

MAY-JUNE 2016

THE

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# REAL TRUTH™

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING

*The Reality of*

# GLOBAL POVERTY

**Why Hyper  
Political Correctness?**

**Making Sense of an Earth  
Filled with Violence**

**Pope Francis' First Three Years  
*Perception vs. Reality***

**Leader Profile:  
Angela Merkel**

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**REAL TRUTH**<sup>™</sup>  
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A R T I C L E S

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■ **DIALOGUE:** Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel and France's President Francois Hollande talk in Strasbourg, France, during a meeting about Europe's immigration crisis (Feb. 7, 2016).

PHOTO: PATRICK SEEGER/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

## Leader Profile: Angela Merkel – Chancellor of Germany

Throughout the years, Ms. Merkel has proven one thing: She is not to be underestimated.

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**FRONT COVER:** A child stands amid the rubble of her family's home, which was destroyed in an airstrike in Sanaa, Yemen (March 12, 2016). The United Nations reported that more than 80 percent of Yemen's population is in dire need of food, medicine and other basic necessities.

PHOTO: MOHAMMED HUWAIS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

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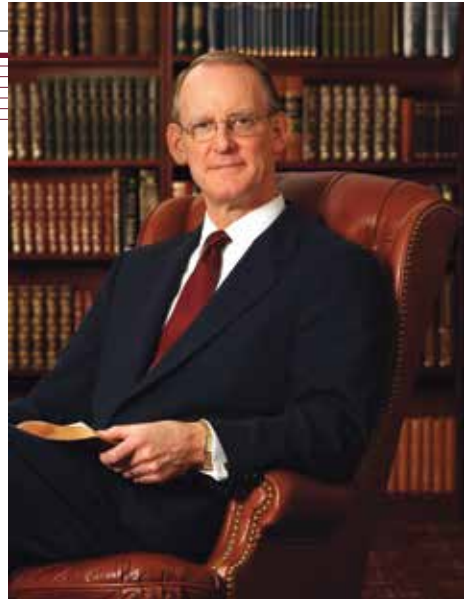
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## PERSONAL FROM

David C. Fack



# True Conversion— Explained!

**W**HAT IS *TRUE* conversion? Is it merely “professing Jesus as Lord and Savior”? How and when is one converted? Is it *sudden*—meaning, *immediate*? Or a gradual process, lasting a long time? So many struggle with problems, weaknesses and sins. Does God expect overcoming—and growth? And what does this mean? How is it done? What role does the Holy Spirit play? What about faith and repentance?

Many *assume* they must be perfect. Others judge God’s Way by the conduct of Christians. Can one sin and remain a Christian? What about forgiveness?

Millions seek answers to these and related questions. This Personal will look at the subject of Christian conversion and finally make it *plain*!

When is a person converted? I have known many who doubted their conversion because they had never been taught the meaning of *true* conversion. When under fire—under pressure—they lacked the confidence to know they could effectively address their problems. They were not sure that they had the *power* to overcome them.

Since the devil—the author of confusion (I Cor. 14:33)—deceives the whole world (Rev. 12:9), he would

of course seek to confuse professing Christians about this most important subject.

Just what *is* a real Christian? Is he one who “attends church”—“professes Jesus”—“knows Christ”—has been “baptized”? Is there a single verse to which we can turn that gives the Bible definition of a real Christian—that eliminates *all* confusion?

The apostle Paul wrote, “For as many as are *led by the Spirit of God*, **THEY** are the sons of God” (Rom. 8:14). A Christian, then, is one who has the Holy Spirit leading him. But is having God’s Spirit absolutely essential to being a Christian? In context, Paul had already said this: “But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, *he is none of His*” (vs. 9)!

It is that simple! One either has the Spirit of God, and *is* a Christian, or one does *not* have it and is *not* a Christian—is “none of His.” All those who are truly converted have the Holy Spirit in them.

But is receiving God’s Spirit all there is to Christianity and conversion—or is there more?

### Receiving Power

Jesus taught the apostles for 40 days after His Resurrection (Acts 1:3), instructing them to wait in

Jerusalem until they would receive the Holy Spirit on the Feast of Pentecost. They asked if He was about to establish His kingdom on Earth. He answered, “It is not for you to know the times or the seasons...but *you shall receive POWER*, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you” (vs. 7-8). He then disappeared into a cloud.

Like the apostles waiting for power through the Holy Spirit, most people today wait for some kind of additional strength upon conversion. Tell a teenager that he will be given the keys to the family car and he will have no difficulty understanding he is about to receive *real* power. The first time I was handed the keys to my father’s car, I understood exactly what it meant. It is no different with a potential Christian waiting to receive God’s Spirit at repentance and baptism.

Paul wrote Timothy, “For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of *power*, and of love, and of a sound mind” (II Tim. 1:7). Since Christians have the Spirit of God, very real power has come into their lives. Of course, the verse also says that a Christian demonstrates *love*—or the *give* way of life—and that his conduct reflects a *sound mind*.

The fact that God’s Spirit imparts sound-mindedness is evidence that God wants Christians to understand their calling—their conversion—God’s *purpose* for them. He wants them to be *sound* in His Way. Of course, this *must* include understanding all the basic aspects of *true* conversion.

### When Is It Given?

How does one actually *receive* God’s Spirit? And how can he know for certain that it has been given? Since this *moment* constitutes conversion, at what point can the would-be Christian be assured that God has given His Spirit? Since not having God’s Spirit precludes one from being a true Christian, surely God would not leave His servants in doubt as to whether they have it—or exactly *when* they receive it!

The book of Acts states, “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name

of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, *and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*” (2:38).

Receiving the Spirit of God comes upon real repentance and a correct baptism. (To learn more about the biblical method of baptism, read *What Do You Mean “Water Baptism”?* at [rcg.org/wdymwb](http://rcg.org/wdymwb).) With these things also comes the remission of sin—or forgiveness. So there is a specific *moment* when conversion begins. There is a *definite time* when the Holy Spirit enters the mind and one becomes a true Christian—and God has begotten a new son.

Now we must ask, is salvation now *finished* in the Christian? Is he or she now “saved”? Is the newly begotten child of God suddenly *perfect*, unable to ever sin or go wrong, because he thinks he has already been saved?

Real Christian conversion is a *gradual* process of *growing* and *overcoming*—of *changing* and *developing*. But how? And at the end of the process, what does the “finished” Christian look like? And what does this have to do with the goal of a Christian—with what he is striving for as his final reward for having been a Christian?

### God’s Purpose for Christians

Throughout His ministry, Jesus proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom of God. Hidden within this message is the understanding of the awesome, *incredible human potential* for the one who truly yields to God. Wherever Christ went, He spoke about the coming kingdom—or *government*—of God. While most of His parables were centered on this message, few that heard them understood their meaning. And when He spoke them, He always included how true Christians were *qualifying* to become part of that government!

Matthew 13 contains a half dozen “kingdom” parables. This chapter begins with the parable of the “sower and the seed,” and it depicts one throwing seed into various locations and kinds of soil. In some cases, the parable described how the seed grew and flourished in the person who received it. In other cases, it either died quickly after starting to grow or took no root at

all. Others who received the seed grew in character “thirty, sixty or one hundred fold” on the way to the kingdom.

This is followed by the parable of the “wheat and tares.” This parable discusses “fruit” that appears in Christians’ lives prior to the time that God gathers them into His “barn.” The fruit, good or bad, represents Christian growth, or lack of growth.

The third parable depicts the kingdom beginning as a tiny “grain of mustard seed” that grows into a great tree. This is followed by the parable of leaven, depicting God’s kingdom as leaven spreading until it has permeated the dough (the Earth, or all nations) that contains it. The fifth compares the kingdom to “hidden treasure” found in a field. The finder sells all that he has to buy this field.

The sixth parable describes the kingdom as the “pearl of great price,” which a person buys after selling all that he has to raise sufficient money for the purchase. The seventh and final parable of this one chapter describes the kingdom as a “net” gathering all kinds of fish. The “good” fish are kept—the “bad” are thrown away. Jesus explains that the good fish are those who enter the kingdom. The bad represent those burned (vs. 50) and destroyed in a “furnace of fire.”

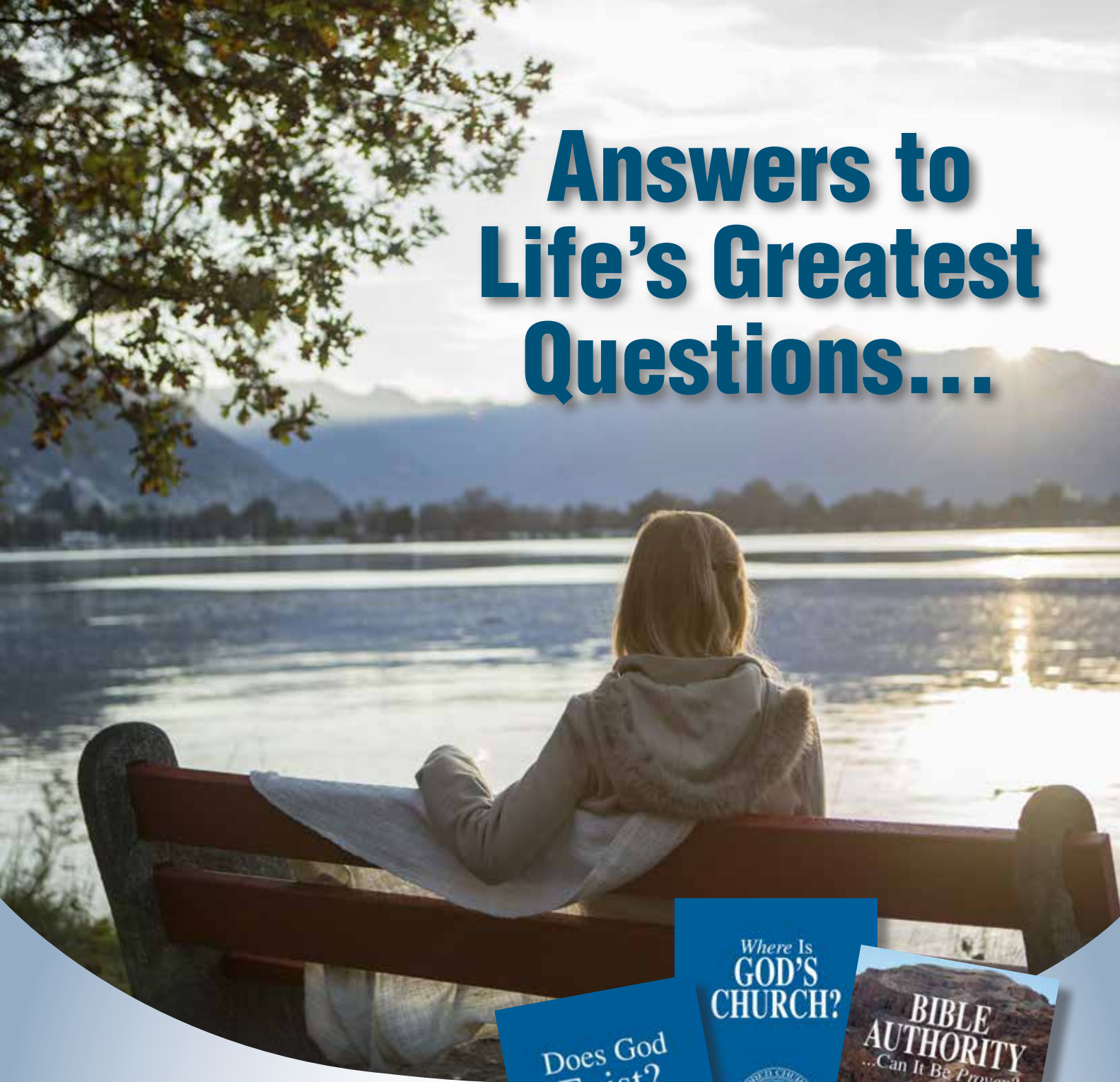
In each parable, the message is the same. Some (not all) are willing to pay the price to be a Christian. They are willing to spiritually grow and develop real Christian character so they may later inherit the eternal reward of becoming born (no longer merely begotten) sons of God—in the *God Family*—ruling with Him in the kingdom of God.

There are many other New Testament parables. Much of Christ’s teaching was through use of these stories about common, well-known things. They were intended to carry deep lessons about a Christian’s calling—for those whose *minds have been opened* by God to understand them.

Jesus stated, “No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent

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# Answers to Life's Greatest Questions...



Does God  
Exist?



Where Is  
GOD'S  
CHURCH?



BIBLE  
AUTHORITY  
...Can It Be Proven?



Millions *believe* God exists! Few have *proof*. Have you proven that God exists? Or do you hope—suspect—feel—believe—think—He does? Can His existence be *scientifically* proven? Can you *know* with certainty that an all-intelligent *Mind* created the universe and all life on Earth—including you? Must the answers be “accepted on faith”? Let’s squarely face these questions!

Visit [rcg.org](http://rcg.org) to order  
your free booklets!



# The Reality of Global **POVERTY**

While pockets of severe deprivation do exist in the West's lands of plenty, the overall picture of the poor is starkly different in the rest of the world.

BY JEFFREY R. AMBROSE

**T**HE DOLLARS AND cents of poverty beyond the shores of the United States is sobering beyond words. According to the United Nations-commissioned Millennium Project: "More than one billion people in the world live on less than one dollar a day. Another 2.7 billion struggle to survive on less than two dollars per day. Poverty in the developing world, however, goes far beyond income poverty. It means having to walk more than one mile every day simply to collect water and firewood; it means suffering diseases that were eradicated from rich countries decades ago."

"In some deeply impoverished nations less than half of the children are in primary school and under 20 percent go to secondary school." Around the world, nearly 70 million children do not receive a basic education and 774 million adults are illiterate.

Each year, eight million children under age 5 die from preventable causes, such as malaria, diarrhea and pneumonia, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

Living on less than a dollar or two per day—well below the earning potential of a homeless panhandler in a large North American city—equates to a life that most Americans would rather not think about, much less experience.

But this is reality for roughly 36 percent of human beings on the planet!

The scourge of poverty affects every country to a degree, but in certain parts of the globe, it is the rule rather than the exception.

### Poverty in Asia

A resident of a dying fishing village near Pakistan's increasingly polluted Manchar Lake told interviewers for the United Kingdom group Panos: "We have been living here since the beginning. Seven generations have lived and died here... We, who are standing on the edge of death now, have seen our hair grow white here.

"Today again, my mother-in-law has an upset stomach and is vomiting. This is an injustice to us: the water of Manchar has turned to poison. Children go to bathe in this water and...even if one drop of this water enters their mouth, they will lose their lives..."

"Recently three of our women, who each had eight-month-old babies, died due to the poisonous waters. In our homeland...there is only misery for us... We have no livelihood...there are only small fish. We now survive by begging.

"In the times of our forefathers, the water was so sweet that if you...drank water out of the small hollows left in the ground by the cattle's footprints, even that was sweet. The water has been bad like this since the last 10, 15 years... now even dogs will die if they drink it, let alone human beings..."

In China, which has made great strides in developing an urban middle class, there are still millions who live in miserable conditions.

"When she gets sick, Li Enlan, 78, picks herbs from the woods that grow nearby instead of buying modern medicines," *The New York Times* reported. "This is not the result of some philosophical choice, though. She has never seen a doctor and, like many residents of this area, lives in a meager barter economy, seldom coming into contact with cash.

"'We eat somehow, but it's never enough,' Ms. Li said. 'At least we're not starving.'

"In this region of southern Henan Province, in village after village, people are too poor to heat their homes in the winter and many lack basic comforts like running water. Mobile phones, a near ubiquitous symbol of upward mobility throughout much of this country, are seen as an impossible luxury. People here often begin conversations with a phrase that is still not uncommon in today's China: 'We are poor.'"

A recent *International Business Times* report suggested that more than 82 million in China live below the poverty line (less than one dollar a day).

### India

The largest city on the Indian subcontinent—and the world's largest city proper—holds millions of impoverished residents within its confines. *National Geographic* described life there: "All cities in India are loud, but nothing matches the 24/7 decibel level of Mumbai, the former Bombay, where the traffic never stops and the horns always honk. Noise, however, is not a problem in Dharavi, the teeming slum of one million...where as many as 18,000 people crowd into a single acre (0.4 hectares). By nightfall, deep inside the maze of lanes too narrow even for the putt-putt of auto rickshaws, the slum is as still as a verdant glade. Once you get accustomed to sharing 300 square feet (28 square meters) of floor with 15 humans and an uncounted number of mice, a strange sense of relaxation sets in."

Those who live in the rest of the country fare little better. According to India's Socioeconomic and Caste Census, the nation still has the world's largest number of poor people in a single country. Of its over 1.2 billion inhabitants, an estimated 363 million live below the poverty line. Nearly

three-quarters of these live in rural areas.

### South America

In a resurgent Latin America, with countries such as Venezuela rising in wealth on the crest of oil profits, many have not yet felt the flush of success. *The Wall Street Journal* reported: “Less than three years into [President Nicolas] Maduro’s tenure, Venezuela’s economy is in shambles amid low oil prices, and poverty is more prevalent than it was when the leftist Chavismo movement took power nearly 17 years ago.”

“A new study conducted by a consortium of Venezuelan university professors called Encovi says 76% of citizens are now living in poverty when measured by income, the highest level since 1975. That compares with a peak of 55% and a low of 21% during Mr. Chavez’s tenure.

“Measuring poverty, tricky anywhere, is complicated in Venezuela by a dearth of data. Mr. Maduro’s government stopped publishing poverty statistics after it took over in 2013 and hasn’t released basic economic indicators like inflation or output since late 2014.”

*Foreign Policy* reported on what the situation was like before the gov-

ernment stopped releasing economic data: “When the Venezuelan government defends itself from its critics, it usually points to declining poverty rates as proof of its success. For a while, this worked; poverty figures indeed improved during a portion of the chavista years. But the days when poverty was a winning issue for chavismo are over. Official statistics now show that poverty is rising rapidly.”

“In order to calculate the poverty rate, [Venezuela’s official statistics office] estimates the cost of a representative basket of goods, which includes things such as food, dress, housing, transportation, health, communications, and education. The basket is intended as a representative sample of the type of things an average Venezuelan family consumes during a year. If per capita income falls below the cost of this basic basket of goods, the person is considered poor.

“According to this measure, the number of Venezuelans classified as poor shot up in [2013] by 1.8 million people. Roughly 6 percent of all Venezuela’s 30 million people became poor in [2013] alone. The situation is even direr when one looks at extreme poverty, i.e., the number of people whose income cannot even buy a representative basket of food and drink. In

[2013] alone, the number of extremely poor Venezuelans rose by 730,000. They now reach close to three million people, or roughly 10 percent of the population.”

### Africa

On a continent with a name that is nearly synonymous with poverty, the statistics are stunning.

■ More than 40 percent of Africans are unable to obtain sufficient food daily (Millennium Project).

■ In 1960, Africa was a net exporter of food. By 2007, the continent’s food imports exceeded exports by \$22 billion (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations).

■ Declining soil fertility, land degradation, and AIDS have caused food production per capita to drop slightly over the last 30 years, despite dramatic population increase (ibid.).

■ More than 50 percent of Africans suffer from cholera, infant diarrhea, and other water-related diseases (Millennium Project). Treatment of waterborne illnesses such as diarrhea and cholera consumes 12 percent of government health budgets in sub-Saharan Africa (Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council).

Please see **GLOBAL POVERTY**, page 24



■ **DIRE CONDITIONS:** Left, a young girl peeks out from a slum shanty in New Delhi, India (March 18, 2015). Right, children from an impoverished family stand outside their home in Najaf, Iraq (Feb. 6, 2016).

PHOTOS: MONEY SHARMA/ (LEFT); HAIDAR HAMDANI/ (RIGHT); AFP/GETTY IMAGES



# WHY HYPER POLITICAL CORRECTNESS?

Just about any word, phrase or action can cause offense to a group or individual. How did society become so sensitive to language, and how can you navigate it?

BY JUSTIN T. PALM

**W**HAT'S WRONG WITH a camel on a college campus? What about a comedian spinning jokes to bright-eyed students? Or an enlightening speech from the managing director of the International Monetary Fund? What could possibly be wrong with the word "indigenous"?

Evidently a lot.

A new, almost militant form of political correctness (or PC) has emerged. Once a relatively mild trend, today's political correctness has morphed into a giant controversy.

Some see it as a dangerous trend threatening free speech. They feel political correctness advocates have gone too far in their efforts to muzzle "offensive language." Others see it as the sign of an enlightened, inclusive and loving society. They argue that people should not have the right to say anything they want, especially if it could marginalize or discriminate someone. The opposing sides—both with compelling arguments—are clashing.

A kind of speech police has emerged and is trying to enforce a new dictionary on the country, particularly across the grassy fields and within the stately buildings of American college campuses. Once-common words and

phrases are being blacked out from society's lexicon, redacted like classified details within a soldier's letter home from abroad. Harassment was once defined as a pattern of behavior. Now it can be something as small as a simple statement or phrase.

As millions of Americans become fed up with political correctness, it has even come to be a major issue in the presidential election season.

A growing number of experts warn that today's obsession with politically correct speech has dire consequences on youth and society at large.

## PC on Steroids

Once upon a time, unfamiliar or uncomfortable ideas were engaged, not forcefully shut down. People were willing to debate one another. This was a central tenet of higher education. In this environment, most would apply *critical thinking*—objectively examining facts and evidence—to

decide whether they agreed with a principle, theory or idea.

Times have changed. Today's young people have been taught to lead with their emotions, and to speak out boldly against social injustice and offenses. Anyone who acts or speaks inappropriately should be punished. Right and wrong is in the eye of the beholder. One person's statement and intent could be as pure as the driven snow, but not if someone else views it as offensive. This militant mindset seeks to muzzle anyone who holds opposite views.

*The Atlantic* magazine article "The Coddling of the American Mind" provided shocking evidence about the politically correct atmosphere found throughout college campuses in the United States. The September 2015 article opens: "Something strange is happening at America's colleges and universities. A movement is arising, undirected and driven largely by students, to scrub campuses clean of

words, ideas, and subjects that might cause discomfort or give offense... Two terms have risen quickly from obscurity into common campus parlance. *Microaggressions* are small actions or word choices that seem on their face to have no malicious intent but that are thought of as a kind of violence nonetheless."

An example of a microaggression would be asking someone where they were born. This seemingly innocuous question supposedly has racist, anti-immigration tones and calls into question one's Americanism.

The article also defined the popular new term "trigger warnings": "*Trigger warnings* are alerts that professors are expected to issue if something in a course might cause a strong emotional response. For example, some students have called for warnings that Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* describes racial violence...[therefore] students who have been previously victimized by racism or domestic violence can

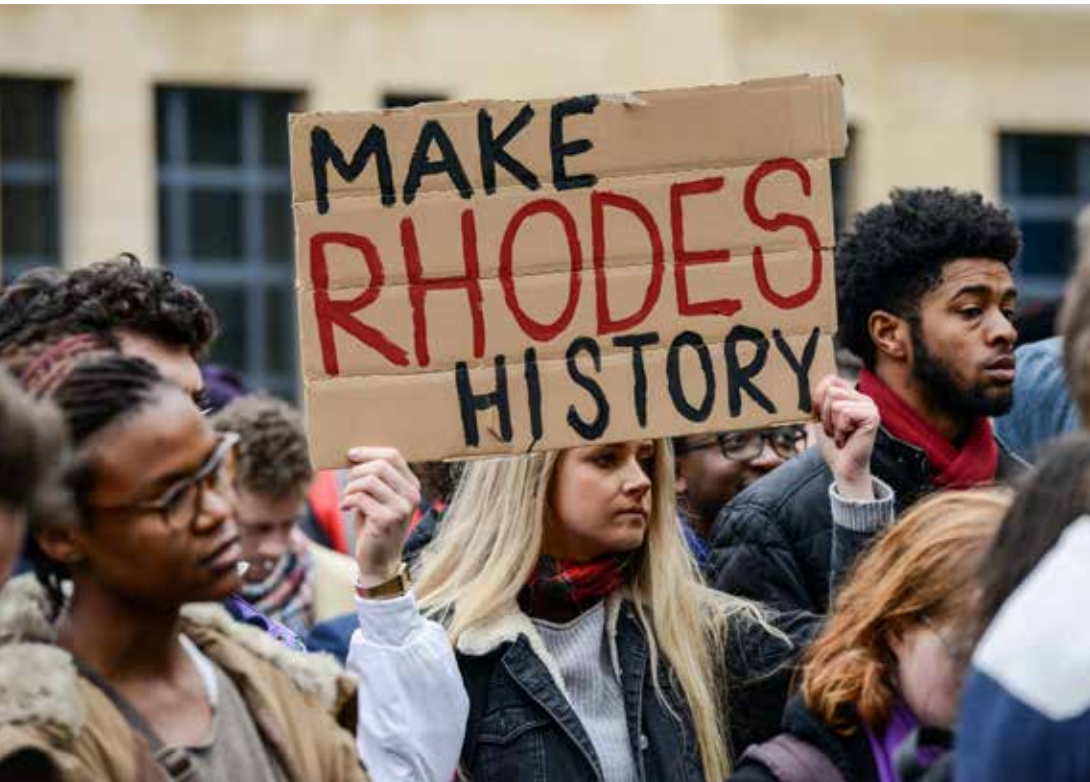
choose to avoid these works, which they believe might 'trigger' a recurrence of past trauma."

Another example shows the bizarre nature of some of the offenses: "In April [2015], at Brandeis University, the Asian American student association sought to raise awareness of microaggressions against Asians through an installation on the steps of an academic hall. The installation gave examples of microaggressions such as 'Aren't you supposed to be good at math?' and 'I'm colorblind! I don't see race.' But a backlash arose among other Asian American students, who felt that the display itself was a microaggression. The association removed the installation, and its president wrote an e-mail to the entire student body apologizing to anyone who was 'triggered or hurt by the content of the microaggressions.'"

### The Canceled Camel

Those who doubt political correctness is out of control need only turn to the incident of the "canceled camel." The University of St. Thomas in Minnesota planned to bring a camel onto campus to celebrate the end of the year as part of a "Hump Day" event. The reasoning was that Wednesday is known as "hump day" and camels have humps. However, the event was quickly canceled after students protested that it was racially insensitive to Middle Eastern cultures. Upon calling off the event, its sponsor released the following statement: "It appears...this program is dividing people and would make for an uncomfortable and possibly unsafe environment for everyone attending or providing the program" (*Campus Reform*).

Countless similar stories have surfaced in recent years, and no forum or event appears to be off limits. For instance, debates on con-



■ **SPEAKING OUT:** Students protest outside Oxford University's Rhodes House Library in Oxford, England (March 9, 2016). The demonstrators sought to remove statues of controversial colonial-era figures from the university campuses.

PHOTO: CHRIS RATCLIFFE/GETTY IMAGES

troversial topics are simply being canceled. At Oxford University in England, a debate on abortion was shut down in 2014 for fear of causing offense.

In a *New York* magazine piece titled “Not a Very P.C. Thing to Say” (under the subhead “How the language police are perverting liberalism”), Jonathan Chait wrote about this new form of political correctness and its implications: “After political correctness burst onto the academic scene in the late ’80s and early ’90s, it went into a long remission. Now it has returned...You may remember when 6,000 people at the University of California-Berkeley signed a petition last year [2014] to stop a commencement address by Bill Maher, who has criticized Islam (along with nearly all the other major world religions). Or when protesters at Smith College demanded the cancellation of

a commencement address by Christine Lagarde, managing director of the International Monetary Fund, blaming the organization for ‘imperialist and patriarchal systems that oppress and abuse women worldwide.’”

The author continues: “UCLA students staged a sit-in to protest micro-aggressions such as when a professor corrected a student’s decision to spell the word *indigenous* with an upper-case *I*—one example of many ‘perceived grammatical choices that in actuality reflect ideologies’...These sorts of episodes now hardly even qualify as exceptional.”

Famous comedians like Jerry Seinfeld, Chris Rock, and Bill Maher no longer perform at colleges due to sensitive students negatively reacting to their material.

Jeannie Suk of *The New Yorker* wrote of the difficulty of teaching required subjects in today’s new environment: “Imagine a medical student



■ **VOTING FOR CHANGE:** Students listen as the student government at the University of South Carolina votes on a resolution to increase diversity (Nov. 10, 2015).

PHOTO: WALLY KkaliJ/LOS ANGELES TIMES/TNS

who is training to be a surgeon but who fears that he’ll become distressed if he sees or handles blood. What should his instructors do? Criminal-law teachers face a similar question with law students who are afraid to study rape law.”

Ms. Suk takes the reader inside her experiences teaching rape law at Harvard: “Students seem more anxious about classroom discussion, and about approaching the law of sexual violence in particular, than they have ever been in my eight years as a law professor. Student organizations representing women’s interests now routinely advise students that they should not feel pressured to attend or participate in class sessions that focus on the law of sexual violence, and which might therefore be traumatic. These organizations also ask criminal-law teachers to warn their classes that the rape-law unit might ‘trigger’ traumatic memories.

Individual students often ask teachers not to include the law of rape on exams for fear that the material would cause them to perform less well. One teacher I know was recently asked by a student not to use the word ‘violate’ in class—as in ‘Does this conduct violate the law?’—because the word was triggering. Some students have even suggested that rape law should not be taught because of its potential to cause distress.”

Think. How could anyone prosecute rapists if *rape law* did not exist? Sadly, those unwilling to face these hard matters will never be in a position to actually help the victims of sexual violence. Averting the eyes from sensitive issues does not make the problems disappear.

This attitude could be likened to an onlooker driving faster through a crash scene on a highway to avoid the gruesome incident, as opposed to stopping and lending assistance. Instead of

turning a blind eye, these topics should be understood and dealt with in a direct way so that others can be helped.

### **“All-important” Feelings**

Another voice was added to the anti-political correctness chorus with the release of an article on news website *Vox* titled, “I’m a Liberal Professor, and My Liberal Students Terrify Me.” Written under a pseudonym out of fear of using his real name, the author opened: “Things have changed since I started teaching. The vibe is different...The student-teacher dynamic has been reenvisioned along a line that’s...hyper-protective, giving each and every student the ability to claim Grievous Harm in nearly any circumstance, after any affront, and a teacher’s formal ability to respond to these claims is limited at best.”

Later in the article, the professor gave insight into the environment on college campuses: “As Northwestern University professor Laura Kipnis writes, ‘Emotional discomfort is [now] regarded as equivalent to material injury, and all injuries have to be remediated.’ Hurting a student’s feelings, even in the course of instruction that is absolutely appropriate and respectful, can now get a teacher into serious trouble.”

“Commentators on the left and right have recently criticized the sensitivity and paranoia of today’s college students. They worry about the stifling of free speech, the implementation of unenforceable conduct codes, and a general hostility against opinions and viewpoints that could cause students so much as a hint of discomfort.”

The *Vox* article continued, “It’s not just that students refuse to countenance uncomfortable ideas—they refuse to engage them, period.”

Colleges are no longer able to teach critical thinking skills, but instead lead students to base all decisions on their feelings and emotions. How did this happen?

### **Thin Skin**

Previous generations taught children that life was unfair. Pain and difficulty

were part of the sometimes harsh reality of living on planet Earth. Avoiding discomfort was unrealistic and an unreasonable goal. Staying away from offensive ideas was impossible.

This all changed in the 1980s, when a dramatic shift in parenting took place. Today’s youth (including college students) are taught that life should be a safe place—a warm, cozy cocoon. Children are treated as *highly fragile*, and have been protected from life’s sharp edges by so-called “helicopter” parents. Each individual is valued equally and treated with the utmost fairness. Everyone earns a trophy no matter how well they did.

But experts warn that the sincere and well-meaning actions of protective parents are in fact setting the new generation up for failure. The hyper focus on protecting people from offensive language is having a negative impact. Instead of *guarding* their children from danger, they are *endangering* them.

*The Atlantic* made this observation about the cause of today’s politically correct environment: “In a variety of ways, children born after 1980—the Millennials—got a consistent message from adults: life is dangerous, but adults will do everything in their power to protect you from harm, not just from strangers but from one another as well.”

This concept was also detailed in an interview with social psychologist Jonathan Haidt: “The big thing that really worries me—the reason why I think things are going to get much, much worse—is that one of the causal factors here is the change in child-rearing that happened in America in the 1980s. With the rise in crime, amplified by the rise of cable TV, we saw much more protective, fearful parenting. Children since the 1980s have been raised very differently—protected as fragile. The key psychological idea, which should be mentioned in everything written about this, is Nassim Taleb’s concept of anti-fragility.”

“...children are anti-fragile. Bone is anti-fragile. If you treat it gently, it

will get brittle and break. Bone actually needs to get banged around to toughen up. And so do children. I’m not saying they need to be spanked or beaten, but they need to have a lot of unsupervised time, to get in over their heads and get themselves out. And that greatly decreased in the 1980s. Anxiety, fragility and psychological weakness have skyrocketed in the last 15-20 years. So, I think millennials come to college with much thinner skins. And therefore, until that changes, I think we’re going to keep seeing these demands to never hear anything offensive” (Minding the Campus).

One solution some experts suggest is for universities to “strongly discourage” trigger warnings. Instead, they should recommend the American Association of University Professors’ suggestion on these warnings, which states: “The presumption that students need to be protected rather than challenged in a classroom is at once infantilizing and anti-intellectual.”

*New York* magazine reported, “Trigger warnings aren’t much help in actually overcoming trauma—an analysis by the Institute of Medicine has found that the best approach is controlled exposure to it, and experts say avoidance can reinforce suffering.” In fact, surveys have shown that rates of emotional distress are rising on campuses, where one would think they would be dropping with such a focus on creating a “safe place.”

*The Atlantic* piece warned that “the increased focus on microaggressions coupled with the endorsement of emotional reasoning is a formula for a constant state of outrage, even toward well-meaning speakers trying to engage in genuine discussion.

“What are we doing to our students if we encourage them to develop extra-thin skin in the years just before they leave the cocoon of adult protection and enter the workforce? Would they not be better prepared to flourish if we taught them to question their own emotional reactions, and to give people the benefit of the doubt?”

Please see **POLITICAL**, page 28



# Pope Francis' First Three Years

## *Perception vs. Reality*

After years of high expectations for Francis, his accomplishments can begin to be placed in the context of Vatican history.

BY DAVID J. LITAVSKY AND SAMUEL C. BAXTER

“I WAS COMPLETELY overwhelmed.” It was “beyond my imagination.” “I could not stop sobbing.” “I thought I died and went to heaven! His compassionate eyes and tender touch will always be in my heart.”

These are all answers to this question: How does it feel to be in the presence of Pope Francis? The comments appeared in *The*

*Philippine Star* before the pontiff's visit to the island nation.

Another man described his feelings while meeting the pope during a painful time in his life: “There he was, right in front of me, and I could tell him anything at all that was on my mind. And would you believe it? For the first time ever in my life, I was at a loss for words. All I could muster was ‘Mille mille grazie, Santo Papa!’ That was it! No more words would come out of my mouth! I kissed

his hand, he blessed me and looked straight into my eyes and I could literally feel my heart jump out of my chest. He had such a loving presence that, I believe, it eased [the] pain [of losing my father].”

So many people have reported similar experiences that it has been dubbed the “Francis effect.”

It has been this way since the day Jorge Mario Bergoglio was elected three years ago. The moment he, now Pope Francis, stepped onto the balcony overlooking St. Peter's Square,

■ **AMONG THE PEOPLE:** Pope Francis waves as he leaves St. Peter's Square at the end of Palm Sunday mass in Vatican City (March 20, 2016).

PHOTO: FRANCO ORIGLIA/GETTY IMAGES

the world immediately saw a difference. He wore a simple white cassock without the usual colorful, expensive vestments.

Around his neck was a modest silver cross instead of the usual gold, jewel-studded version worn by popes of the past. He forewent the red leather papal loafers in favor of black orthopedic shoes. (He is even known to wear a plastic Casio wrist watch.) He seemed simpler and plainer than his predecessors.

All of this resonated with the people. “The feeling in the square was very joyful,” an American mother, who had been there with her family that night, commented to *CBS*. “It was just electric.”

A *60 Minutes* reporter attended “one of his weekly masses, and afterwards, [Francis] spent two hours... in the crowd. By this point, basically, everyone had left. But he walked around, he spoke to about one hundred people in wheelchairs, and he stopped and really spoke to each and every one of them.”

The number of people that attended the weekly papal address in St. Peter’s Square soon tripled over the number that came during the tenure of Francis’ predecessor, Benedict XVI.

The reporter noted, “We haven’t seen a buzz like this around a person in a long time,” and explained that “this outpouring of euphoria is fueled by the hope that this new pope would finally tackle the problems bedeviling the church.”

Some leaders in the church shared the notion that Pope Francis is a revolutionary. Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York told *ABC News*: “...what we were after was a good pastor with a track record of solid administration but fatherly, warm, tender care for the sheep, for his people. And, boy, we got that on steroids with Pope Francis. He’s the world’s parish priest.”

Even the U.S. is not immune. During his tour of the nation in September 2015, as the pontiff motored his way toward the Capitol building in Washington, D.C., in the back of a small, black Fiat, the raw excitement

was audible. A *CBS* reporter commented as the car passed by: “Can you hear the crowd, cheering? Oh! There he is! There’s the pope! He waved!” With a simple wave of his hand, Pope Francis, sitting in the back seat of the compact vehicle with a steady, genuine smile on his face, electrified bystanders.

Due to his pop-culture image, Francis has been dubbed the “super pope” or “rock star pope.” Yet he has also been labeled a “progressive,” “reformer” and “true Catholic.”

*The New York Times* listed several ways the pope has changed the direction of the church and the world: he emphasizes the plight of the poor and the need for ethics in finance, criticized the church on its “obsession” with the issues of abortion and same-sex marriage, endorsed Palestine as a state, approved the creation of a Vatican tribunal to judge bishops accused of covering up sexual abuse cases within the church, and called on political figures to act to stop climate change.

Given his global diplomatic and cultural influence, 1.2 billion followers, and arguably the wealthiest organization in the world backing him up, *Forbes* named him the fourth most powerful person on Earth in 2015. The man at the helm of the largest religious force should be in the best position available to unite all people in an effort to secure lasting solutions to the world’s problems.

Yet, three years into the Vatican’s new wave of energy, has Pope Francis lived up to the pie-eyed expectations?

### **Instilling Hope**

Throughout his papacy, Francis has declared that all religions could receive salvation and all religions could work together. His words on *Vatican Radio*: “The Lord has redeemed all of us, all of us, with the Blood of Christ, all of us, not just Catholics. Everyone! ‘Father, the atheists?’ Even the atheists. Everyone!... ‘But I don’t believe, Father, I am an atheist!’ But do good: we will meet one another [in heaven].”

Expectations that the pope would actually work with other religions further materialized in February 2016

when he met and signed a declaration with Patriarch Kirill, leader of the Russian Orthodox Church—the first meeting between the two church heads in over 1,000 years. The document, which called on the world community to unite against violence and defend persecuted Christians, particularly in the Middle East, was the first of its kind.

In the declaration, which was translated and released on the Vatican’s website, the church leaders stated: “We are not competitors, but brothers, and this concept must guide all our mutual actions as well as those directed to the outside world. We urge Catholics and Orthodox in all countries to learn to live together in peace and love, and to be ‘in harmony with one another’ (Rm 15:5).”

Reporters immediately touted the groundbreaking possibilities of this meeting.

A reporter for the *National Review* stated, “The Francis-Kirill encounter could open the way to a better ecumenical future, if what follows in its wake is a genuine dialogue between Catholicism and Russian Orthodoxy about Christian witness in the 21st-century world...”

The pope also has raised hopes of increased solidarity between nations and cultures to tackle common problems—poverty, government corruption, breakdown of the family, violence and division.

During an address to the European Parliament in 2014, Francis outlined his overall vision. The translator, barely able to refrain from breaking down emotionally, carried his message: “As I speak to you today, I would like, as a pastor, to offer a message of hope and encouragement...It’s a message of hope based on the confidence that our problems can become *powerful forces for unity* in working to overcome all those fears which Europe, together with the entire world, is experiencing at the moment. It’s a message of hope in the Lord, who turns evil into good and death into life. It’s a message of encouragement to return to the firm conviction of the founders of the European Union, who

wanted a future based on the capacity to *work together in bridging divisions* and in *fostering peace and fellowship between all the peoples* of this continent” (emphasis added).

The reestablishment of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States reflected the pontiff’s ability to influence foreign policy.

In a similar fashion, Pope Francis called on the world to come together to fix environmental issues. His encyclical “*Laudato Si*” urges global solidarity on actions such as reducing greenhouse emissions and recycling. It was intended to lead “both ordinary people in their daily lives and decision-makers at the Paris U.N. climate meetings to a wholesale change of mind and heart,” according to *Deseret News*.

Prominent Rice University historian Douglas Brinkley called it a “seminal moment in world history because the pope now is the leading global voice on climate change. The pope brings extraordinary clout connecting Christianity and humanism to the protection of natural resources.”

Many Catholics hoped Francis would even reform church doctrine—such as allowing women to preach, homosexuals to become full members, standards of divorce and remarriage to be loosened, and abortion to be accepted.

When asked in July 2013 about his thoughts on homosexuals, he famously responded that if a person “seeks God and has good will, who am I to judge him?”

To this day, current and former Catholic members have clung to the hope that revision of church doctrine on this and other subjects lies ahead. While this dialogue never manifested itself in practice, it “raised expectations that other changes must surely be in the papal pipeline,” *CBS* reported.

### Nothing New

“What’s changed, really?” a *CBS* reporter asked Robert Dodaro, an early Catholic philosophy professor and priest at Rome’s Pontifical

Lateran University. The response came quick with a definitive tone: “Nothing.”

“Unless you think style is more important than content,” the priest continued, “and a lot of people do.”

Pope Francis has made clear that he has not and cannot change church teaching. In fact, he can only bring out the flavors within it that match the world’s tastes. According to Cardinal Timothy Dolan in an interview with *ABC News*: “[Pope] John the twenty-third said, ‘look, the teaching of the church is a timeless gift. You can’t change it. It’s ours, we inherit it. We’re given it. But the way we gift wrap it, the way we make it more attractive and more compelling to the

world, that can always change.’ And that’s what Francis is saying.”

In other words, Francis is a smiling new face on the same body. The Vatican has done this before.

During the First Vatican Council of 1869-1870, cardinals and bishops from around the world gathered in Rome to discuss how to respond to the rise of free-thinking movements and liberalism bred by the Industrial Revolution in the early 1800s. The consensus was to put emphasis on biblical literalism and the infallibility of the pope—giving him sole power to define church doctrine.

In the 1960s, however, with Europe still limping along after the most destructive war in history, the



■ **CONTINUED TRADITIONS:** Pope Francis celebrates mass at St. Peter’s Basilica in Vatican City (March 24, 2016).

PHOTO: PATRICK SEEGER/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Catholic Church, with its lavish customs and monarchical pope, seemed passe—irrelevant.

The Second Vatican Council, which took place from 1962 to 1965, shifted the church's focus to an emphasis on lay members and local bishops, interfaith dialogue, less central authority, and supporting the poor. Bishops around the world expressed their goal to make the church more accessible, sensible and universal in a world filled with increasing conflict, political partisanship, poverty and counterculture.

They also made clear that the church had a responsibility to reach out to other religions: "The Church, therefore, urges her sons to enter with prudence and charity into discussion and collaboration with members of other religions. Let Christians, while witnessing to their own faith and way of life, acknowledge, preserve and encourage the spiritual and moral truths found among non-Christians, also their social life and culture."

"Over the centuries many quarrels and dissensions have arisen between Christians and Muslims. The sacred Council now pleads with all to forget the past, and urges that a sincere effort be made to achieve mutual understanding; for the benefit of all men, let them together preserve and promote peace, liberty, social justice and moral values."

"Therefore, the Church reproves, as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against people or any harassment of them on the basis of their race, color, condition in life or religion" (Second Vatican Council, *Nostra Aetate* 3, October 28, 1965).

The tone of papal leaders of Vatican II (following the Second Vatican Council) reflected this new direction. Pope John Paul II fought against anti-Semitism. Benedict held friendly discussions with the Russian Orthodox Church, which had been at odds with Catholicism for centuries.

But, "Pope Francis is saying, more clearly than ever before, that Christ offered himself as a sacrifice for everyone," James Martin, a

Catholic priest, told *The Huffington Post*. "That's always been a Christian belief...But rarely do you hear it said by Catholics so forcefully, and with such evident joy."

Whatever the previous popes revolutionized, Francis epitomized. Paulo Anto Pulikkan, a Catholic priest, summed it up to the *Catholic News Agency*: "A true legacy of the Second Vatican Council is being fulfilled in the person and pontificate of Pope Francis."

On the inside, however, the church looks the same. While the pope is immensely popular—a Pew Research Center poll indicated that 80 percent of U.S. Catholics have a favorable view of him, a higher figure than any in the past—the number of those that attend mass and identify as Catholic has not changed according to the same poll. Those that came back to church hoping to hear a new message in their congregation left after hearing more of the same.

While the pope has brought a charged message of inclusiveness and hope for three years, and the church's rebranded policies have been around for over 50 years, is the church, and the world, really different? Harkening back to the interviewer's question: What has changed in the world, *really*?

### **Stark Reality**

The hope placed in Pope Francis is understandable. People see atrocities and hardships occurring around the globe and want change. For the same reason, people entrust their futures to politicians and other inspiring personalities.

A quote attributed to Catholic thinker Augustine of Hippo addresses longing for change: "Hope has two beautiful daughters; their names are Anger and Courage. Anger at the way things are, and Courage to see that they do not remain as they are."

The problem is this: things *have* remained as they are. Augustine lived over 1,500 years ago. Yes, some small, regional or temporary improvements occurred throughout the centuries, but

mankind's constant foes remain: war, prejudice, murder, poverty—the list sadly goes on.

Too often, hope is just a shallow emotional high. Also, it hides a crucial truth of humanity: MANKIND CANNOT SOLVE HIS PROBLEMS.

Let's be honest with ourselves. Despite impressive technological breakthroughs, experiments with nearly every conceivable form of government, and incredible scientific knowledge—we cannot solve our evils and ills.

This is a bitter pill to swallow! Yet it is actually the first step to true, lasting hope.

*Psychology Today* defines hope as "not just a feel-good emotion, but a dynamic cognitive motivational system." This quality leads to "growth and improvement." People who have it "are actively engaged in their learning, constantly planning strategies to meet their goals, and monitoring their progress to stay on track."

Said another way, hope has to do with having a goal *and* a plan to get there—then working to achieve the objective. Most times, people have a goal and no plan. As a result, the hope quickly fizzles.

The scientific definition is consistent with the Bible. In the Old Testament, one of the Hebrew words for hope can mean a "rope" or "line." As in, "I know the goal and how to get there. I know that if I follow this 'line'—no matter how hard the journey is—I will arrive at the desired outcome."

What should you truly hope for in a better tomorrow? And how do you get there?

The answer comes in exploring one more question. You can already see that man is incapable of improving his situation. The next question is *WHY*? Answering this will help you understand current world conditions. It also will lead you to understand your incredible purpose for being on Earth.

This information is all contained in *Why Man Cannot Solve His Problems*, written by *Real Truth* editor-in-chief David C. Pack. There is no need to cling to shallow hope—or wallow in despair. Find out the right way at [rcg.org/uun](http://rcg.org/uun). □



# Making Sense of an Earth Filled with VIOLENCE



Teen shoots family after waking him up for school—driver kills six in shooting spree—boy stabs classmate to death after she says “no” to a date—19-year-old guns down her ill mother with a shotgun, then texts a photo of the body to her father. How can you make sense of a world brimming with senseless violence?

BY SAMUEL C. BAXTER

MAY-JUNE 2016

**S** PRAWLED ON THE couch, Dad watches a knife plunge into the stomach of a gang member who coughs up blood as he dies. The father dozes in and out of sleep, bathed in the flickering light of the television.

Upstairs, his son clenches a video game controller. He navigates a Navy SEAL to stealthily dispatch a guard by snapping his neck. His younger brother watches.

The next morning, Mom leans toward the bathroom mirror, applying eyeliner. Her clock radio reports the news: *Single mother of three killed in burglary...children put in foster care*. For a fleeting moment, her heart goes out to the children left parentless by such a meaningless act, but she quickly finishes applying the makeup to stay on schedule.

She descends the stairs and crouches to tie the laces of her daughter’s shoes. By the time the girl finishes elementary school, she will have seen about 8,000 TV murders.

A bed-headed Dad sits at the kitchen table, reading the daily newspaper over a bowl of cereal. He browses the headlines—“Couple Slay 14 in Murderous Rampage,” “Man Arrested for University Rape and Kidnapping,” “African Terror Group Has Killed 20,000 Since 2009”—then turns to the sports section.

Even for such a family, violence is commonplace, though removed from the everyday. For much of the global population, however, violent acts play out daily:

■ A California teen beats a 72-year-old man with an aluminum bat—after the elderly man tripped and hit the 18-year-old’s car in a gas station parking lot.

■ A 14-year-old boy in Mexico is forced to the ground by five strong men, who proceed to kick and beat

■ **REMEMBRANCE:** Mourners light candles for the nine victims of the shooting at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina (June 18, 2015).

PHOTO: CHIP SOMODEVILLA/GETTY IMAGES

him as a heavily tattooed leader slowly counts to 13. When the men finally relent, the boy—who is unconscious and his face a bloodied pulp—is now part of the gang.

■ A preteen girl, bound and gagged, suffered regular rape at the hands of members of the Islamic State terror group. She was in captivity for 11 months.

Tragically, every nation in the world is plagued with unbridled violence. The unending barrage of brutality and bloodshed can be numbing for everyone, whether they live in war-torn Syria or Suburbia, U.S.A.

From time to time, events shake the collective consciousness—Columbine, September 11, riots and police backlash in Ferguson, Missouri, a spate of terror attacks across Europe. Such tragic occurrences elicit the question: Why is the Earth *filled* with violence?

These events are often followed by a period of self-reflection and “soul searching.” Then, amid the continuing onslaught of cruelty and viciousness, society again slowly becomes callous toward these acts and unwittingly falls into the jaded thinking that violence is a natural part of life.

Constant exposure to violence makes a person less sensitive to it, and can even lull one into thinking conditions are better than they really are.

Yet to truly make sense of a world saturated with violence, a person must shake himself awake from this slumber and take a hard look at world conditions.

### Animal Instinct?

In an attempt to explain the phenomena of violence, scientists draw the conclusion that aggression is an innate characteristic. Charles Darwin felt it was born out of an instinctual animal trait needed for self-preservation. Sigmund Freud took it further, claiming aggression is one of two basic urges of mankind, along with sex, and that many of the urges occur at an unconscious level.

These ideas have seeped into public thinking. They are found in popular novels and feature films of

today, which almost always rely on the tired themes of sex and violence. Newspapers have long known that stories with violence attract the most attention, and even formulated the maxim, “If it bleeds it leads”—the story with the highest body count will make the front page.

Religionists also buy into the thinking that violence is intrinsic to the human condition, though in a different way. Many churchgoers believe that deep down all people are essentially good and would obey God if given the chance. Yet these believe each person’s supposedly good “immortal soul” is trapped in an evil “prison house” body.

To suppress what are seen as “animalistic urges” or actions of an “evil body,” mankind has set up an intricate network of laws. In the West, much of this legislation is based on a Judeo-Christian code of morality: “Thou shalt not kill,” “Thou shalt not steal,” etc. From these simple statements come countless anti-violence laws on child abuse, rape, battery and disorderly conduct, with a law for every type of murder—first degree, second degree, manslaughter and wrongful death.

While much of this moral code is apparently pulled from the Bible, it ignores what the Book actually states about the inner workings of mankind.

Unknown to most, the Bible contains a complete map of human nature, and explains how and why widespread violence persists today. These verses, when put together, reveal the true picture of mankind.

Chapter 17 of the book of Jeremiah states, “The heart is *deceitful* above all things, and *desperately wicked*: who can know it?” (vs. 9). Take this verse at face value. Each person’s heart is *deceitful above all things*—with all things meaning ALL THINGS!—and each person is *desperately wicked*.

The epistle of James begins to explain the motivations behind widespread violence: “From whence come wars and *fightings* among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? You lust, and have not: you kill, and desire to have,





■ **CONFLICT:** Top left, Mexican students clash with riot police in the area around Mexico City's international airport while protesting government corruption and violence (Nov. 20, 2014). Middle left, Pakistani mourners carry the coffin of a victim who died from a suicide bombing that killed over 72 people in Lahore, Pakistan (March 28, 2016). Bottom left, a man holds a candle at a memorial representing solidarity following terrorist attacks that killed at least 31 in Brussels, Belgium (March 22, 2016). Top right, a woman cries near Le Petit Cambodge restaurant the day after a deadly attack occurred there in Paris, France (Nov. 14, 2015). Bottom right, a United States Marine takes position on a beach during a joint landing operation by U.S. and South Korean marines in Pohang, South Korea (March 30, 2015).

PHOTOS: ALFREDO ESTRELLA/AFP/ (TOP LEFT); ARIF ALI/AFP/ (MIDDLE LEFT); CARL COURT/ (BOTTOM LEFT); ANTOINE ANTONIOL/ (TOP RIGHT); JUNG YEON-JE/ AFP/ (BOTTOM RIGHT); GETTY IMAGES

and cannot obtain: you fight and war, yet you have not..." (4:1-2).

Human beings are driven by their lusts—what they want. They attempt to satiate their lusts by whatever means, even if it means violence. In the end, however, their lives are left empty.

These verses paint a bleak picture, and leave little hope for mankind's future. Ask: Is it really a surprise that Earth is filled with violence when deep down each person is *desperately* wicked?

### "Only Evil Continually"

It can be difficult to take an honest look at mankind because the track record is never pretty. It is a tale of murder, rape, war and vicious brutality.

There have been peaks of violence of the worst sort—ash clouds pluming from Nazi concentration camp smokestacks—conqueror Genghis Khan stating that the "greatest pleasure" in life is to chase and kill an enemy, then rape his wife—execution pyres crackling

with the bodies of "heretics" during the Middle Ages.

Modern society has entered the run-up to one of those times of peak violence, but most will not take notice.

This soon-coming period of global violence was foretold long ago in the Bible, when Jesus Christ's disciples asked what the end of the age would look like. He responded, "Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is nigh: so likewise you, when you shall see all these things, know that it [the end of the age] is near, even at the doors" (Matt. 24:32-33).

Just as one can observe when the seasons are changing by looking at the trees, certain trends and conditions outlined by Christ signal mankind has entered the last days.

In verse 37, Jesus describes one such signal: "But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

Most people know the Bible story of Noah. He built an ark and entered it, along with his family and pairs of animals. Then, it rained 40 days and 40 nights...

Yet this common retelling misses a crucial element. During that time, mankind reached one of its worst periods of violence. The book of Genesis records that before the flood, "God saw that the *wickedness* of man was great in the earth, and that *every* imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was only evil continually*" (6:5). Verse 11 states, "The earth also was corrupt before God, and *the earth was filled with violence.*"

In the days before Noah entered the ark, the entire Earth was filled with violence, with evil having free reign over the land. Yet life continued "business as usual."

Return to Matthew 24, where Jesus described the common mindset during the time of Noah: "For as in the days that were before the flood they were *eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage*, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (vs. 38-39).

A parallel account in Luke adds, "They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all" (17:27).

With a world *overrun* with violence, how could no one think anything was wrong? People began to view violence as a fact of life and believed conditions were better than they actually were.

Similar thinking prevails today.

### Hidden Violence

Definitions of violence include exertion of physical force to injure—violent treatment—intense and furious destructive action—vehement expression. All these *fill* today's world.

Yet the dictionary definition misses a huge element of violence and hides how truly pervasive it is.



■ **VIOLENCE:** Top, a member of a military wing of Hamas holds his weapon during a rally to mark the 12th anniversary of the death of Hamas spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassine in Gaza City (March 23, 2016). Bottom, Pakistani volunteers move an injured blast victim to a hospital after a bomb exploded on a bus in Peshawar, Pakistan (March 16, 2016).

PHOTOS: MAHMUD HAMS/ (TOP RIGHT); HASHAM AHMED/ (BOTTOM RIGHT); AFP/GETTY IMAGES



The Bible alone completely defines this word. The Sixth Commandment states, “Thou shalt not kill.” But this command is amplified by the words of Jesus in the New Testament: “You have heard that it was said to the men of old, ‘You shall not kill; and whoever kills shall be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be liable to the hell of fire” (Matt. 5:21-22, *Revised Standard Version*).

In other words, anger toward another person without proper cause, even when it is unsaid, is a form of murder. With this added to the definition, the picture of an “earth filled with violence” comes into panoramic view.

Think. With this expanded definition, how many *unreported* murders occur every day? Husband against wife, brother against brother, neighbor against neighbor—all in a world where people fly off the handle without notice!

### What the World Misses

This is an age of paradoxes. A suicide bomber explodes himself to kill and maim in the name of religion, and across the world a groom kisses his bride for the first time. A hotheaded brother dukes it out with his sibling over a girl, and elsewhere a father teaches his daughter to drive. A man harbors a bitter grudge against his neighbor for decades, and a 20-something tosses his graduation cap into the air at a nearby university.

These are a type of the proverbial “days of Noah,” and the Earth is awash with violence of every imaginable form. As happened before the Flood, few take note.

Societies have attempted for millennia to solve the problems of violence—not realizing the “way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings...” (Isa. 59:8). Man will continue fruitlessly trying to manufacture peace, only to bring even worse hatred and cruelty.

How can violence end? It starts with individuals realizing the extent

that violence pervades their lives, and beginning to understand there is another way to live.

Notice Christ’s words in Matthew 5: “You have heard that it has been said, You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (vs. 43-44).

Yet this cannot be done on human steam, because “the carnal mind is enmity [hostile] against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom. 8:7).

This violent, hopeless age naturally lulls people to sleep—unable to see that mankind is incredibly off-track.

God puts forth a simple instruction for those alive today: “Awake you that sleep...” (Eph. 5:14). Do not think that escape from a violence-filled Earth will come with the wave of a magic wand. It requires action!

You must admit that you are naturally hostile toward God, and can only navigate this pitch-black age through following His Law.

Notice Proverbs 6: “For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life” (vs. 23).

Do not let the day-in-day-out barrage of brutality numb you to the realities of this world. Stay alert, watch world events, and begin to “sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof” (Ezek. 9:4).

Also, “See then that you walk circumspectly [live carefully], not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:15-16).

The world was never meant to be filled with violence—and you can take comfort that it soon will not be. To understand how God will ultimately bring peace to this violence-filled Earth, read *How World Peace Will Come!* at [rcg.org/hwpwc](http://rcg.org/hwpwc). □



■ **BLOODSHED:** Top, emergency workers help victims at a site where a car bomb exploded and killed at least 27 people in Ankara, Turkey (March 13, 2016). Bottom, riot police clash with students protesting against the murder of an activist in Tegucigalpa, Honduras (March 3, 2016).

PHOTOS: ELIF SOGUT/ (TOP); ORLANDO SIERRA/AFP/ (BOTTOM); GETTY IMAGES

## Chancellor of Germany

**ANGELA MERKEL**

Throughout the years, Ms. Merkel has proven one thing: She is not to be underestimated.

**A**LL WORLD LEADERS, small and great, have a beginning—a sometimes humble origin in which if you saw him or her, you might conclude there was not much to get excited about. Early in their lives, even the greatest personages in history were inexperienced and wet behind their ears, seemingly a mere afterthought before time and events would converge to shine a bright light on them for all to see.

If you had a time machine and you used it to venture decades into the past to find Angela Merkel, you would encounter a very young Angela Kasner. And you might be amazed that someday this awkward, no-nonsense, born-and-bred German girl would one day rise to become the leader of a reunited Germany—and the de facto leader of a united Europe.

During Ms. Merkel's decade-long tenure as chancellor of Germany, she has managed to steer her nation, with the European continent in tow, through assorted quandaries. Challenges have included threats to Germany and the EU from within, such as the Greek financial crises of 2010 and 2015, and threats from neighbors such as Russia's forays into the Ukraine. The latest predicament of refugees fleeing war-torn Syria into

■ **NEW YEAR'S ADDRESS:** German Chancellor Angela Merkel speaks to the nation from the Chancellery in Berlin, Germany, during a televised New Year's address (Dec. 30, 2015).

PHOTO: UKAS MICHAEL - POOL/GETTY IMAGES

her prosperous nation is both indig-  
enous and foreign in nature.

Yet, through it all, Ms. Merkel has  
ensured that Deutschland has remained  
a force with which to be reckoned.

Ask any teacher, schoolmate and  
acquaintance from the past, and he or  
she would tell you Angela was brilliant,  
analytical, sharp—someone who always  
strove to bring calm to those around her.  
Someone who time and again would be  
underestimated as “weak” and “inef-  
fectual”—only to have those who did so  
eventually discover they were mistaken.

And all too often, they realized their  
miscalculation too late.

### **Humble Beginnings**

A shrewd politician with an analytical  
mind, Angela Merkel was born Angela  
Dorothea Kasner to Horst and Herlind  
Kasner on July 17, 1954, in Hamburg,  
West Germany. With two younger sib-  
lings, Marcus and Irene, Angela grew  
up in the small town of Templin, rough-  
ly 50 miles north of Berlin, in the  
German Democratic Republic (GDR—  
East Germany).

Partly of Polish descent via her pater-  
nal grandfather, Ms. Merkel was the  
daughter of a Lutheran pastor who held  
sympathetic views toward the GDR  
communist regime (while he believed  
in the basic idea of socialism, he did  
not appreciate the way in which it was  
implemented). The Kasner family was  
permitted certain freedoms that were  
typically denied the families of other  
Christian pastors. They were allowed  
to easily cross between East and West  
Germany, for example, and to own two  
automobiles.

Since children of clergy in East  
Germany were routinely discriminat-  
ed against, Angela Kasner’s parents  
encouraged her to join the communist  
youth organization, the Free German  
Youth. They believed it would be the  
only way that their daughter could taste  
success in life and attend university.

Though her native language  
is German, Miss Kasner learned to  
speak Russian fluently and converse in  
English as well.

As a teenager, Angela experienced  
the universal growing pains of youth.

But unlike many of her peers, she was  
never a slave to the whims of fashion  
and was never desperate to makeover  
her appearance into Hollywood glam-  
orous. Instead, she emitted a girl-next-  
door charm.

Former teachers and schoolmates  
have described young Angela as quiet,  
plain and mousy—as well as nice,  
friendly and extraordinarily intelligent.  
Her former math teacher remembered  
her as being one of his most gifted  
pupils. He stated in the *BBC* documen-  
tary “The Making of Angela Merkel  
(An Unusual Politician)”: “I don’t recall  
an example where she ever gave up.  
Surely there were moments when she  
didn’t get her goal, but when it got  
difficult and she had a task in front of  
her which asked too much, she tried to  
calculate it in reverse.”

After Nazi Germany’s defeat in  
1945, the Soviet Union and U.S.-led  
allied forces divided Germany into two  
separate states. Berlin was split into  
two zones, and people could freely  
cross into each territory. This changed  
on August 13, 1961, when communist  
troops in East Germany put up fences  
and divided Berlin. Barbed wire was  
replaced with cement blocks, and the  
infamous Berlin Wall had been erected.  
Looking back, Angela Merkel described  
this earth-shattering, historical event as  
her first political memory.

Angela Kasner learned the necessity  
of keeping her political views to herself,  
as did most people who feared draw-  
ing the attention of the Stasi, the East  
German secret police.

She attended the University of  
Leipzig and studied physics, where she  
earned her doctorate’s degree for quan-  
tum chemistry in 1978. Ms. Kasner  
then worked as a researcher at the  
Central Institute for Physical Chemistry  
of the Academy of Sciences in Berlin-  
Adlershof from 1978 to 1990, where  
she was described as a cheerful and  
open-minded person.

She married fellow physicist Ulrich  
Merkel in 1977, whom she met at uni-  
versity. Though their marriage dissolved  
in 1982, she kept her married name.  
In 1998, she wedded Joachim Sauer,  
a chemistry professor from Berlin, to

whom she has remained married ever  
since.

### **Social Revolution**

Former U.S. President Ronald Reagan  
uttered his famous declaration, “Mr.  
Gorbachev, tear down this wall!” dur-  
ing his 1987 speech at West Berlin’s  
Brandenburg Gate. Social revolution  
was in the air, and peoples in both the  
West and the East could sense it. Ms.  
Merkel, a 35-year-old physicist when  
the wall eventually fell in late 1989,  
was well aware of the commotion but  
managed to take it all in stride. Her calm  
demeanor, however, did not reflect the  
momentous transformation taking place  
in this part of the world.

By May 1989, communist Hungary  
began dismantling its border fence  
with Austria—a move which spurred  
East Germans to further desire change.  
Months later, a series of peaceful dem-  
onstrations were held in Leipzig, East  
Germany, with throngs of protesters  
growing to more than 70,000 people.  
Though everyone braced themselves for  
a violent response by the East German  
police and army, it never came. Soon  
after, the communist East German lead-  
er was forced to leave office. Crowds in  
Leipzig eventually swelled to 320,000  
people.

“East Berliners held their own pro-  
test, which would come to be known  
as the Alexanderplatz demonstration.  
Some 500,000 to 1 million Berliners  
came out to demand reform. East  
German authorities tried to subvert the  
protests, but there was little to no vio-  
lence” (“The Berlin Wall, 1961-1989:  
A Timeline of a Divided Germany,”  
*International Business Times*).

On November 9, 1989, a commu-  
nist party spokesman misunderstood  
an order regarding travel restrictions,  
and announced that East Germans were  
now free to travel directly to the west.  
His blunder triggered a mass exo-  
dus across the Berlin Wall—ultimately  
leading to the wall’s dismantlement.

“Within a few hours, thousands  
had gathered at Berlin Wall check-  
points and were demanding to be let  
through per the order” that had been  
read (*ibid.*).

When it became obvious that they could not undo the results of the miscommunicated order, checkpoint commanders allowed growing and swelling throngs to cross over. The wall that divided East and West Berlin beginning in 1961 could now easily be crossed.

Not one to act rashly, Angela Merkel continued her regular after-work routine on that historic night: She visited a sauna with a friend and then went out to treat herself to a beer. Despite her cool exterior, it was clear to Ms. Merkel that politics had become extremely important to her people—and that the two Germans would soon reunite.

East and West Germany merged into one nation on October 3, 1990. It was hoped that discord, brought on by decades of forced separation during the Cold War, would be erased by unity. Some trepidation about a strong Germany in the post-world-war era remained, however. Fearing the prospect of a newly united Germany, politicians—especially in France—struck a deal that Germany would be allowed to reunify only if it signed the Treaty of Maastricht, an agreement that created the European Union, binding Germany to its European neighbors as a deterrent to war.

Like her peers, who seized the moment to reinvent themselves, Angela Merkel decided to enter the world of politics. She joined a new political party of center-right activists known as Demokratischer Aufbruch (Democratic Awakening). She contributed by helping them unpack boxes and install computer equipment that had just been donated by their fellow politicians in West Germany.

### Climbing the Political Ladder

Angela Merkel was eventually elected to the post of deputy spokesperson for the new government, Alliance for Germany, led by Lothar de Maiziere, a lawyer and former professional viola player. Ms. Merkel is described as playing a moderating and balanced role, seeking to appease all parties. She seemed most comfortable acting in the background and had to be virtually pushed to the forefront to take on a leading role as

spokesperson. Yet she learned to rise to the occasion and immediately stood out from the cookie-cutter crowd of slick and polished politicians, who were typically obsessed with their attire and personal appearance.

In March 1990, during East Germany's first and only democratic election, Lothar de Maiziere was elected prime minister and Angela Merkel became his deputy press secretary. In a *BBC* documentary on Angela Merkel, he recalled the following memory of his protegee: "She didn't seem to care about her awkward appearance at all. She looked like a typical GDR scientist, wearing a baggy skirt...sandals and a cropped haircut. I remember coming back from our first trip and remarking to my female office manager, 'Couldn't you go out shopping for clothes with her?'" (*The Making of Angela Merkel*).

After the unification of East and West Germany, her party merged with the Christian Democratic Union Party (CDU). Ms. Merkel was elected to the Bundestag (the German parliament) and was appointed by CDU party leader and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl to his cabinet as the minister for women and youth. Next, she was appointed to serve as federal minister for environment, conservation and reactor safety. Helmut Kohl specifically wanted someone "quiet" and "female," preferably a former East German. He routinely called Ms. Merkel his "little girl."

Other German leaders have commented on the political "aikido"—a martial arts technique that redirects an opponent's moves against him—of Angela Merkel: "'At the beginning men tried to humiliate her. They were very authoritarian towards her...' [German] cabinet minister Ursula von der Leyen told the *BBC*. 'She let them have their way, she was very soft, answering in a low voice. Men couldn't cope with it at all because that was not typical behaviour. She is not pompous, she is very quiet. I think that's what people like about her'" (*Sydney Morning Herald*).

Helmut Kohl and his government saw defeat in the 1998 elections. However, Ms. Merkel became the party's secretary-general. The following year, in the

wake of a financial scandal involving Mr. Kohl, she was elected as the CDU's first female chairperson. The party at large tried to gloss over the embarrassment of the scandal and expected Ms. Merkel to follow suit. Instead, Helmut Kohl's "little girl" wrote a scathing opinion piece that was published on the front page of Germany's leading conservative newspaper, which called for her boss's immediate resignation.

Ms. Merkel lost in the 2002 general elections, but she became the leader of the conservative opposition in the lower house of the Bundestag.

Though her policies were sometimes not favored by the German population, it did not adversely affect Angela Merkel's overall popularity: the 2005 general elections saw her win the candidacy for the CDU ticket.

In a televised debate seen throughout Germany, in typical bravado fashion, political opponents did their best to belittle Ms. Merkel—attempting to portray her as weak and feckless. But Angela Merkel's careful, unassuming, calm-cool-and-collected demeanor won over the hearts and minds of the public, who did not appreciate the way in which she had been treated.

Ms. Merkel went on to defeat incumbent Chancellor Gerhard Schroder, thus accomplishing two firsts for Germany: the first female elected to chancellor and the first who grew up in East Germany.

### Receiving Acclaim

As chancellor of Germany and effectively the leader of the European Union, Angela Merkel has gained her share of honors from outside her nation. American business magazine *Forbes* ranked Ms. Merkel at the top of its list of the world's most powerful women in 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015. *Time* magazine named the German leader its 2015 "Person of the Year," and she received India's Indira Gandhi Peace Prize in 2013.

Though childless, Angela Merkel is popularly known throughout Germany by her nickname "Mutti"—mother of the nation—and is Europe's longest serving female head of government.



When the financial crisis of 2008 took hold in the United States and throughout Europe, the Merkel administration bailed out Germany's banking institutions and committed to fiscal austerity to deal with growing debt. This was a true test to her ability to bring calm and composure, a key to stabilizing financial markets.

Chancellor Merkel eventually won a second term. By 2010, under her stewardship, Germany's economy recovered faster than that of any other country in Europe. Ms. Merkel went on to help craft a bailout for Greece, holding the eurozone together. She said in a public statement: "The euro is the guarantee of a united Europe. If the euro fails, then Europe fails." And Ms. Merkel won another term to office in a landslide victory.

Ms. Merkel has proven to be bold in her leadership and not afraid to go against the grain. Back in 1994, when she became federal minister for environment, conservation and reactor safety, Ms. Merkel was a scientist at heart, believing that atomic power was the key to her country's future. But in the wake of Japan's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant disaster, during which a 9.0-magnitude earthquake and resulting tsunami triggered a nuclear meltdown and mass evacuations, Angela Merkel did an about-face.

In 2011, Germany, under her leadership, delivered a shocking statement to the world by declaring that all of the nation's nuclear power plants would be closed by 2022. This announcement made Germany the largest industrial power to move away from nuclear energy.

By changing her stance regarding nuclear power, Ms. Merkel removed ammo from her critics, especially the Green party.

In a 2013 *BBC* documentary, Ms. Merkel addressed her critics: "People often accuse me of not acting fast enough. That I let things go on too long.

For me, it's important that I deliberate all options. Different ways of doing it. Running through scenarios, and not simply theoretical experiments in my head. But I also try to live with that decision for a while. I think about it for a whole day, to see how it develops. What it will mean, what people are going to say about it, who's going to write something about it, who's going to criticize it" (*The Making of Merkel*).

Among the tough issues that brought criticism was how Ms. Merkel dealt with Russian policies regarding Ukraine. Some saw Germany's approach as initially weak, eliciting speculation that Ms. Merkel's attempts to negotiate with Moscow was a move to alienate the

Europe's refugee crisis. Ms. Merkel was bold in her declaration that "Europe needs to follow Germany's example and increase the number of asylum seekers it takes each year" (*The Western People*).

While addressing widespread fear of allowing hundreds of thousands of Muslims into Germany, she admitted that multiculturalism in her country would never work. Nonetheless, due to the gravity of the situation in Syria, she felt Germany and the rest of Europe must do all it can to open its borders.

The infamous shadow of its Nazi past (death camps, military aggression, the list goes on) still hangs over the German people. Perhaps, as some speculate, both Ms. Merkel's and Germany's embrace of foreign refugees in dire need would help absolve national guilt still lingering from World War II.

However, the German chancellor's refugee policy suffered a major setback in March 2016, as noted by *The New York Times*: "A far-right party fiercely opposed to Chancellor Angela Merkel's welcome for refugees made startling gains in three state elections in Germany... dealing the chancellor a blow as she tries to seal a deal with Turkey to reduce the influx of migrants.

"In elections that showed how strongly the refugee crisis has scrambled politics and daily life in Germany, Ms. Merkel's center-right Christian Democrats failed to wrest control of two states in western Germany where they had once been expected to do so." The outlet went on to describe Ms. Merkel as "now facing the toughest challenges of her political career."

Yet setback is nothing new to Angela Merkel. Her response will likely, as always, be the outcome of careful deliberation and resolve on her part.

Opponents, critics and supporters alike can be sure of one thing—Angela Merkel should not be underestimated. □



■ **INTERNATIONAL CLOUD:** German Chancellor Angela Merkel and United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon speak during a joint press conference in Berlin, Germany (March 8, 2016).

PHOTO: JOHN MACDOUGALL/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

West and appease Russia. Those in the German chancellor's camp would say her goal was to be patient and deliberate—avoiding a reckless response that could lead to larger conflict.

### Refugee Policy

Ms. Merkel's calming approach was also seen in 2015 when she, against her party's wishes, accepted increasing numbers of refugees seeking to escape the war-torn Middle East. She went on to urge the rest of the European Union to do the same.

Angela Merkel received high praise from Peter Sutherland, Ireland's former attorney general, for her response to

# GLOBAL POVERTY

Continued from page 6

■ In Africa, a child under age 5 dies of malaria every two minutes—about 305,000 child deaths per year (WHO).

■ Conditions are particularly bad in the countries on the southern border of the Sahara Desert stretching from Senegal to Ethiopia. In the region, one million children under 5 die each year from causes related to malnutrition, and one in four children are underweight.

## View from a Distance

In the developed world—where typical daily obstacles may include an extended wait at a red light, a slow commute, and spotty cellphone coverage—it is nearly impossible to comprehend a world where an open sewer may run past one's front door. Where a simple latrine exists nowhere near one's home. Where the most basic necessities, such as food and water, may be available tomorrow—but may not. Where going to bed hungry is a given.

Those who care enough to think about this at any length cannot help but throw up their hands and ask, "What can be done?"

This fundamental question remains unanswered in most minds: *Is there a solution?*

The Templeton Foundation posed a related question to a number of notable

figures: "Will Money Solve Africa's Development Problems?"

Dr. Donald Kaberuka, former president of the African Development Bank, replied in part: "Alone, money cannot solve Africa's development problems. Proof, if any was needed, is the fact that many of Africa's natural resource-rich countries score very low on human development indicators."

William Easterly, a professor of economics at New York University, shared the same opinion: "...after fifty years of trying and \$600 billion worth of aid-giving, with close to zero rise in living standards in Africa, I can make the case for 'No' pretty decisively. Aid advocates talk about cheap solutions like the 10-cent oral rehydration salts that would save a baby dying from diarrheal diseases, the 12-cent malaria medicine that saves someone dying from malaria, or the \$5 bed nets that keep them from getting malaria in the first place."

Despite the aid money flowing, Dr. Kaberuka wrote, millions continue to die from malaria and diarrheal diseases. Most potential malaria victims are still not sleeping under bed nets.

"Clearly, money alone does not solve problems," he stated.

## The Only Real Solution

*The Real Truth* article "The Poverty Trap – How It Will Be Eliminated!" clearly describes the solution to the

problem. It starts: "Nearly 2,000 years ago, Jesus Christ uttered words that have proven true throughout the history of man: 'For you have the poor with you always' (Mark 14:7).

"But why?"

"Philanthropists, charities, relief agencies, governments and popular movements alike have struggled to stamp out poverty. Religions of virtually every belief have called for adherents to assist the poor. In the wealthier nations of the world, food banks exist to feed the disadvantaged. Governments, from federal to local, have set up programs to house the unemployed and those who live paycheck to paycheck. The 'Great Society' of the 1960s spent multiple millions of dollars as America waged war on poverty.

"Sadly, poverty 'won.'"

"Still, the destitute living in the United States, Britain, Australia, Canada and other prosperous nations of the West nearly live like royalty in the eyes of millions trapped in the living nightmare of day-to-day existence in developing regions—developing nations in which refrigerators and indoor plumbing are practically nonexistent and brutal regimes are a way of life.

"Again, why did Christ say, 'For you have the poor with you always?'"

Read the rest of the article at [real-truth.org](http://real-truth.org) to find out the answer straight from your Bible! □



■ **WIDESPREAD SUFFERING:** Left, a boy with severe malnutrition rests in his mother's arms in a hospital in Aweil, South Sudan (Oct. 9, 2015). Middle, a woman holds a handful of rice while living in a tent camp in Carama, Burundi (June 23, 2015). Right, a homeless man warms himself alongside a fire as another man sleeps on a roadside in New Delhi, India (Jan. 7, 2015).

PHOTOS: ALBERT GONZALEZ FARRAN/AFP/ (LEFT); SPENCER PLATT/ (MIDDLE); SAJJAD HUSSAIN/AFP/ (RIGHT); GETTY IMAGES

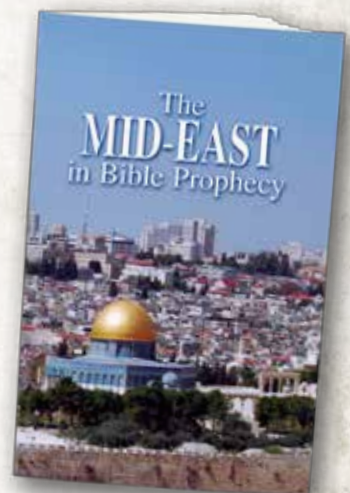


# WHY MIDDLE EAST TURMOIL?

Few understand the historical roots of the Middle East. There, nations, cultures, religions, history and politics collide—*with prophecy!* How will its problems be resolved? What does the Bible say?

Learn how the present and *future* of the Middle East play a large role in God's Master Plan for humanity, and how this region is at the center of astounding prophecies that will affect the lives of all people on Earth.

Order your free copy of *The Mid-East in Bible Prophecy* at [rcg.org/tmeibp](http://rcg.org/tmeibp).





# MAXIMIZE Your Children's Summer

Parents, TV or the Internet: Which one will guide their summer break?

BY JAMES RODRIGUEZ

**S**CHOOL IS OUT for the summer! Put the books and backpacks away! This is undoubtedly great news for children.

As adults, summertime's promise stretches out before us, with visions of anticipated relaxation and hopes for creating long-lasting memories. Each year, we look forward to special times with our families.

When school breaks for the warmer months, millions of young people find the first couple of weeks extremely satisfying. No schedule to keep, no getting up when it is still dark outside, no rushing to get ready in the morning, and no competing with brothers or sisters for time in the bathroom. *Finally, a time to simply relax and do nothing, they think.*

This becomes old fast. Soon children must channel the energy they used to get ready for school, attend seven hours of classes, and complete homework into other activities.

But how? Parents can and must do their part in answering this question.

It has been said that a family that does things together—whether it be cooking, enjoying dinner, playing games—stays together! This is even more true in the Internet age when time is easily swallowed by usage of computers and electronic devices.

With some creative thinking and planning, you can come up with or find activities that encourage family closeness, love, friendship and bonding, which will yield warm memories for years to come.

### Plan Ahead

As early as possible, examine your schedule to see what obligations you will have during the summer months. Make sure to leave plenty of free time to spend with your kids.

Similarly, think ahead with your children and set summer goals with each of them. Encourage them to write these targets down and come up with steps to implement them. This will take effort, but the rewards are well worth

it. For example, depending on the age of your children, assign a number of books to read over the summer months. They will be able to take them along on lengthy car rides or simply read them outdoors in the cool of the evening with a tall glass of lemonade.

Take advantage of good weather by exploring the outdoors. Depending where you live, there is a wide variety of things to do. Nature walks, rock collecting, hikes through trails in your area, biking, bug hunts, kite flying in your local park, or a picnic are some ideas. You can even camp out in your backyard one night and recount stories and lessons from your life. Make it a teaching moment by scheduling this when a meteor shower or lunar eclipse is to take place. Or enjoy stargazing on a clear night—picking out as many constellations as possible.

Most of all, have fun! Let your children remember their summers as a time when their parents went out of their way to go on seemingly spur-of-the-moment outings. Your children do not have to know that what appears to be spontane-

ous family fun was actually planned. Take a drive to a nearby country farm, museum, flea market, or county fair. The possibilities of places to visit are as broad as your imagination!

### Troubling Trends

Keeping your children engaged is not as simple as it once was. The evidence is overwhelming that families are under assault as never before. Work and the stresses of our hectic lives devour much of our time, often allowing someone or something else to unknowingly take our place as parents.

Technology has its benefits, yet there are related risks. People are spending more time using the Internet and less time with family. The average adult is online 20 hours per week. Those ages 16-24 spend up to 27 hours online per week.

The percentage of Americans who use the Internet has reached 84 percent, with the proportion of young adults ages 18-29 who use the Internet outpacing levels among older groups, according to Pew Research Center. But this trend of rising technology usage affects those even younger.

According to *Time*, children 9 or younger spend more time watching television than any other activity except sleep—a full 35 hours per week—nearly a full-time job’s worth! This time spent in front of the TV does not include time spent on computers, tablets and gaming consoles, which together add up to another 10 hours per week.

Generally, parents feel obligated to provide the kind of life for their children that they never had—including every material convenience that their children want. Often, both parents work and some even have two jobs to make this happen. Life has become so stressful, so demanding, that a quarter of parents admit to spending as little as 34 minutes of undistracted time per day with their children, according to *The Daily Mirror*.

Scores of studies have emerged connecting the effect of family time on the character and social development of children. In summary, the research shows that the more quality time par-

ents spend with their children, the better off the entire family. Teenagers who regularly ate dinner with their families experienced “lower rates of substance abuse, teen pregnancy and depression, as well as higher grade-point averages and self-esteem,” according to The Family Dinner Project. “Studies also indicate that dinner conversation is a more potent vocabulary-booster than reading, and the stories told around the kitchen table help our children build resilience. The icing on the cake is that regular family meals also lower the rates of obesity and eating disorders in children and adolescents.”

Of course, these gains are boosted by additional time parents spend with children during the summer months.

### Our Responsibility

Children are a most precious resource. One of the most important relationships in society is that between a parent and child. Parents have been entrusted to rear, train and develop their children into young adults.

Recognize that children need parents’ attention and loving guidance to grow into mature adults. They were made this way by a Creator who understands what His Creation needs. He pro-

vided an Instruction Manual, the Bible, to guide them in all matters, including the parent-child relationship.

Psalms 127:3 states, “Children are a heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is His reward.”

Parents have been given a gift from God to look after, treasure and care for. God considers children precious in His sight. He has given them to parents to train, mold and teach.

In fact, God commands parents in Deuteronomy 6:7 to teach their children “when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up” in the morning. In other words, parents are required to teach their children every moment they are with them. This includes being a good example.

When numerous digital distractions threaten to cheat your children out of a productive summer, you are obligated to make time for the most precious gift you have been given. What type of memories will you foster for them and their children in the years to come?

Plan ahead to ensure this summer is the most memorable, most rewarding yet. Your children will one day thank you greatly. □



## POLITICAL

Continued from page 10

The rest of the article makes a strong case that this attempt to protect young people from harmful ideas and behavior is actually damaging their ability to function in society, get along with others, and enjoy normal relationships. “It prepares them poorly for professional life, which often demands intellectual engagement with people and ideas one might find uncongenial or wrong.”

One of the core issues within the subject of political correctness is a victimization mindset. This can also be summarized as a focus on how “I” have been offended or how “I” have been mistreated or marginalized. The focus is on the *self*. The ultimate cure to political correctness is to focus on the needs of others as opposed to how you have been wronged.

### Ancient Wisdom Holds the Key

While many negative effects stem from the modern version of political correctness, it is not wrong to think about the impact your words and actions have on others. In fact, it is vital.

One ancient leader knew the importance of choosing words carefully. He was the wisest man who ever lived—the Israelite King Solomon. His father, David, undoubtedly taught him much about how to “win friends and influence people,” long before Dale Carnegie wrote the book on the subject.

Solomon was a great leader who ruled and judged Israel during many decades of peace. He built strong alliances with surrounding nations. Proverbs is filled with his wisdom, which was ultimately a gift from God. This knowledge is the key to achieving balance in this highly charged age of political correctness.

Here are just a few examples from Proverbs 10:

■ “The mouth of a righteous man is a *well of life*...” (vs. 11).

■ “Hatred stirs up strifes: but love [outgoing concern for others] covers all sins” (vs. 12).

■ “In the lips of him that has understanding WISDOM is found” (vs. 13).

■ “Wise men lay up knowledge...” (vs. 14).

■ “The mouth of the just brings forth wisdom...” (vs. 31).

■ “The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable...” (vs. 32).

The New Testament underscores the Proverbs. The apostle Paul instructed readers to “*walk in wisdom*” (Col. 4:5) and to “live peaceably with all men” (Rom. 12:18).

“Let your speech be always with *grace, seasoned with salt*, that you may know how you ought to answer every man” (Col. 4:6).

This means one should strive to use ‘oil and honey’ in his words, and be as gracious as he can.”

This of course involves being mindful of how one comes across, and how all words will be viewed by others. Purposely saying derogatory or offensive comments will not lead to living “peaceably” with all men. Christians should strive to get along with those around them, not rock the boat with incendiary comments.

Think. How many “political correctness” controversies could have been avoided if just one of the parties had followed the examples of Solomon and Paul?

Paul also wrote about the importance of being gracious and seasoning

our speech with salt: “Let your speech be always with *grace, seasoned with salt*, that you may know how you ought to answer every man” (Col. 4:6). This means one should strive to use “oil and honey” in his words, and be as gracious as he can. Paul obviously thought long and hard about what he was going to say before saying it. He would have made a habit of thinking through the implications of his words.

Finally, Paul stressed the importance of not unnecessarily offending others: “*Give none offense*, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God...” (I Cor. 10:32), and also, “*Giving no offense* in any thing...” (II Cor. 6:3).

Contrast this approach with those who publicly burn religious books to make a political statement. Or individuals who purposely use offensive words in front of those who will be offended. These types of people only fuel the flames of anger in those who advocate for political correctness.

Scripture speaks equally to those on the receiving end of offenses.

The disciple Peter asked a fundamental question central to healthy human relations: “Lord, how often should my brother sin [err] against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?” Note Jesus Christ’s response, “I say not unto you, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven” (Matt. 18:21-22). At the core of this response is an important principle that is the opposite of oversensitivity—forgiveness.

All should look more closely at the intent of others. Were they actually trying to be offensive or hurtful? If not, we should give them the benefit of the doubt and look past their comments. Even if they were purposely being offensive, having thick skin can lead to self-control and overall well-being.

Overall, exercise common sense. Think about the needs of others instead of how you have been victimized, and be an exception to the rule in this age of hyper political correctness. □

## PERSONAL

Continued from page 2

Me draw him” (John 6:44, 65). You cannot understand God’s truth unless God has drawn you—called you—to it through the power of His Spirit. The process of coming to true Christian conversion begins with a calling or drawing directly by the Father.

The parables of the talents, penny, marriage supper, 10 virgins, sheep and goats, unjust judge, fig tree, lost sheep, lost coin, prodigal son, unjust steward, Lazarus and the rich man, the good Samaritan, and others, all involve or depict a Christian entering the coming kingdom.

Time could be taken to more closely examine each parable and demonstrate this. Though some are very short, and others quite long, the purpose of most of Jesus’ parables is essentially the same—for those who follow Peter’s instruction to “grow in grace, and in...knowledge” (II Pet. 3:18), rulership in the government of God under Christ is attainable.

### The Coming Kingdom

In the sermon on the mount, Jesus said, “Seek you *first* the kingdom of God, and His righteousness” (Matt. 6:33). A Christian must always strive toward these two inseparable goals.

Notice that the **FIRST** priority is seeking the kingdom of God. But one must also develop God’s righteousness—His divine *character*. Most of Jesus’ sermon is an emphasis on **CHARACTER BUILDING** through obedience to God’s Law.

The apostle John recorded Christ’s words: “In My Father’s house are *many mansions*...I go to *prepare a place* for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, *I will come again*, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:2-3).

This bears serious examination.

First, there are many “mansions” in God’s “house.” Second, Christ is preparing people along with these mansions before He “comes again.” Third, Christians are not going where He is to be with Him—in heaven or anywhere else—because Jesus said, “I will *come*

*again*.” (Heaven has never been the reward of the saved.) The Christian is offered an inheritance of *rulership* over the Earth. Carefully read Matthew 5:5, which Jesus quotes from Psalm 37:11—stating that “the meek shall inherit the earth.”

One chapter later in John, Jesus continued, “I am the true Vine...every branch in Me that *bears not fruit* He takes away: and every branch that *bears fruit*, He purges it, that it may *bring forth more fruit*” (15:1-2). Then He added, “Bring forth much fruit!” (vs. 5), and, “Herein is My Father glorified, that you *bear much fruit*” (vs. 8). And, finally, “I have chosen you...that you should go and *bring forth fruit*” (vs. 16).

A Christian bears fruit in his life! Verse 8 goes on to explain that by doing this, “...so shall you be My disciples.” Christ identifies you as one of His disciples (and God’s begotten sons) by whether or not you bear fruit in this life!

Now we must consider some basic verses about the kingdom.

God’s pre-Flood servant Enoch (Noah’s great-grandfather) also preached about the coming kingdom of God. The book of Jude describes his message: “And Enoch also...prophesied...saying, Behold, *the LORD comes with ten thousands of His saints*, to execute judgment upon all...” (vs. 14-15).

Likewise, Daniel wrote, “But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever” (7:18). Two other places in the same chapter, verses 22 and 27, reiterate this reward for true Christians.

The book of Revelation records several places where Christ, through John, offers the kingdom to those who overcome. Notice: “And he that *overcomes*, and keeps My works unto the end, to him will *I give power over the nations*: and he shall *rule them* with a rod of iron” (2:26-27), and, “...to him that *overcomes* will I grant to sit with Me in *My throne*” (3:21).

Finally, notice Revelation 20:4-6.

Speaking of the saints, it states: “I saw *thrones*, and they sat upon them... and they lived and *reigned* with Christ a thousand years...*This is the first resurrection*...they shall be priests of God

and of Christ, and shall *reign* with Him a thousand years.”

When coupled with Revelation 5:10, it is clear that the resurrected saints become both “kings and priests” who “reign on the earth” with Christ.

This knowledge is truly special—and precious. The world does not know about God’s coming kingdom, which Jesus Christ will set up. “The god of this world” (II Cor. 4:4)—Satan—has deceived mankind. Read Revelation 12:9 to remove all doubt.

Christians are in daily training. Therefore, it is critical that they understand their “training regimen.”

### Faith and Repentance

Let’s now look at faith and repentance. We have explained that God gives His Spirit at baptism, which takes place after repentance. But how is repentance achieved? Does one just declare, by simple assertion, “I have repented”? Is this all there is to it? The answer is an emphatic *no!* It is *not* that simple.

Repentance is a *gift* from God just as much as one’s initial calling. When speaking of gentiles coming to conversion, the Bible states, “Then has God also to the Gentiles *granted repentance* unto life” (Acts 11:18), and it speaks of circumstances where God “will *give*... *repentance* to the acknowledging of the truth” (II Tim. 2:25). Finally, it explains that it is “God’s goodness” that leads people to repentance. No one “works up” repentance in order to *require* God to give them His Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

People must *seek* God and *ask* for the gift of repentance. It is not automatic and should never be treated as such. But God grants repentance to all those who seek it with their whole heart, as David did in Psalm 51. (You should take a moment to read this entire psalm.)

But exactly what does one repent of? The Bible says “all have sinned” (Rom. 3:23). What *is* sin?

I John 3:4 states that “sin is the transgression of the law.” This refers to the Law of God. The normal, fleshly or carnal mind is hostile to it (Rom. 8:7). People do not naturally obey God. Human nature *disobeys*—*breaks*—

God's Law, and does so naturally! A Christian keeps God's Law. He does not just hear it or talk about it. Notice: "For not the *hearers* of the law are just before God, but the *doers* of the law shall be justified" (Rom. 2:13).

Therefore, God will only give His Spirit to one that He has conquered—one who is willing to obey Him (Acts 5:32).

The world depicts God's Law as harsh and burdensome. But John wrote, "For this is the *love of God*, that we KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS: and His commandments are not grievous" (I John 5:3). (Also read Romans 13:10.) God's Law is called holy, just, good and spiritual (Rom. 7:12, 14), and it is through God's Spirit that one is *able* to obey God and thereby practice the love of God. Romans 5:5 states, "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts *by the Holy Spirit*."

A repentant mind has turned from its own way. It wants to follow God. It is yielded to God—yielded to His government, His authority in its life. Such a mind strives to copy Jesus Christ and produce the "*fruits of the Spirit*." Christ talked about "bearing much fruit."

He later inspired Paul to list the "fruits of the Spirit"—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance (self-control)—in Galatians 5:22-23. These become evident in the conduct of the Spirit-led—the converted—person.

The repentant mind has turned from the selfish "get" way of life to the way of "give." A Christian's entire thinking becomes transformed—CHANGED completely—to a whole new way of looking at life.

The Christian lives by faith (Heb. 10:38; Hab. 2:4). But the faith *of Christ* (Rev. 14:12), not human faith, is what makes it possible for a person to obey God. Yet the person must demonstrate an initial faith that Christ has forgiven him at baptism (Acts 2:38). It is at this moment that a Christian's prior slate of conduct has been wiped completely clean. It has become as white as snow—cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14).

This first *human* faith is then replaced by *Christ's* faith in the now converted person (Rom. 1:17).

We have seen that faith is one of the fruits of God's Spirit, which has entered into the Christian's mind at begettal—at conversion and baptism.

Do not misunderstand! God does not *owe* you His Spirit because you have exercised faith and repented. We saw the Holy Spirit is a gift (Acts 2:38). So is repentance. God's Spirit is not something that you can *earn* by your works, any more than salvation can be earned by works. Read Ephesians 2:8-9.

### True Conversion Explained

Recall that the power that comes with God's Spirit helps a person grow and overcome. Literally, this power is Christ living His life in the Christian. Without His help, the new convert gets nowhere fast! When Jesus said to "bring forth much fruit" (John 15:5), He followed it with "for without Me you can do *nothing*."

Human power—human energy—only helps a person overcome in physical areas. *Spiritual* problems cannot be conquered through physical, mental or emotional effort.

Remember, Christ is the Vine and we are the branches. Branches must be *connected* to the Vine, and this happens through God's Spirit working in a mind.

When speaking of this, Jesus said, "...out of his belly shall *flow rivers of living water*. (But this spoke He of *the Spirit*, which they that believe on Him shall receive...)" (John 7:38). As it performs good works, God's Spirit flows "out of" the Christian. Therefore, it must be replenished, or it will be depleted and disappear completely. This is why Christ said, "If you...know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit *to them that ask Him?*" (Luke 11:13). After conversion, you must regularly ask, in prayer, for more of the Holy Spirit.

Paul wrote, "I can do all things through *Christ* which *strengthens me*"

(Phil. 4:13), and, "My brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the *power of His might*" (Eph. 6:10). Jesus also said, "...with God all things are possible" (Matt. 19:26). With God's Spirit actively working and growing in you, this can be true of you!

Truly deep conversion does not occur overnight. Paul wrote to the Corinthians that they were "babes [babies] in Christ" (I Cor. 3:1). He described how they required "milk," instead of "meat," for food.

The brand new Christian is much like an infant. By analogy, he first learns to roll over, then crawl, before walking—and even then at first in an unsteady, toddling fashion. Only later does he finally learn to spiritually run.

Paul understood this. He compared conversion to running a race (I Cor. 9:24). Of course, though not right away, the runner must, at some point, develop more speed, because Paul said, "...run, that you may obtain [meaning, win]."

Such is the Christian way of life. Slow, steady growth, through daily practice, produces progress in the life of the person who is copying Christ. The new Christian sincerely strives, from the heart, to be different—to turn around and go the other way—the way of God—for the rest of his life!

### Not the Easy Way

But is the Christian's path easy? Is becoming Christ-like in character the proverbial cakewalk? Definitely not!

Let's return to the sermon on the mount for Christ's own answer. He said: "Enter you in at the *strait* [difficult] gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many there be which go in there at: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads to life, and *few* there be that [are] find[ing] it" (Matt. 7:13-14). It has always been only the few, or even *very few*, who are willing to pay the price to live this difficult way of life.

This is only half of the story on the subject of conversion. For the rest, be sure to read the free booklet *What Is True Conversion?* at [rcg.org/witc](http://rcg.org/witc). □



## WEATHER &amp; ENVIRONMENT

**NASA: Mediterranean Drought “Worst of Past 900 Years”**

An 18-year drought in the eastern Mediterranean area has been measured by NASA as the region’s worst of the past nine centuries. This includes the nations of Cyprus, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Turkey.

Data on weather patterns from AD 1100 to 2012 was determined based on measurements of the thickness of tree rings in the area. Thicker rings indicated years of plentiful water supply, while thin rings revealed years of drought.

NASA reported on its website: “Between the years 1100 and 2012, the team found droughts in the tree-ring record that corresponded to those described in historical documents written at the time. According to [lead author of the study, Ben] Cook, the range of how extreme wet or dry periods were is quite broad, but the recent drought in the Levant region, from 1998 to 2012, stands out as about 50 percent drier than the driest period in the past 500 years, and 10 to 20 percent drier than the worst drought of the past 900 years.”

The current drought has been characterized by a yearly decrease in rainfall, with some years receiving only two-thirds of expected precipitation. This problem has been compounded by population growth and an improving quality of life in some cities, which has increased the demand for water per person.

Several bodies of water, including Israel’s Sea of Galilee, have been depleted to near-irreversible levels. Israel’s Water Authority spokesman, Uri Schor, said that water levels for several aquifers in Israel have “reached a certain point that we earned much less than what we spent.”

The World Resources Institute (WRI) estimated that the Mediterranean Levant area will become the most water stressed region in the world by 2040 should the current dry spell continue.

According to a 2015 report from WRI, this could have major political consequences for the region: “With regional violence and political turmoil [in the Middle East] commanding global attention, water may seem tan-

gential. However, drought and water shortages in Syria likely contributed to the unrest that stoked the country’s 2011 civil war. Dwindling water resources and chronic mismanagement forced 1.5 million people, primarily farmers and herders, to lose their livelihoods and leave their land, move to urban areas, and magnify Syria’s general destabilization.”

In addition, the WRI reported: “Saudi Arabia’s government said its people will depend entirely on grain imports by 2016, a change from decades of growing all they need, due to fear of water-resource depletion. The U.S. National Intelligence Council wrote that water problems will put key North African and Middle Eastern countries at greater risk of instability and state failure and distract them from foreign policy engagements with the U.S.”

For more insight on drought and the developing global water scarcity crisis, read the article, “Our Water Crisis – Reversing the Irreversible,” at [realtruth.org](http://realtruth.org). □



■ **DEPLETED RESOURCE:** Fishing boats float on Lake Qaraoun, an artificial body of water in Lebanon’s Bekaa valley (April 14, 2014).

PHOTO: JOSEPH EID/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

HEALTH ISSUES

## Study: Vast Majority of Americans Are Unhealthy

Just 2.7 percent of adults in the United States perform four basic behavioral characteristics of a healthy lifestyle that would protect against heart disease, a study by researchers from Oregon State University (OSU) and the University of Mississippi concluded.

A press release from OSU explained that scientists “examined how many adults succeed in four general barometers that could help define healthy behavior: a good diet, moderate exercise, a recommended body fat percentage and being a non-smoker. It’s the basic health advice, in other

words, that doctors often give to millions of patients all over the world.

“Such characteristics are associated with a lower risk of cardiovascular disease as well as many other health problems, such as cancer and type 2 diabetes.”

Especially concerning is that the scientists kept the bar for success low.

“The behavior standards we were measuring for were pretty reasonable, not super high,” said Ellen Smit, senior author on the study and an associate professor in the OSU College of Public Health and Human

Sciences. “We weren’t looking for marathon runners.”

According to the study, which had a sample size of 4,745 people, 16 percent had three characteristics, 36.8 percent had two, 33.5 percent had one, and 11.1 percent had zero.

Ms. Smit said the findings were not encouraging from a public health perspective.

“This is pretty low, to have so few people maintaining what we would consider a healthy lifestyle,” she said. “This is sort of mind boggling. There’s clearly a lot of room for improvement.” □

WEATHER & ENVIRONMENT

## Millions of Americans at Risk for Manmade Earthquakes

Some seven million people in the United States live in areas that are vulnerable to earthquakes caused by wastewater disposal, according to a report published by the U.S. Geological Survey.

The states with areas at the highest risk of such disasters include Oklahoma, Kansas, Texas, Colorado, New Mexico, Ohio and Alabama.

Some states have experienced an increasing number of man-induced

earthquakes, many of which have been attributed to fracking (also known as hydraulic fracturing). Oklahoma, for instance, has experienced hundreds since 2009 after this practice became common in the area. Prior to this, the state had an average of two earthquakes per year.

In the fracking process, water and other fluids are injected into shale rock below the surface to free oil and gas trapped within it. However, this yields a high volume of chemical wastewater, which is disposed by pumping it into deep wells for storage.

The water often seeps into gaps or cracks within the crust, known as faults, and acts as a wedge between opposite sides of the crack.

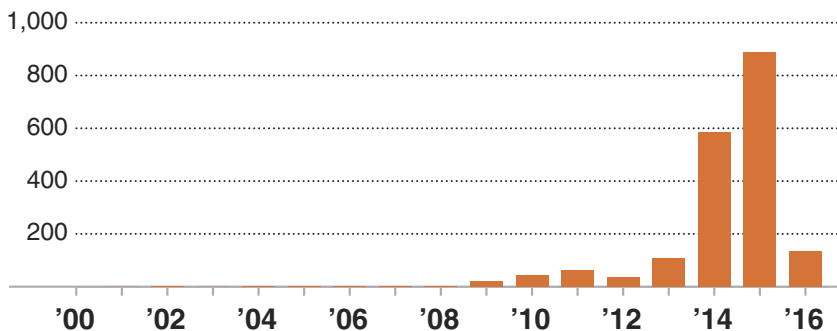
While most earthquakes caused by wastewater disposal are relatively small—in the range of magnitude 3—some have reached magnitude 5. Also, there is uncertainty as to how powerful they can become.

According to *The Washington Post*, scientists “do not know if there is an upper limit on the magnitude of induced earthquakes.” □

### Earthquakes 3.0 or Greater

Oklahoma earthquakes began rising in 2009 as an increasing amount of wastewater created by hydraulic fracturing was disposed of in underground injection wells. (Figure for 2016 is current as of March 31.)

Number of earthquakes per year



Source: USGS-NEIC ComCat & Oklahoma Geological Survey  
Graphic: Los Angeles Times/TNS

## China-U.S. Tensions Mount over South China Sea



■ **CONTESTED TERRITORY:** The cruiser USS Shiloh is anchored at Subic Bay, a former U.S. naval base in the Philippines, amid rising tensions over China's militarization in areas of the sea that are also claimed by neighboring nations (May 30, 2015).

PHOTO: ROBERT GONZAGA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Sino-U.S. relations received a blow after Washington cut an agreement with the Philippines that will allow America to station soldiers at Philippine bases in the highly disputed South China Sea.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying called the deployment of U.S. troops “harmful” to regional stability, and considered it an effort to counter China’s territorial claims over the sea. He stated during a media briefing: “The U.S. has talked about [our] militarization in the South China Sea. But can it explain whether its own increased military deployment in the region is equivalent to militarization?”

Washington said the buildup is intended to help maintain free passage of neutral trade and passenger ships, which has been threatened by China’s increasingly “assertive pursuit

of territorial claims in the South China Sea, one of the world’s busiest trade routes,” *Reuters* reported.

Beijing lays claim on most of the sea’s waters, through which \$5 trillion in trade value passes each year. Other neighbors, including Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam, often claim overlapping territory, which has led to several standoffs and Chinese military buildup in recent years.

“State Department spokesman John Kirby, a retired two-star Navy admiral, said that the United States has ‘made absolutely no bones about the fact that we take the rebalance to the Asia Pacific region very seriously,’” *The Washington Post* reported. “But he added that there is ‘nothing offensive or provocative’ about any of the Pentagon’s deployment of troops to the region.” □

## Sex Abuse Cases in Britain’s Schools Hit All-time High

The number of school sex crimes in the United Kingdom topped 5,500 during the 2012-2015 academic years—the highest wave of such incidences—according to combined data from police forces in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. One-fifth of these cases were peer-on-peer abuse, with the youngest victim and suspect 5 years old.

In addition, a study from the children’s commissioner of England suggested that 85 percent of all child sex abuse cases in the country are unreported.

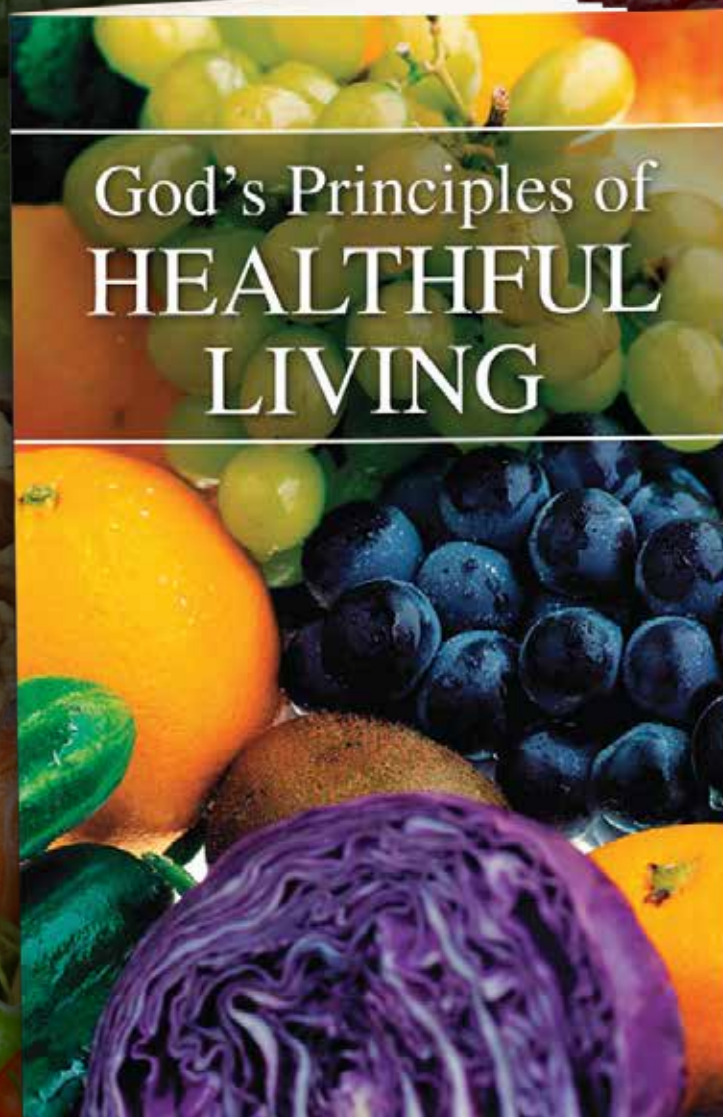
Jon Brown, head of Sexual Abuse Programs at the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), said: “These figures are very disturbing, especially as many victims are so young and the reported offences took place on school premises. Sadly, we are not surprised as previous NSPCC research has illustrated the scale of abuse committed by young people.

“We know that for some older children, accessing hardcore pornography is warping their view of what is acceptable behaviour. And the very young—those of primary school age or even younger—may be copying sexual activity they have witnessed.”

In order to combat the increasing numbers of abuse, the government is working to make child abuse reporting mandatory in all schools. □



# Learn the Keys to Health!



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