealings.”

In reality, the article stated, it was a time of “verbal savagery.”

The bitter relationship between Washington and Jefferson is a prime example. Jefferson frequently attacked President Washington in conversations and letters and characterized him “as a monarchist bent on destroying the rule of the people” (Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association).

He refused to attend Washington’s memorial service and felt that “the ‘republican spirit’ in the nation might revive now that Washington was dead and the Federalists [the opposition party] could no longer hide behind his heroic image” (ibid.).

Similarly, Alexander Hamilton and John Adams did not agree with Jefferson’s political ideas. Jefferson wrote that Adams hated Benjamin Franklin. In addition, Franklin loathed Adams’ bullying style of diplomacy.

For Americans, it is hard to think of the Founding Fathers in such a light. We want to think that there was a time when politics were conducted civilly—when the nation moved forward in lockstep.

Yet it was not the case then, and it is not now. In fact, political vitriol is more rampant than ever before—and *worsening*. A Santa Fe Institute study published in research journal *PLOS One* found that “partisanship or non-cooperation in the U.S. Congress has been increasing exponentially for over 60 years with no sign of abating or reversing.”

Each side is vehement that its way of improving America is right.

But it does not stop with politicians. The internet allows everyone to voice their opinions and pick political fights. Contrast this with fledgling America: the only way to widely spread a message would have been through newspapers—and few had such access.

No one wants to see the United States so disunited. Rather, most want the idealized version of the nation: where everyone moves forward *together* to tackle economic problems, discrimination, national security, and so on.

Americans should especially yearn for this during national holidays such as the Fourth of July. Independence Day should be a time when families and friends come together to discuss the many blessings afforded them—and openly talk about what the future will bring. Yet fear of ideological cat-fights all too often causes us to bite our tongues and quietly consume our hamburgers.

Today, everyone has an opinion, from politician to pundit to private citizen. Each is certain he is right. While everyone wants to improve America, how can this occur among the deafening roar of competing ideas?

### **Everyone Is Entitled**

Another way to word this question can be found in the biblical book of Amos: “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (3:3).

America today is a living answer to this rhetorical question. There is precious little agreement, and it makes walking together increasingly impossible.

This even happens *within* a political party. Think back to when the 2016 presidential campaign began ramping up—even before the current president entered the race.

A 2015 mid-April Republican gathering in New Hampshire was especially telling. A *National Public Radio* report of the event showed everyone carving out their niche and advocating their vision for the nation. There was one vying to be “most conservative,” another “trying to broaden the base of the party” and advocating standing “up for every amendment in the Bill of Rights,” and still another working to assure voters that he has a conservative record and is not a RINO (Republican in name only). Still another, the son of immigrants, said the American Dream can only be preserved “if the country

steers towards more conservative principles of government.”

Yes, these were all descriptions of Republicans. Yet all had different views for what the country needs. To put it bluntly, each thought the answer was *himself*.

The Democratic candidates for 2016 were the same: An ambitious career politician. A far-left Social Democrat. A third-party advocate for environmental issues and social justice. Each politician had a different set of views—and each absolutely believed he or she was right.

Things were bad before. But the results of the 2016 presidential election supercharged division in this nation. Adding fuel to the fire is social media and the spread of misinformation.

As a former U.S. senator said in *Time* magazine: “Social media changes whose voices are heard in modern society.”

He wrote: “Messages posted online provide policymakers and opinion leaders with distorted impressions of what the public believes and wants. Extremes—including partisan and ideological extremes—dominate the digital landscape of ideas. Through the online looking glass, bipartisanship and moderation are barely visible.”

If policymakers struggle to know truth from lies, what chance does the average citizen have?

For them, political opinions are also becoming increasingly myopic. Most tend to watch news networks, listen to radio programs, and read news only from sources that cater to their political leanings. The longer people marinate in their own ideas, the less likely they are to consider opposing views.

Again, a main culprit is social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter.

*The New York Times* reported that “a torrent of politically charged commentary has flooded Facebook, the world’s largest social networking site, with some users deploying their ‘unfollow’ buttons like a television remote to silence distasteful political views. Coupled with the algorithm now powering Facebook’s news feed,

the unfollowing is creating a more homogenized political experience of like-minded users, resulting in the kind of polarization more often associated with MSNBC or Fox News. And it may ultimately deflate a central promise of the Internet: Instead of offering people a diverse marketplace of challenging ideas, the web is becoming just another self-perpetuating echo chamber.”

The comment sections of internet news sites overflow with the results of this “self-perpetuating echo chamber”: endless, pointless bickering, with neither side giving an inch.

Such political clashes derive from the start of the nation. Many of the Founding Fathers ascribed to the Enlightenment movement. *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* stated: “Central to Enlightenment thought were the *use and celebration of reason*, the power by which humans understand the universe and improve their own condition. The goals of rational humanity were considered to be knowledge, freedom, and happiness.”

The Age of Enlightenment espoused a deep optimism toward human reason. Herein lies the problem.

### Flawed Thinking

Many will say that the U.S. was founded squarely on Judeo-Christian values. While some of our laws are adapted from the Bible, much of our foundation is human reasoning stemming from Enlightenment thinking.

The problem with man’s reasoning is that it is a mixed bag. It is why there are so many differing opinions in the U.S. today—and so much disagreement.

If Americans actually looked at what the Bible says, they would see the problem with relying on manmade ideas. For example, Proverbs 14:12 states, “There is a way which *seems* right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.”

When you allow everyone to decide what they think is right to them, you end up with a wide variety of conflicting answers—and some of them can even *seem* logical.

Proverbs 16:2 adds to this concept: “All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes...” To each individual, his way of life makes sense.

The deathblow for human reasoning can be found in Jeremiah 10: “O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walks to direct his steps” (vs. 23).

Man cannot direct his own steps. He cannot simply peer within himself to understand his place in the universe or how to rule himself.

Be honest! Such a system does not work. Human reasoning has been behind *every* form of government man has concocted. None have succeeded in the long run.

In fact, proving human reasoning does not work is a major theme of the Bible. This starts from the beginning in the Garden of Eden when the first humans ate from the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Gen. 2:17). Eating the fruit from this tree symbolized how human beings would decide for themselves what is right and wrong instead of relying on God’s direction.

Again, the tragic results of this are obvious throughout the record of history.

In order for Americans to walk together in agreement—to truly make the nation better—we must first admit that man cannot govern himself. Each citizen must consider that his ideas could be wrong—and that they almost certainly *are* wrong.

### Right in Own Eyes

The Bible contains a cautionary tale of what happens if a nation relies on its own ideas rather than God’s. This point is so important that it takes up much of the Old Testament.

The story is that of the ancient Israelites. They were given great blessings by God. They had access to His Word, which shows His mind on subjects. He gave them His laws and statutes so that they could be a model nation.

Over and over, however, the Israelites tried their own ways. Over and over, they refused to stop and

consider if they were headed down the wrong path. Over and over, they failed miserably.

This pattern played out so many times that God repeatedly called the nation *stiffnecked*, which means stubborn, obstinate and impudent.

An early example of this is found in Exodus 32, after the Israelites built a golden calf and rejected the true God. In verses 8-9, God states: “They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto...And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people.”

Consider the level of stubbornness here. God had miraculously taken this nation out of slavery—and repeatedly demonstrated His awesome power—and they still chose to rebel.

The lesson behind this? Even a nation with incredible blessings with the God of the Bible backing it up can reject Him and His way.

For Israel, rebellions often happened when there was no strong leader in the nation. Notice: “And it came to pass, when the judge [that oversaw Israel] was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers...they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way” (Judg. 2:19).

Israel utterly refused to listen to godly reason. Their stubbornness weakened the nation to the point that it was overrun and its people were carted off to captivity.

Isaiah 48 summarizes the astonishing level of this stubbornness. God tells Israel it is “obstinate, and your neck is an iron sinew, and your brow brass” (vs. 4).

America today is approaching this same level of stiffnecked thinking in the political arena. Few recognize the seriousness of the situation.

### Hyperpartisanship

Re-read the quote mentioned earlier from the Santa Fe Institute about

Please see **AMERICA’S DIVIDE**, page 30

# Education Lost

## *The Fight to Keep Teaching*

Warzones the world over are robbing children of their education. How can we save this generation and put its schooling back on track?

BY EDWARD L. WINKFIELD





A student takes an exam in Nairobi following a return to daily life after turmoil caused by Kenya's presidential re-election vote (Oct. 31, 2017).

PHOTO: PATRICK MEINHARDT/  
AFP/GETTY IMAGES

**E**VERY SCHOOL DAY, Abdirizack Hussein Bashir rises at dawn for a 5-mile trek through a dangerous forest where he sometimes faces harassment by Kenyan army patrols hunting down extremists.

Now the 12-year-old's dream to become a doctor is threatened. Attacks by the al-Qaida-linked al-Shabab group have forced the transfer of hundreds of teachers from the border area with Somalia, where the extremist group is based. Schools have closed and thousands of children are affected.

At least 224 primary schools and 42 secondary schools in the east African nation's Wajir County can no longer function after non-local teachers fled. The exodus was initiated by the February 16 al-Shabab attack on a primary school that killed two teachers. Kenya's Teachers Service Commission subsequently transferred 329 educators elsewhere for their safety. Many others left on their own. In all, 917 non-Muslim primary school teachers have left the area.

It was the largest-ever mass exodus of teachers from the region.

"There are no teachers. When you go to school you only see soldiers patrolling," a boy said in a *USA Today* story. The outlet also reported how dozens of schools in the Boni National Reserve have been closed for four years since al-Shabab began using the area as a staging ground for attacks on police stations, schools, government buildings and travelers.

Thousands of students across the region now sit idle at home or in refugee camps, according to the Kenyan government. Many still wear their school uniforms because they have few other clothes, *USA Today* reported.

Tragically, Kenya is not the only place where war has robbed children of education.

After more than seven years of civil war in Syria, 1.7 million children are not attending school, according to humanitarian organization International Rescue Committee. Over a third of the schools in the middle-income country, which Syria was before the war, have closed due to fighting and destroyed infrastructure.

"There is the fundamental stress, what is called the toxic stress, of being involved in a war. And for those inside the country, they're denied the most basic access to education," David Miliband, president and CEO of the

IRC, said of Syria's education crisis in a *PBS* interview.

Mr. Miliband said that the conflict's "toll on children is almost greater than on any other group." He compared "toxic stress" on children to symptoms commonly seen in adults with post-traumatic stress disorder.

The nearly 2 million Syrian youth not receiving proper education only includes those still in the country. About half of the 5.5 million refugees who have fled are children, and Mr. Miliband estimates that half of those children are not receiving an education at all.

The Integrated Regional Information Networks, or IRIN, reported that 17-year-old Mohammad Zubayer dreamed of finishing school and getting a government job so he could help his Rohingya community in Myanmar's Rakhine State.

Today Mohammad is a refugee living in Bangladesh. Formal education is barred in his and other crowded refugee camps—meaning an entire generation of Rohingya youth are not in school.

"I wanted to be smart by studying," Mohammad told IRIN. The boy, who completed the eighth grade in Myanmar before fleeing to Bangladesh last year, said, "I wanted to be a scholar to help the Rohingya community. But kids who want to study are not getting the chance."

By January 2018, more than 1 million Rohingya refugees had fled into neighboring Bangladesh after Myanmar's army cracked down following a series of attacks last summer by a Rohingya rebel group.

Conditions in the Rohingya refugee camps make formal education difficult, if not impossible. The highest priority has been providing food and shelter to otherwise helpless Rohingya refugees. Teaching children has fallen farther down the priority list.

There are an estimated 1,179 makeshift learning centers in the various settlements. IRIN says nearly a third of the flimsy shelters—made of bamboo and plastic sheets—are threatened by floods and landslides in the coming monsoon season.

Ongoing conflicts in the nations of Kenya, Syria and Myanmar have well-documented impacts—ones that immediately affect the lives of the people displaced, starving and so forth. Yet what gets far less coverage—and may have much more far-reaching effects—is the direct attack on the future of children no longer receiving a quality education.

## The Many Obstacles to Learning

Al-Shabab has carried out a wave of attacks in Kenya since 2011, calling it retribution for Kenya sending troops to Somalia to fight the extremists. Many of the attacks are directed against educational institutions: In April 2015, gunmen raided Garissa University College, killing 147 students. Also, teachers near the Somali border have been targeted, including in a November 2014 attack on a bus in neighboring Mandera County.

The area has been described as a recruitment hotbed for extremist groups that oppose Western education. Children out of school are frequently targeted by this recruitment.

Wangechi Nderitu, one of the teachers camping out at the Teachers Service Commission offices, said one student who was punished by instructors went on to train with al-Shabab in Somalia for two years. He then returned, took his father's gun, and went after the teachers who disciplined him. However, they had already been transferred from the school.

For al-Shabab, the closure of schools is seen as "a success," said Abdullahi Boru Halakhe, a counter-ter-

Children attend a school in a slum in Nairobi, Kenya (March 13, 2018).

PHOTO: JAN HETFLEISCH/GETTY IMAGES

rorism and countering violent extremism expert.

"Schools and education is one of the antidotes against the narratives of the [extremist] group. Thus, if you close the school, how else can you build a counter-narrative?" he asked.

The Kenyan government has intervened, yet this has come with its own set of problems.

Mr. Nderitu said the government has forced teachers to stay in the region without providing additional security. He said his bank accounts have been frozen and that the Teachers Service Commission says they will not be released until he and his colleagues go back to work.

"This is blackmail," Mr. Nderitu said. "That's why we are stranded here."

Government is being blamed for exacerbating the youth education problems in the Rohingya crisis as well. According to IRIN, both the governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh are not on board with establishing a formal education system in the Rohingya refugee camps.

"That is the fear that the government has: If they have education in Bangla, [the Rohingya] might try to be Bangladeshi [citizens], and they will feel comfortable staying here rather than going back to Myanmar," said

Nazrul Islam, education coordinator for BRAC, a Bangladeshi aid group that runs 200 refugee camp learning centers.

The government of Myanmar refuses to allow Burmese-language curriculum to be used in Bangladesh's refugee camps. Therefore, according to IRIN, the same government responsible for forcing the Rohingya out of Myanmar is also blocking Rohingya children from continuing their education while in exile.

And what little education there is in the refugee camps remains problematic. Some children can attend class for about two hours per day but there is no paperwork to show the grade level they have completed. This means, even after the current Rohingya problems have passed, it will be difficult to start classes again.

Also, there are grade-level restrictions, meaning that the majority of school-age Rohingya children cannot attend. IRIN reports that only a quarter of school-age youth—about 130,000—attend classes. This means around 400,000 young refugees are not receiving an education. "They only educate the small kids," said Kushida Begum, a refugee mother with three children who attended fourth, fifth and sixth grades in Myanmar before the family fled to Bangladesh. "They say





there is no school for big kids here. I am dying by thinking about the kids' future."

The seven-year civil war in Syria has also brought a slew of education problems.

According to July 2017 World Bank estimates, the civil war has destroyed or damaged a third of the nation's housing and half of its medical and educational facilities. This all led to the loss of \$226 billion in gross domestic product—four times Syria's GDP in 2010.

The human toll, though, is much more difficult to calculate.

"The fact that 9 million Syrians are not working will have consequences long after the fighting has stopped," said Saroj Kumar Jha, a World Bank director in the Middle East. "The departure of nearly 5 million refugees, combined with inadequate schooling and malnutrition leading to stunting, will cause long-term deterioration of the country's most valuable asset, its human capital. In the future, when Syria needs it most, there will be a collective shortage of vital skills."

Fleeing the war-torn nation is not enough. There has been a terrible impact on young Syrian refugees also.

Half of the millions of Syrian children currently living in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon do not have access to formal education, Human Rights Watch reported. The humanitarian organiza-

tion cites child labor needs, enrollment requirements, language difficulties, and a lack of affordable transportation as barriers keeping children out of the classroom. The extended lack of education is taking a tremendous toll.

"Well, we found that [Syrian] children in grades six, seven, eight, so children almost approaching teenage years, were unable to do the kind of sums or spelling that you would expect from a grade one student," Mr. Miliband told *PBS*.

"So, that's what six years of education being lost means, never mind the huge blow to the children's understanding and self-esteem that comes from seeing their country blown apart, and often their families blown apart as well," he continued.

### Efforts to Change

The Kenyan government's response to terror threats has been suboptimal, said counterterrorism expert Mr. Halakhe.

"While there is an acknowledgment that there are no easy answers to what is obviously a complex and complicated problem, the government has failed even to do...the basic like... stationing security officers at some of the schools."

Al-Shabab has exploited the region's history of marginalization for recruitment and propaganda, Mr. Halakhe added. "In this latest situation,

Rohingya children look into a school at a refugee camp in Bangladesh (Nov. 1, 2017).

PHOTO: DIBYANGSHU SARKAR/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

al-Shabab could say to the potential recruits: 'Look, your government cannot even provide you with a modicum of security, come and join us.'"

Kenya's Parliament has approved a government plan to hire 88,000 teachers, a fraction of the nationwide shortfall of more than 104,000. The government is also seeking to hire teaching assistants to fill the gap. Meanwhile, students like 12-year-old Bashir are left to wait: "Now that there is no more class, what will I do with all this time?"

Bangladesh's government does not want the Rohingya to stay long-term. This uncertainty leaves the formal education of 530,000 school-age Rohingya refugees in question. Yet, despite no official curriculum, it has not stopped children from showing up to learn.

IRIN says aid groups submitted alternative guidelines covering basic literacy skills in hopes of government approval. There are also efforts to develop guidelines that cover education up to grade eight. Even if approved, however, it does not address the government's formal ban on education.

"We are calling on the government of Bangladesh to recognize the right of refugee children to education," Beatriz Ochoa, humanitarian advocacy man-

“Education remains a vital part of any society. This is why a common tactic of oppressors is to control or in some cases cut off access to this staple of civilization.”



ager for Save the Children’s Rohingya response, told IRIN. “All education sector partners should be given the authorization from relevant authorities to set up classrooms, organize learning activities, or, where feasible, expand temporary learning activities to ensure all refugee children can access education and develop their minds.”

For Syria, IRC stressed the importance of humanitarian aid—specifically American dollars—for resolving the long-term education crisis there. Mr. Miliband stated that “America has often marked itself out for its commitment on the humanitarian front. And those children in Syria who we surveyed, they need America’s help.”

Yet dollars alone will not be enough to help children in need of the basic elements of education. Fixing the problem will require even more.

Mr. Miliband continued stating that “there’s no point in pretending that kids who have been through a war are like any other first grader or fifth grader turning up for school. They need proper attention to their social and emotional resources.”

### Tomorrow’s Education

Education remains a vital part of any society. This is why a common tactic of oppressors is to control or in some cases cut off access to this staple of

civilization. To truly fix the problems with today’s education—especially in the tragic cases of Kenya, Syria and Myanmar—a significant overhaul is needed. This repair must be revolutionary.

Yet even if man could dream up the perfect solution, could he ever implement it? It would involve solving age-old problems such as war and famine—and require changing human nature itself.

Face it. We CANNOT do this on our own!

But all hope is not lost. The ability to acquire knowledge is unique to human beings and makes a fulfilling life possible—this includes a meaningful relationship with God.

Read the following words from *Real Truth* Editor-in-Chief David C. Pack. They show the importance of education, how it has been perverted, and that it must begin to be fixed in the near future upon the return of Jesus Christ.

“God can only work with people who can read the Bible. Salvation is absolutely impossible if people cannot read about the true God and His requirements and commands. *Basic* education, then, becomes absolutely essential for approximately one-half of the peoples on Earth to even have an opportunity to be saved.

Syrian students attend a school in the rebel-held town of Douma (Sept. 18, 2017).

PHOTO: AMER ALMOHIBANY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

“The other half of mankind has been ‘educated.’ This means that they have been steeped in the world’s false values, pagan religions and customs, the atheistic concept of evolution—and all the ways of Satan’s nature instilled into people as human nature. This half has much to *unlearn*. They will not have to receive basic education as much as they will have to be *re-educated!* People will learn that much of the knowledge they swallowed as fact was little more than false indoctrination and propaganda, given them by the god of this world (II Cor. 4:4).

“Humanity will have to learn that there is *right* knowledge and there is *wrong* knowledge—and how to know the difference. People will also learn the difference between spiritual and physical knowledge. It will be universally taught that the Bible is the foundation of all knowledge. Satan is the true father of this world’s education. At that time, men will learn that they can no longer eat of the ‘tree of the knowledge of good and evil,’ which is rooted in his thinking.

“All true knowledge comes from God—and mankind will understand that peace, happiness, abundance, and



universal health and prosperity spring from divine revelation. The fable that mankind is continually evolving into a 'higher order' will be debunked and replaced with the knowledge that for 6,000 years man continually became more degenerate, decadent, and depraved—in conduct and thought.”

In the near future, children will be exposed to correct knowledge at an early age. The curriculum of schools will be built on this proper knowledge and will teach students to have a comprehensive approach to their studies and to have a proper view of their lives and society.

Mr. Pack further explained this: “Life is a *process* of education—learning to develop character by obedience to God’s laws, which in turn yields every good, fulfilling, and favorable result. Education in the world tomorrow will explain how to live—and how to learn a productive trade. Of course, all academic sub-

A Syrian girl walks down a destroyed street as she heads to school in the rebel-held town of Douma (Sept. 20, 2017).

PHOTO: AMER ALMOHIBANY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

jects, including wholesome art and music, will produce well-rounded people. Life will become invigorating, exciting, and fulfilling.

“Imagine how important world history will be in the classrooms of tomorrow. Everyone will be forced to view the TRUTH of history through the eyes of *God*, instead of through the revisionist propaganda of each nation’s historians—including their dishonest version of world history, written according to how they need to portray it. No one will be allowed to forget how, and how long, the world was off track from God’s laws and ways.”

Finally, Mr. Pack explained how the children in war-torn places such as Kenya, Syria and Myanmar will understand from an early age the true cause of conflict that has plagued their societies for generations.

“The facts of *why* things happen a certain way will be taught in a straightforward fashion. No punches will be pulled. For instance, mankind will be taught exactly *why* war occurs, from God’s perspective. Consider this

from the book of James: ‘From where come wars and fightings among you?’ (Jms 4:1). The question is direct. So is God’s answer: ‘Come they not hence, even of your *lusts* that war in your members? You *lust*, and have not: you kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: you fight and WAR, yet you have not, because you ask not. You ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your *lusts*’ (Jms 4:1-3). And verse 5 adds, ‘Do you think that the scripture says in vain, The spirit that dwells in us *lusts* to envy?’ (Jms 4:5).”

“Plain, simple answers like these will be given in classrooms around the world. Gone will be vague, blurred, philosophical opinions lacking the absolutes of God’s Law and *His* explanations.”

These are just a few of the practical yet world-changing ideas that will become reality—just over the horizon.

For more information on how different the world to come will be, continue reading *Tomorrow’s Wonderful World – An Inside View!* available for free at [rcg.org/tww](http://rcg.org/tww). □



# GET READY FOR A SURGE OF GAMBLING

More Americans are gambling, and that is set to increase further after a federal decision to allow sports betting. While this may bring financial benefits for governments, there is an unavoidable price society will have to pay.

BY DAVID J. LITAVSKY

**O**N MAY 14, the United States Supreme Court cleared the way for states to legalize betting on sports, breaking a ban that has been in place since 1992.

For sports leagues and gambling industries, the imminent expansion of sports betting promises a bonanza. For the experts and organizations already concerned about pervasive problem gambling, it promises a whole new roster of worries.

Modern sports betting presents a much greater danger to gamblers in that it is accessible to them at any time and location via their mobile phones.

There is particular alarm over the anticipated explosion of so-called “in-game wagering” in which gamblers bet, often at a rapid pace, on play-by-play developments—for example, will the next football play be a run or a pass.

“You lose track of time,” said Les Bernal, national director of Stop Predatory Gambling. “The goal of the operators is to get you into a zone where you lose your financial reasoning and think of nothing except betting.”

Prior to the U.S. Supreme Court ruling, only four states were allowed to offer sports betting and only Nevada offered betting on single games. Now that the court has lifted those bans, there are expectations that most states will offer sports betting within a few years in a play to raise tax revenue. Delaware legalized it in June.

“In the short term, the primary beneficiaries of the Supreme Court’s decision are likely to be the established casinos and gaming companies in New Jersey that handle the action from Jets fans visiting their local horse track,” *Bloomberg* reported.

But Readyfire Inc., a fledgling sports gambling company, “is betting that legal sports betting will expand until it’s commonplace for people to place wagers on their phones during lulls in the action instead of checking Twitter. As it aims to create many new gamblers, Readyfire is developing games that will appeal to people who are unlikely ever to set foot in a casino or cultivate a relationship with the neighborhood bookie.”

One Readyfire app, Halftime Live, draws about 6,000 people to answer trivia questions during sporting events’ halftimes. Prizes average about \$400.

“We think this is the biggest expansion of gambling in our nation’s history, in one fell swoop,” said Keith Whyte, executive director of the National Council on Problem Gambling. “Absolutely, categorically, there will be more risk factors for addiction—we’ve never had that much high-speed, high-stakes interactive access to any sort of betting.”

The council wants any company, sports league or government that benefits from sports betting to devote at least 1 percent of the revenue to fund programs preventing and treating compulsive gambling. It also wants betting operators to train staff about problem gambling, set and enforce a minimum age limit, and enable gamblers to set limits on how much time and money they spend betting.

Yet Mr. Whyte is skeptical that state lawmakers and the gambling industry—even if they pay lip service to problem gambling—will take sufficiently tough action.

Nationwide, the generally accepted figure for gambling addiction is 2 to 3 percent of the U.S. population, according to Neva Pryor, who runs New Jersey’s Council on Compulsive Gambling. But in New Jersey, which until recently had the nation’s second-

# ADDICTION



largest casino market, that figure is over 6 percent.

And that is without legal sports betting just a click or call away.

“We’re going to be adding fuel to the fire of an already serious problem,” Ms. Pryor said.

Calls from people who have gotten in over their heads betting on sports currently account for 5 percent of all calls to the council’s 800-GAMBLER hotline.

Arnie Wexler, who once held Ms. Pryor’s current job, says problem-gambling treatment programs should be bracing for a surge of business.

“This is going to be a volcano two years from now, because two years is typically how long many gamblers take before they start seeking help,” he said.

Recovering problem gambler, Marc Lefkowitz, has similar concerns.

“I’m lucky I quit in 1983,” said Mr. Lefkowitz, who started a gambling treatment program in Long Beach, Washington. “Back then, maybe you could bet by the quarter [of a game]. Now you’re betting every minute, and that frequency makes it more addictive.”

## Upping the Ante

The growth of sports betting highlights the fact that many more Americans are gambling. With the continuing improvement of the economy—falling unemployment rates and increasing wages—people have more cash on hand to be willing to take more risks.



■ **ALL IN:** Left, players compete during the World Series of Poker in Las Vegas (July 21, 2017). Right, people watch coverage of the NCAA college basketball tournament at a sports book betting location in Las Vegas (March 15, 2018).

PHOTOS: AP/JOHN LOCHER

The American Gaming Association reported in its late-2017 State of the States that “America’s commercial casino industry enjoyed a record-setting year in 2016, with nationwide consumer spending on casino gaming increasing by 1.1 percent to reach a total of \$38.96 billion.”

Nevada itself scored three straight months of \$1-billion profit from gambling during January through March, a streak the state had not seen since 2008. Much of that was driven by sports wagering, specifically the NCAA basketball tournament in March. (Nevada was the only state where sports betting was completely legal prior to the Supreme Court decision in May.)

With the public’s appetite for betting increasing, other states are looking to win big as well—adding much needed tax income to cash-strapped governments. “Sports betting is a huge business,” *Forbes* reported. “The American Gaming Association (AGS) estimates that \$107 billion is wagered on sports illegally each year (though estimating

illegal activity is always dicey). And tax revenue, collected as income tax on winnings and as an excise tax on casino revenue less those winnings (called gross gaming revenues or GGR), could easily add up.”

Despite all the potential benefits for state governments, there is an unavoidable price to pay.

### Deadliest Addiction

According to the National Center for Responsible Gambling, as many as 4 million Americans have a gambling disorder, including addiction or compulsive gambling.

As with being hooked on drugs or alcohol, gambling addiction is very difficult to overcome. Many addicts do recognize the harm they cause themselves and loved ones but continue to give into their cravings anyway.

“When you’re dealing with an addict active in their addiction, they’ve lost all judgment,” Valerie Lorenz, author of *Compulsive Gambling: What’s It All About?*, told *The Atlantic*. “They can’t control their behavior.”

Some gambling addicts have even stated that they experience a high similar to those caused by drugs or alcohol. This occurs because the psy-

chological response is the same—a high tolerance for dopamine.

*The Atlantic* reported: “Neuroscientists have discovered characteristics that appear to be unique to the brains of addicts, particularly in the dopaminergic system, which includes reward pathways, and in the prefrontal cortex, which exerts executive control over impulses. ‘We’ve seen a dysregulated reward system,’ says Jon Grant, a professor in the department of psychiatry and behavioral neuroscience at the University of Chicago. ‘The frontal parts of the brain that tell us “Hey, stop!” are less active, and parts that anticipate rewards tend to be stronger.’”

Gambling addicts can even develop withdrawal symptoms if they have not been engaged for a while, including headaches, insomnia, anxiety, panic attacks, and heart palpitations.

Dependence leads to problems with finances, puts strain on relationships, and can even cause gamblers to skip work, sleeping or eating in order to feed their habit. According to the American Psychiatric Association, someone with a gambling disorder may demonstrate the following characteristics:

■ The need to gamble with increasing amount of money to achieve the desired excitement



- Restless or irritable when trying to cut down or stop gambling

- Repeated unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back on or stop gambling

- Frequent thoughts about gambling (such as reliving past gambling experiences, planning the next gambling venture, thinking of ways to get money or gamble)

- Often gambling when feeling distressed; after losing money gambling, often returning to get even

- Lying to conceal gambling activity

- Jeopardizing or losing a significant relationship, job or educational/career opportunity because of gambling

- Relying on others to help with money problems caused by gambling

Ultimately, increasing guilt and shame associated with such compulsive behavior often leads to utter despondency. According to the National Council on Problem Gambling, one in five gambling addicts attempt suicide. This is the highest rate among addicts of any kind.

One example was reported in *The Atlantic*. Scott Stevens was a chief operating officer at steel company Ampco-Pittsburgh. Naturally, with his job and a degree in business and finance, he was meticulous with money—both business and personal. When he first met his

wife, Stacy, in 1988, he insisted that she pay off her credit card debt immediately.

Despite a six-figure income, he became a compulsive gambler after winning a slot machine jackpot in a Las Vegas casino in 2006.

Sometimes he scored hundreds of thousands in one day. But he lost a lot more—as much as \$4.6 million in a year. In addition, he lost his job after it was discovered he wrote company checks to feed his habit. Finally, after secretly spending up much of his 401(k), maxing out his credit cards, and losing all of a \$110,000 personal loan, he decided that his family could not succeed with his gambling habits—and he took his own life.

Similar stories are tragically common: an NFL player committed suicide after accruing \$40,000 in Las Vegas gambling debt; a 24-year-old student lost all his financial aid money to gambling and subsequently killed himself; a young accountant jumped from his office in a London skyscraper because his gambling addiction spiraled out of control.

On top of this, there are attempted suicides, divorces and many other tragedies that come with the practice.

And many are subject to it. A Gallup poll from 2016 revealed that nearly two-thirds of Americans admitted to gambling in the past year. Though only a very few of those who have gambled are considered problem gamblers, anyone can quickly succumb to an addiction.

### Morally Acceptable?

The Supreme Court's ban, called the Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act of 1992, outlawed sports betting in most states because of its effects on society. It found after a number of public hearings that sports gambling "is a national problem. The harm it inflicts are felt beyond the borders of those States that sanction it."

Even the commissioner for the National Basketball Association said that the "ramifications of sports betting are a compelling reason for federal legislation."

But values have changed—not just for the government, but also for the public.

A YouGov poll taken after the May 2018 Supreme Court ruling found that more Americans favor making sports gambling legal (42 percent) compared to the percentage of those who oppose it (26 percent). In addition, most Americans (68 percent) see gambling as morally acceptable.

Gambling is widely seen as acceptable because it, for the most part, only ends up harming a small percentage of people. Most who engage in it win some, lose some, and at the end of the day are able to walk away and resume their lives, no harm done.

This prompts another question. Who or what decides whether something is morally acceptable?

The common answers to this: the majority, the statistics, or simply what feels right to the individual. Other answers sound much more intellectual: "ethical egoism," "virtue ethics," and "utilitarianism," all terms for various sources of morality that people adopt to determine how they live.

Many Americans base their morals on what the Bible teaches. They do this because of family traditions or personal convictions. Most simply "have faith" that what the Book says is true.

The Bible *does* contain detailed guidelines for how to live. Yet why should anyone believe a book written thousands of years ago with no proof? If such evidence exists, then this Book—God's Word—could be seen as the ABSOLUTE SOURCE for determining right versus wrong, including on gambling policies.

Such proof does exist! You can know for certain whether to believe what you read in the pages of Scripture. The booklet *Bible Authority... Can It Be Proven?* can walk you through this process. Read it at [rcg.org/bacibp](http://rcg.org/bacibp).

All of society could benefit from what the Bible teaches—including regarding gambling. Yet you can apply it *individually* and experience the many blessings that flow from living God's Word. □





# WHEN MOUNTAINS EXPLODE

**T**wo countries. Two volcanoes. Two different outcomes.

Hawaii's Kilauea volcano, which sits on the archipelago's Big Island, erupted in early May, spewing lava hundreds of feet in the air, releasing toxic gas plumes up to 12,000 feet high, and sending streams of lava coursing into neighborhoods, destroying hundreds of homes, breaking up roads and other infrastructure and forcing thousands to evacuate.

Guatemala's Volcan de Fuego, or "Volcano of Fire," erupted June 3, spewing deadly clouds and rivers of ash and pulverized rock.

It is one of 11 active volcanoes in the Central America country that is along the so-called Ring of Fire.

The two mountains look markedly different. At its peak, the Guatemala volcano is 12,346 feet above sea level and its steep sides are made out of accumulated layers of lava and ash. Hawaii's Kilauea, on the other hand, is a shield volcano—its summit rises only 50 feet above the surrounding landscape.

For communities of people affected by the eruptions of both volcanoes, their lives will never be the same...







## *Kilauea*

Since Kilauea's early May eruption, thousands have been evacuated and many others advised to leave as lava poured out of fissures and burned hundreds of homes. Eerie blue flames from burning methane caused fears of further explosions—and lava pouring into the ocean produced “laze,” a toxic white cloud of gas and volcanic glass. Many residents were told to leave or risk being trapped and unreachable by emergency crews as flows blocked off crucial escape routes.

Though no lives have been lost, the loss of the structures—some vacation homes, others year-round residences—have been devastating for many.

“For us it’s more of a vacation area, but for those who live there permanently, they’re trying to figure out where they’re going to be living,” County of Hawaii managing director, Wil Okabe, said.

Resident of Kapoho city Mark Johnson was coming to terms with the possibility of losing his home and 5-acre citrus farm.

He was evacuated when authorities with bullhorns arrived at 1 a.m. saying it was time for residents to get their things and leave, though he did not expect the lava to head his way.

Others who lived or vacationed in the area mourned the loss of places where treasured family memories were formed.

“That coastline is really important to us—a place where we spent time with our family,” said Franny Brewer.

She reminisced about taking her daughter to swim in the ocean for the first time at a local swimming spot.

“I’ve been crying a lot,” she said. “It’s hard because obviously a lot of people have lost a lot more than just a beautiful place to visit and memories.”

PHOTOS: GRACE SIMONEAU/FEMA VIA AP (PAGE 20-21); U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY VIA AP (TOP LEFT, TOP MIDDLE, TOP RIGHT); U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY VIA GETTY IMAGES (BOTTOM LEFT); MARIO TAMA/GETTY IMAGES (MIDDLE RIGHT, BOTTOM RIGHT)

# Volcan de Fuego

When Volcan de Fuego erupted with little warning on Sunday, June 3, at least 75 people were killed and 192 others went missing after fast-moving flows of red-hot ash and rock coursed down the volcano's flanks and into homes.

Two days later, what was once a collection of verdant canyons, hillsides and farms resembled a moon-scape of ash, rock and debris. The terrain was too hot in many places for rescue crews to search for bodies right away.

Precious few, like retiree Pantaleon Garcia, escaped. He was able to load his grandchildren into the back of a pickup with a jug of water and some food, to stay with relatives in another town.

On the day of the explosion, Lilian Hernandez said her brother and sister ran to check on their 70-year-old grandmother on the family's plot of land in the village of San Miguel Los Lotes.

"She said...she was not going to flee. She was unable to walk. It was hard for her to get around."

Ms. Hernandez and her husband, Francisco Ortiz, survived, but spoke of aunts, uncles, cousins, and two great-grandchildren—36 family members in all—missing and presumed dead.

"The people ended up buried in nearly 3 meters of lava," Mr. Ortiz said. "Nobody is left there."

Other families experienced similar tragedies.

As Guatemala's President Jimmy Morales toured the area and met with survivors the day after the eruption, a woman begged him to help her loved ones in Los Lotes.

"Mr. President, my family is missing. Send a helicopter to throw water over them because they are burning," she said. "I have three children, a grandchild, and all my brothers, my mother, all my family are there...More than 20 have disappeared."

The fast-moving flows with temperatures as high as 1,300 degrees Fahrenheit and hot ash and volcanic gases that can cause rapid asphyxiation caught many off guard.

Hilda Lopez said her mother and sister were still missing after the slurry of hot gas, ash and rock roared into her village of San Miguel Los Lotes.

"We were at a party, celebrating the birth of a baby, when one of the neighbors shouted at us to come out and see the lava that was coming," the distraught woman said. "We didn't believe it, and when we went out the hot mud was already coming down the street."

"My mother was stuck there, she couldn't get out," said Ms. Lopez, weeping and holding her face in her hands. □

PHOTOS: AP/RODRIGO ABD (TOP LEFT, BOTTOM MIDDLE); JOHAN ORDONEZ/AFP/GETTY IMAGES (TOP RIGHT, MIDDLE LEFT); AP/MOISES CASTILLO (MIDDLE RIGHT); AP/LUIS SOTO (BOTTOM LEFT, BOTTOM RIGHT)





JULY-AUGUST 2018

# YOUR DIET

## Can Less Be More?

**A**S PEOPLE AGE, their stem cells—the source for all the types of cells in the body including bone to hair to stomach—naturally slow down regenerating. This decline can make it difficult to recover from gastrointestinal infections or other conditions that affect the intestine.

But, according to a new study from MIT biologists, this age-

related loss of stem cell function can be reversed by implementing a simple health practice: a 24-hour fast.

The MIT researchers found that fasting dramatically improves stem cells' ability to regenerate, in both aged and young mice. In fasting mice, cells begin breaking down fatty acids instead of glucose, a change that stimulates the stem cells to become more regenerative.

“Fasting has many effects in the intestine, which include boosting regeneration as well as potential uses in any type of ailment that impinges on the intestine, such as infections or cancers,” said Omer Yilmaz, an MIT assistant professor of biology and one of the senior authors of the study, which appeared in the May 3 issue of *Cell Stem Cell*.

Intestinal stem cells are responsible for maintaining the lining of the



intestine, which typically renews itself every five days. When an injury or infection occurs, stem cells are key to repairing any damage. As people age, the regenerative abilities of these intestinal stem cells decline, so it takes longer for the intestine to recover.

Dr. Yilmaz called intestinal stem cells “the workhorses of the intestine that give rise to more stem cells and to all of the various differentiated cell types of the intestine. Notably, during aging, intestinal stem function declines, which impairs the ability of the intestine to repair itself after damage.”

While this most recent study explored how fasting exerts its effects at the molecular level, scientists have known for decades that low caloric intake is linked with enhanced health.

### Many Benefits

One of the most well-researched benefits of abstaining from food and water in a structured way is that it boosts longevity.

“There are hundreds of studies showing that when animals are fed fewer calories they live longer,” Dr. Joel Fuhrman, a physician from New Jersey, said to *WebMD*.

“The excess calories Americans eat shorten their lives,” he continued.

A 2017 Harvard study found that regular fasting can increase lifespan and slow aging by altering cell activity. Abstaining from food and water kept cells’ mitochondria—their powerhouses—in a “youthful state.”

An article on *News Atlas* explained further: “Inside cells mitochondrial networks generally alternate between two states: fused and fragmented. Using nematode worms, an organism useful for studying longevity as it only lives for two weeks, the study found that restricted diets promotes homeostasis in mitochondrial networks allowing for a healthy plasticity between these fused and fragmented states.”

“Our work shows how crucial the plasticity of mitochondria networks is for the benefits of fasting. If we lock mitochondria in one state, we com-

pletely block the effects of fasting or dietary restriction on longevity,” senior author of the study William Mair stated in the article.

“Low-energy conditions such as dietary restriction and intermittent fasting have previously been shown to promote healthy aging,” said Heather Weir, lead author of the study.

A study published in *Science* magazine purported that fasting mice displayed numerous signs of improved health.

“One of the most well-researched benefits of abstaining from food and water in a structured way is that it boosts longevity.”

It reported that mice that went on a restricted diet for three days “shed fat and were 45% less likely to fall victim to cancer. During their lean...episodes, their level of blood sugar fell by 40% and the amount of insulin in the blood was 90% lower. And although brainpower usually declines with age, the mice retained more of their mental ability; they bested control animals in two kinds of memory tests, perhaps because they produced more new neurons in the hippocampus, a brain area crucial for memory.

Lead author of the study Valter Longo and “colleagues also uncovered evidence that the regimen boosted the animals’ capacity to restore and replenish their tissues. ‘That’s the most exciting’ finding, Longo says. For instance, regeneration of the liver

was quicker in the fasting animals, and the balance of different types of cells in their blood was more youthful. The numbers of certain stem cells also soared in the dieting rodents.”

### Types of Fasting

Spiritual fasting—abstaining from all food and liquids for a specific, non-physical purpose—has been practiced since biblical times. In contrast, physical fasting generally permits certain amounts and types of liquids.

For physical fasts, there are two common types: water fasting, and juice fasting, which is generally more popular.

In juice fasting, the alkali-forming fruit and vegetable juices increase the healing effect of fasting. It accelerates the elimination of uric acid and other inorganic acids. Natural sugars in juices also strengthen the heart during the fast. Juice fasting can be done over a longer period of time due to the nourishment provided, which does not interfere with the process of autolysis—the process by which the body burns fat stores to convert into energy.

Other positive changes that occur in the body during a juice fast include the removal of toxins and dead cells from the body, the cleansing of the liver and other organs, and the stabilization and normalization of nervous and mental functions.

Be sure to conduct personal research before commencing any fast. You may also want to discuss it with a personal physician. Not all fasting programs are one-size-fits-all, and there are health risks if you fast for too long. Those with existing conditions, including but not limited to diabetes, should seek medical advice from a qualified practitioner before undergoing a fast for the first time.

Our book *God’s Principles of Healthful Living* explains more of the physical benefits of abstaining from food and water for short periods, as well as many other laws our bodies were designed to follow to remain in good health. Read it at [rcg.org/glohl](http://rcg.org/glohl). □

# IRAN

Continued from page 6

the region—both directly and through its proxies [such as the terrorist group Hezbollah].”

“The alarm among the other Gulf countries, as well as in Israel, about Iran’s objectives has been rising in direct proportion to Iran’s progress toward nuclear weapons capability. They fear that Iran will become more and more aggressive in seeking to assert its dominion over the region and in trying to destabilize other regimes. As one Saudi put it, ‘They want to dominate the region, and they express it strongly and clearly.’”

## Historical Allies

Amid continuous brinkmanship and political posturing, one would think Israel and Iran have always been vehement enemies. Indeed, it is hard to imagine conditions that would allow Tehran and Jerusalem to enjoy favorable relations.

Yet, in utter contrast to today, Israelis and Iranians were consistent allies until 1979. During the rule of Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, Iran had close relations with Israel starting

in the 1950s, including diplomatic representations and direct flights. The two countries were the United States’ main allies in the region, and Iranian oil was shipped to Israel during the nation’s 1973 war.

The experience of a *New York Times* journalist years ago provides an example of how much Iran’s attitudes toward Israel have changed: “As an American Jew visiting Iran, I apparently made an irresistible target. ‘Zionist Israel,’ an Iranian official instructed me, was the root of all problems in the Middle East; a Western ‘colonial imposition’ on Muslim lands that must be reversed. ‘It’s Iran’s own fault,’ I replied. ‘If Cyrus the Great hadn’t freed the Jews from Persian slavery 2,500 years ago and told them to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their Temple, there wouldn’t be an Israel.’ The official chuckled and changed the subject.”

The article continued: “Before Iran’s 1979 Islamic Revolution, ancient cultural bonds and common strategic interests between Persians and Jews made Iran and Israel close allies...Iranian diplomats in Europe saved thousands of Jews from the Holocaust and...Iran served as an escape route for Iraqi Jews fleeing to Israel after the 1948 war for Israeli independence. In fact, Iran was

one of the first Muslim countries to establish diplomatic and trade relations with the state of Israel. Common Sunni Arab enemies made Persians and Jews close friends for the next three decades.”

The example that shines above all others in regard to favorable relations between Iran (Persia) and Israel is the reign of King Cyrus over the Persian (or Achaemenid) Empire. Far from an ancient tyrant, historians regard him as a “man of peace,” and also a “strong and righteous ruler.”

Cyrus was able to bring together subjects of diverse cultures. According to *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, “The Achaemenids’ role in universal history lies in their fashioning a model for centralized rule over various peoples...to the advantage and profit of all and their achievement of a unified Iranian nation for the first time.”

In the book *Ancient Persian Warfare*, author Phyllis G. Jestice states, “Those he conquered, he treated well...so they would not think they had to fight to the death against him.”

The ruler is highly esteemed in Iranian culture. The Iran Chamber Society describes him as “upright, a great leader of men, generous and benevolent.”

King Cyrus even has a favorable report recorded in the Bible’s Old Testament: “Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia...he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth has the Lord God of heaven given me; and He has charged me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all His people? The Lord his God be with him, and let him go up” (II Chron. 36:22-23).

Under the rule of Cyrus, the Jews who were forcibly enslaved during the Babylonian Empire were allowed to return to the Holy Land. *Encyclopaedia Iranica* states, “In the Hebrew tradition embodied in 2 Chronicles 36:23 and Ezra 1:1-2 Cyrus is regarded with favor, and he has figured prominently in Jewish thought through the ages.”

■ **NIGHT RAID:** Missiles rise into the sky as Israeli missiles target Iranian air defense positions and other military bases in Damascus, Syria (May 10, 2018).

PHOTO: SYRIAN CENTRAL MILITARY MEDIA VIA AP



## Ancient Example

Cyrus the Great is one positive subject that most Iranians and Israelis can agree on. Persian descendants consider him an exceptional leader. And the Jews have him to thank for allowing them to return to Jerusalem—and helping to fund the building of the Second Temple.

Jewish historian Flavius Josephus wrote in the *Antiquities of the Jews* that Cyrus would “write to the rulers and governors that were in the neighborhood of their country of Judea, that they should contribute to them gold and silver for the building of the temple, and besides that, beasts for their sacrifices.”

Yet the historical record of King Cyrus does more than merely reveal an antiquated example of good Israel-Iran relations. It also typifies the only permanent solution for the Middle East.

The kingdom of Cyrus stretched from the western edge of modern-day India all the way to Turkey. He was “upright,” a “law-giver,” and a just ruler of the Persians, Assyrians, Jews and Babylonians.

Notice how the king was portrayed in the Old Testament book of Isaiah: “Thus says the LORD to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him...” (45:1).

Read the passage again. The God of the Bible calls Cyrus His “anointed.” The Hebrew term for this word is *mashiyach*. The other times this word is used, it refers a high priest or a king over Israel or Judah.

Beyond Cyrus, this term also applies to one additional Being: the Messiah. Thus, this ancient Persian king’s reign can be seen as a forerunner of the ultimate climactic fulfillment of the Messianic prophecy.

Notice the descriptions of Cyrus throughout the Old Testament:

■ The king was named God’s “shepherd” (Isa. 44:28).

■ He was charged to build a house for God (II Chron. 36:23).

■ “All the kingdoms of the earth” were given to him (vs. 23).

Despite these physical parallels to the returning Jesus Christ—who is also known as a Shepherd (John 10:11)—a Builder (Heb. 11:10)—and King over all nations (Rev. 17:14)—the importance of what King Cyrus’ reign signified is hidden from almost all of mankind.

## Lasting Peace

In his booklet *What Is the Kingdom of God?* David C. Pack describes the future fulfillment of what Cyrus’ kingdom and government exemplified: “Like a newscaster far ahead of his time, Christ came to make an announcement about a complete change in the way the world would one day be governed. With this change would come unprecedented world peace, happiness, harmony, universal health and prosperity.

“Everywhere He went, Christ spoke about the kingdom of God. It was the subject of most of His parables. When He commissioned His twelve apostles and sent them to preach, the instruction was to preach about the kingdom of God (Luke 9:1-2). When He later sent out His seventy disciples (Luke 10:1), He also commanded them to preach the kingdom of God (vs. 9). Paul preached this same ‘kingdom of God’ message everywhere he went (Acts 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31). The terms *kingdom* and *kingdom of God* are found scores of times throughout the New Testament. Yet, it is absolutely astonishing how nearly everyone has lost the knowledge and true meaning of what this kingdom *is!*”

The definitions of the English words “gospel” and “kingdom,” however, *clearly* explain what Christ meant. Gospel simply means “good news”—and a kingdom is a form of government.

Mr. Pack continued: “In other words, Christ preached ‘the good news of the *government* of God.’ The coming of

world peace, happiness, health and abundance *will* certainly be good news for a mankind that has not known it for 6,000 years.

“Christ’s disciples asked Him what the sign of His Coming and the end of the age would be (Matt. 24:3). He warned the disciples of deception from many who would come ‘in His Name,’ saying, ‘Christ was Christ’ (vs. 5). He meant that they would put an emphasis on the PERSON of Christ instead of the MESSAGE He brought. But, He also prophesied that ‘this gospel of the *kingdom* shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and *then* shall the END come’ (vs. 14).”

Also in Matthew 24, Jesus described conditions occurring today between Iran and Israel and throughout the world. Notice verse 6: “And you shall hear of *wars* and *rumors of wars*...”

Yet the verse concludes stating “the end is not yet.” The chapter continues describing that world conditions will grow even worse: “For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom...” (vs. 7).

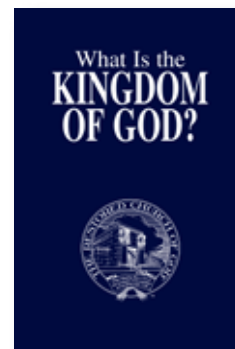
Ultimately, verse 22 states that “*except those days should be shortened*, there should no flesh be saved [alive]...”

In other words, without God’s intervention, mankind will push itself to annihilation!

Unlike the temporary reign of Cyrus, the coming Kingdom of God will bring lasting peace and prosperity throughout the world.

At that time, God “shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, *neither shall they learn war any more*” (Isa. 2:4).

Only then will Iran and Israel finally—and forever—be able to return to the friendly relations they once enjoyed. □



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# AMERICA'S DIVIDE

Continued from page 9

partisan politics: “We find that despite short-term fluctuations, partisanship or non-cooperation in the U.S. Congress has been increasing exponentially for over 60 years with no sign of abating or reversing.”

Notice that the researchers did not say linear growth. It is exponential growth.

Exponential growth is difficult for the human mind to grasp because it starts out slowly and then quickly jumps forward. The classic grade school example of this is that if you had a penny and doubled it every day you would have \$10.7 million in just 30 days. Realize that on the 15th day, you would still have only \$327.67, and on day 25, \$335,544.31. Most of the growth would occur in the final days.

While partisanship is not doubling every year, exponential growth is still set to increase by 5 percent every year. In the penny analogy, 5 percent growth every day would make you a millionaire in a little over a year.

The researchers stated what this means for the U.S.: “Americans today are represented by political figures who struggle to cooperate across party lines at an unprecedented rate, resulting in high profile fiscal and policy battles, government shut-downs, and an inability to resolve problems or enact legislation that guides the nation’s domestic and foreign policy.”

In summary, they stated: “Not surprisingly, partisanship correlates with failure to introduce and pass legislation. The number of bills introduced, bills passed, and the percentage of introduced bills that pass fall exponentially over time.”

The level of non-cooperation has reached the point of hyperpartisanship, and this bleeds into how the two parties speak about one another in interviews and campaign speeches. The level of name-calling and belittling is astonishing—and it stems

from stiffnecked thinking that “my way is right, and yours is dead wrong.”

A *Wall Street Journal* article investigated this trend, with its writer voicing fears that there is no “middle” in politics any more. The article stated: “Up until the mid-1980s, the typical American held the view that partisans on the other side operated with good intentions. But that has changed in dramatic fashion, as a study published...by Stanford and Princeton researchers demonstrates.

“It has long been agreed that race is the deepest divide in American society. But that is no longer true, say Shanto Iyengar and Sean Westwood, the academics who led the study. Using a variety of social science methods (for example, having study participants review resumes of people that make both their race and party affiliation clear), they document that ‘the level of partisan animus in the American public exceeds racial hostility.’”

Partisanship exceeding racial hostility. At first, such an assertion can seem impossible. Yet think of how Democrats treat Republicans and vice versa. In public, they berate the other side as “ignorant,” “lunatics” and every other demeaning name under the sun. They are able to do this on national television. If a politician went in front of news cameras and said such things about any race, he or she would quickly be out of a job.

Hyperpartisanship—being politically “stiffnecked”—also affects the general public. *The Wall Street Journal* article continued: “Americans now discriminate more on the basis of party than on race, gender or any of the other divides we typically think of—and that discrimination extends beyond politics into personal relationships and non-political behaviors. Americans increasingly live in neighborhoods with like-minded partisans, marry fellow partisans and disapprove of their children marrying mates from the other party, and they are more likely to choose partners based on partisanship than physical or personality attributes.”

As stiffnecked thinking grows in the U.S., people have dug in their heels harder. They think they alone hold the way to make America better. They refuse to ever stop and consider that they could be wrong.

## Proper Perspective

Another passage from the Old Testament is instructive. In Hosea 5:3-4, God says that He sees Israel and it is “defiled.” He declares: “They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God...”

The principle here can apply to ancient Israel, but it definitely fits with America today. As a collective nation, we will not stop and take a serious look at ourselves. We will not frame our doings or put them in proper perspective.

Yet this verse has a twofold meaning. It can also mean that a nation’s actions will not allow it to turn back to God. For the U.S., this can be seen in its stiffnecked, hyperpartisanship thinking. Each side, whether liberal or conservative, thinks the other is dead wrong, which makes their viewpoint seem right.

This clouds the issue because both are wrong. Both sides—and any manmade ideology—is subject to Jeremiah 17:9. Man cannot “direct his steps”—he cannot govern himself!

Without drastic action, the U.S. will wallow in the cycle of hyperpartisanship, which will continue to grow exponentially worse. There will be more political gridlock. More verbal battles in internet comment sections. And simply more disagreement.

Yet all hope is not lost. The Bible does not just explain where mankind has gone off course. It also reveals the right way for individuals to live and how to properly operate a nation.

God’s Word also has a lot to say *specifically* about the U.S. today. It shows *exactly* where it is off track and how it can make itself better. The book *America and Britain in Prophecy* (available at [rcg.org/aabibp](http://rcg.org/aabibp)) uses clear biblical proof to show what the coming years hold for the U.S.—and its ultimate bright, better future! □



## CRIME &amp; PUNISHMENT

# Mexican Mafia Busted for Wielding Influence in California Jails



■ **BEHIND BARS:** Detainees walk at a county jail in Orange, California (March 14, 2017).

PHOTO: ROBYN BECK/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

**L**os Angeles (AP)—The Los Angeles County jails are run by the sheriff, but the Mexican Mafia wielded the power in the world behind bars.

The organization made up of leaders from various Latino gangs operated like an illegal government, collecting “taxes” on smuggled drugs, ordering hits on people who did not follow their rules, and even calling the shots on street crimes, federal prosecutors said May 23.

Their clout was diminished as 83 members and associates were charged in a pair of sweeping federal racketeering conspiracies that alleged drug dealing, extortion, violent assaults and even murders.

“We just delivered a blow to a cold-blooded prison gang and their associates,” U.S. Attorney Nick Hanna said during a news conference.

The so-called “gang of gangs”—an organization of imprisoned Latino

street gang leaders who control operations inside and outside California prisons and jails—started in the 1950s at a juvenile jail and grew into an international criminal organization that has controlled smuggling, drug sales and extortion inside the nation’s largest jail system.

“These Mexican Mafia members and associates, working together to control criminal activity within [LA County jails], have become their own entity or enterprise and effectively function as an illegal government,” the indictment said.

The gang was also able to control street crime by using wives, girlfriends and lawyers to help relay orders to be carried out by members who were not incarcerated, the indictment also stated.

In some instances, gang members would deliberately get arrested on low-level charges so they could

smuggle drugs into the jail and be released days later.

Because the Mexican Mafia controlled drug trafficking in the jails, they got the first shot to sell their supply of methamphetamine, cocaine, heroin or marijuana, prosecutors said. Other groups had to wait and give a third of their contraband to the Mexican Mafia leadership.

The fee, known as a “thirds” tax, gave the name “Operation Dirty Thirds” to the investigation that led to the indictments and arrest of 32 people on May 23.

The gang enriched itself through drug sales, taxes on drugs and even collected a share of purchases on candy bars, deodorant and other items at the jail commissary, the indictment said, adding that the gang was able to exert control by

threatening and carrying out violence if people did not pay up or follow the rules.

The gang members were accused of committing vicious beatings, stabbings, kidnappings and murders in retaliation, Mr. Hanna said.

In an effort to disrupt the gang’s stronghold, the suspects will be held in federal facilities, and those already in custody in state prisons will be moved, authorities said.

Sheriff Jim McDonnell acknowledged that others will follow in their wake, as leadership in the gang that operates in most prisons and jails in the state is always changing.

“There will be new leaders, that’s kinda how the whole system works. It’s hierarchical,” Sheriff McDonnell said. “When one goes to jail or passes away then someone else backfills their spot just like any multilevel organization.” □

## HEALTH ISSUES

## Remedy in Your Kitchen? Scientists Find Household Staple May Help Combat Disease

A daily dose of baking soda may help reduce inflammation caused by autoimmune diseases like rheumatoid arthritis, scientists report.

They have some of the first evidence of how the inexpensive, over-the-counter antacid can encourage the body's spleen to produce an anti-inflammatory environment that could be therapeutic in the face of inflammatory disease, Medical College of Georgia scientists reported in *The Journal of Immunology*.

Other autoimmune diseases include lupus, celiac disease, multiple sclerosis, and Type 1 diabetes.

Drinking baking soda, the MCG scientists believe, tells the spleen—which is part of the immune system and

is where some white blood cells, like macrophages, are stored—to go easy on the immune response. “Certainly drinking bicarbonate affects the spleen and we think it’s through the mesothelial cells,” said Dr. Paul O’Connor, renal physiologist in the MCG Department of Physiology at Augusta University and the study’s corresponding author.

Mesothelial cells line body cavities, like the one that contains our digestive tract, and they also cover the exterior of our organs to quite literally keep them from rubbing together. About a decade ago, it was found that these cells also provide another level of protection. They have little fingers, called microvilli, that sense the environment, and warn the organs they cover that there

is an invader and an immune response is needed.

The researchers have shown that when rats or healthy people drink a solution of baking soda, also known as sodium bicarbonate, it becomes a trigger for the stomach to make more acid to digest the next meal and for mesothelial cells on the spleen to send a message that there is no need to mount a protective immune response.

“It’s potentially a really safe way to treat inflammatory disease,” Dr. O’Connor stated.

Other studies have shown that drinking water with a small amount of baking soda daily can help with indigestion, heartburn, fighting infections, and overall well-being. □

## SCIENCE &amp; TECHNOLOGY

## Galaxy Clusters Much Older than Expected

Astronomers have detected two fully developed galaxy clusters that appear as they existed when the universe was 1.5 billion years old—about one-tenth of its current age.

The find, which was made by international teams using telescopes in Chile’s Atacama Desert and was reported in *Nature* and *The Astrophysical Journal*, was a surprise

for the researchers. “Current theoretical and computer models suggest that [galaxy clusters] as massive as these should have taken much longer to evolve,” at least 3 billion years after the beginning of the universe, the European Southern Observatory reported.

“How this assembly of galaxies got so big so fast is a mystery. It wasn’t built up gradually over billions of years, as astronomers might expect,” Tim Miller, who was a lead author of one of the papers, stated. “This discovery provides a great opportunity to study how massive galaxies came together to build enormous galaxy clusters.” □



■ **AT THE BEGINNING:** This artist's impression shows a group of galaxies in the early universe. PHOTO: ESO/M. KORNMESSER

## Why Are More American Workers Testing Positive for Drugs?



**D**riven by increases in cocaine, methamphetamine and marijuana, drug use by the American workforce remains at its highest rate in more than a decade, according to a new analysis released May 8 by Quest Diagnostics.

Nationwide, 4.2 percent of the workforce tested positive for drugs in 2017, which remained steady compared to 2016. Yet this rate represents a dramatic increase over the 3.5 percent positivity rate from 2012, which represented a 30-year low. The analysis of 2017 data also suggests shifting patterns of drug use, with cocaine and amphetamines surging in some areas of the country and marijuana rising sharply in states with newer recreation use statutes.

“It’s unfortunate that we mark 30 years of the Drug-Free Workplace Act with clear evidence that drugs continue to invade the country’s workplaces. Not only have declines appeared to have bottomed out, but also in some drug classes and areas of the country drug positivity rates are increasing,” said Dr. Barry Sample, a senior direc-

tor of science and technology at Quest Diagnostics. “These changing patterns and geographical variations may challenge the ability of employers to anticipate the ‘drug of choice’ for their workforce or where to best focus their drug prevention efforts to ensure a safe and healthy work environment.”

Increases in positivity rates for marijuana in the general U.S. workforce were most striking in states that have enacted recreational use statutes since 2016. Those states include: Nevada (43 percent), Massachusetts (14 percent) and California (11 percent). These three states also saw significant increases in marijuana positivity in federally-mandated, safety-sensitive workers: Nevada (39 percent), California (20 percent), and Massachusetts (11 percent). Federally-mandated, safety-sensitive workers include pilots, rail, bus and truck drivers, and workers in nuclear power plants, for whom routine drug testing is required.

“These increases are similar to the increases we observed after rec-

reational marijuana use statutes were passed in Washington and Colorado,” said Dr. Sample. “While it is too early to tell if this is a trend, our data suggests that the recreational use of marijuana is spilling into the workforce, including among individuals most responsible for keeping our communities safe.”

In addition to increasing cannabis use, an improving job market is pushing many employers to drop marijuana tests because they are having a difficult time filling jobs. “Marijuana testing—a fixture at large American employers for at least 30 years—excludes too many potential workers, experts say, at a time when filling jobs is more challenging than it’s been in nearly two decades,” *The Associated Press* reported.

In Colorado, which legalized recreational marijuana use in 2014, 10 percent of employers that screen for drugs dropped testing for marijuana as of 2016. The state has a 3 percent unemployment rate. □



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miles**

The night sky has a way of making us ponder our existence. The stupendous grandeur of stars, planets and galaxies—or the Bright Pillar in the Carina nebula pictured here—can make us feel tiny and insignificant. This feeling is nothing new. Millennia ago, ancient Israel's King David wrote this in Psalm 8:3-4: "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; WHAT IS MAN THAT YOU ARE MINDFUL OF HIM?"

What is your purpose? While most never find a concrete answer to this question, you CAN know! To learn about your incredible human potential, read the eye-opening book *The Awesome Potential of Man*.

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