

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2018

THE

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REAL TRUTH™

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING



UNRELENTING

The New Reality of U.S. Wildfires

**What the China-U.S.
Trade War Reveals**

The Rise of
Free-range Parenting

**When There Is
“No Peace to Keep”**

Why You Should Keep Watching the
News, Even When You Are Sick of It

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REAL TRUTH[™]
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VOL. XVI | NO. 5 | SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2018

A R T I C L E S

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■ **MISSION FOR PEACE:** A Bangladeshi United Nations soldier in Gao, Mali, helps assist the Malian government in its struggle against rebels and several Islamic armed groups (March 7, 2017).

PHOTO: ALEXANDER KOERNER/GETTY IMAGES

When There Is “No Peace to Keep”

The United Nations and others have led peacekeeping efforts for decades. But in conflict zones, they are often attempting the impossible: preserve peace where none exists.

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FRONT COVER: A firefighter pauses during an operation as the Carr Fire, one of the largest wildfires in California’s history, continues to burn in Redding, California (July 27, 2018).

PHOTO: JOSH EDELSON/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

CREDITS: All photos from Getty Images unless otherwise noted. Articles on pages 4-7, 11-15, 24-25 and 32 contain information from The Associated Press.

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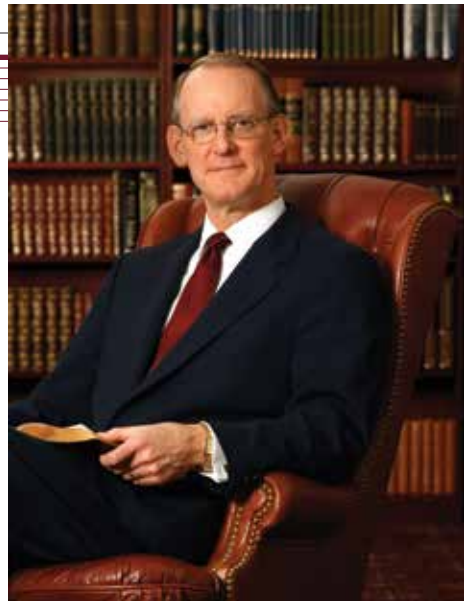
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PERSONAL FROM

David C. Fack



You Can Overcome Sin!

THROUGH THE years, I have pastored thousands who have been called to God's Way. All struggled against the pulls of the flesh and the temptations of Satan and his world. Some overcame. Others did not.

So many seem trapped, unable to overcome—to grow in areas of weakness, fault and sin. Instead of overcoming and defeating their problems, most are overcome and defeated by their problems. This need not be! You *can* overcome. This Personal reveals how.

Jesus Christ said, "Enter you in at the *strait* [difficult] gate: for wide is the gate, and broad [easy] 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 unto life, and *few* there be that find it" (Matt. 7:13-14). Most seek the easy, "broad" path.

Overcoming is hard—difficult—and a lifelong struggle. But it is possible. In fact, true Christians *must* overcome!

This world is drifting along, completely unaware of God's great purpose for man, which is to build character in this life. He is preparing a team who has qualified to help restore His government to Earth.

The Bible Pattern

The Bible is filled with accounts of God's greatest servants battling sin. In every case, they had to learn difficult, painful lessons. Examined collectively, Moses,

Noah, David, Samuel, Peter, Paul and others are seen to have fought every problem known to man.

They struggled against sins, weaknesses, faults, attitudes and temptations of the flesh. David fought sins and wrong attitudes and overcame them. Moses lacked faith and confidence, and had a temper he had to overcome. Yet he will hold high office in God's Kingdom. Both Job and Elijah fought discouragement and depression, to the point of wanting to die. But these men endured—they overcame. They slew their problems, rather than being slain by them!

These men were actively *trained* by God, and had to **OVERCOME** the temptations of Satan and his world, and the pulls of the flesh. A true Christian overcomes his problems, weaknesses, sins and wrong attitudes, rather than the other way around!

To the Overcomer

Jesus said, "He that **OVERCOMES**, and keeps My works unto the end, to him [no one else] will I give *power over the nations*: and he shall *rule them* with a rod of iron" (Rev. 2:26-27), and added, "To him that **OVERCOMES** will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, *even as I also overcame*, and am set down with My Father in His throne" (3:21).

When God re-establishes His government over all nations of Earth, Christians will receive real power to rule. But first they must overcome.

Christians follow—they copy—Christ (I Pet. 2:21). What is the pattern He established for them?

Referencing His own struggle to remain free of sin and perfect in character, Jesus said, “In the world you shall have tribulation [so very true!]; but be of good cheer; I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD” (John 16:33). Christ had overcome both the world and its god—Satan (II Cor. 4:4) and qualified to rule. Just as He qualified to replace Satan, so must all Christians!

Such enormous power to rule could never be given to people who are unprepared—who have not qualified to properly use it. God will not hand great authority to people who might rebel and revert to Satan’s ways. God’s servants must use this life to build His very character, so necessary for those holding offices of authority.

Experienced in Sin

Understand! You have been yielding to the flesh and Satan’s way your entire life. You have probably become *very good* at both. Believe me, as you strive to overcome and resist the pulls at work within you, you will find that wrong patterns of conduct are “second nature” to you—more than you know! Left unchecked, human nature consists of vanity, jealousy, lust, greed, envy, resentment, hatred, anger, pride, rebellion, foolishness, deceit and hostility toward God. This is what you have been practicing—possibly for decades.

Overcoming will not be easy or happen overnight. It is a lifelong struggle against well-established attitudes and a former way of life the Christian has now rejected and turned from. The one who is walking God’s path is striving to curb and *withhold* himself wherever God’s Word instructs. He strives to *exercise* himself in all matters where God says to do so. When God gives instruction to do something, he strives to do it! When God instructs *not* to do something, he strives *not* to do it!

Learning this takes a lifetime. But remember: building character is why you were born. Your job is to put off the fleshly pulls of human nature, and to put on the character of God and

Christ (Col. 3:8-13). Though not easy, the reward is great.

God looks on intent. It is your overall desire and motivation that is important to Him. He wants to know if, after you sin, you are sorry for it and are determined to do better. He understands the temptations that beset us even better than we do. He watches to see if we will be sober and vigilant as we root sin from our lives. Will we carelessly fall back into old patterns? Will we try to overcome on human strength alone?

God’s Power at Conversion

A Christian has God’s Holy Spirit. Acts 2:38 shows it enters at repentance and baptism. It is this Spirit in a converted mind that empowers one with the strength to change what human steam alone cannot. Notice: “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).

The Greek word for power is *dunamis*. It means “miraculous power” or “force.” At conversion, a Christian is given real power! This power establishes the righteousness of God within one’s character. One must draw upon the strength from God’s Spirit to successfully overcome. This strength is unlimited and sufficient to defeat any sin, problem or attitude—no matter how large and daunting such may appear!

But make no mistake. Christians do not build their *own righteousness*. This does not impress God. He sees it as so many “filthy rags” (Isa. 64:6). The apostle Paul wrote of his Christian hope to “be found in Him, *not having my own righteousness*, which is of the law, but that which is *through the faith of Christ*, THE RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH IS OF GOD BY FAITH” (Phil. 3:9).

Role of Faith

Exactly what role does faith play? It does play a role, but how? Ephesians states, “For by grace are you saved *through faith*; and that [the faith] not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man

should boast” (2:8-9). The faith of Christ in us is a gift. And salvation comes as a gift, *by grace—through faith!* But even the faith must be a gift. Otherwise, it would be a work generated by human effort. My booklet *What Is Real Faith?* (rcg.org/wirf) carefully explains this subject.

It is the very faith of Christ that works in a Christian. But grasp this. It *does* assist in performing works in all those with God’s Spirit. They expect God’s help.

Virtually all theologians, religionists and churchmen stop reading after Ephesians 2:8-9 and ignore the crucial verse 10: “For we are *His workmanship*, created in Christ Jesus *unto good works*, which God has before ordained that we should *walk in them*.”

Christ at Work

Quite literally, Jesus Christ lives His life in the Christian. Without His help, one will get nowhere—fast!

Jesus said to bring “forth much fruit,” and then, “...without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). Human power only helps a person overcome in *physical* areas. SPIRITUAL problems cannot be conquered through *physical* effort. Christ is the Vine and Christians are the branches (John 15:5)—branches must be *connected* to the Vine. This happens through God’s Spirit working in your mind.

Paul wrote, “...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 also be true of you!

Remember! Deep conversion does not occur overnight. Paul wrote that some were “babes [babies] in Christ” (I Cor. 3:1). He described how they required spiritual “milk,” instead of “meat” (vs. 2). The brand new Christian is much like an infant. By analogy, he first learns to roll over, then crawl, before walking (and, at

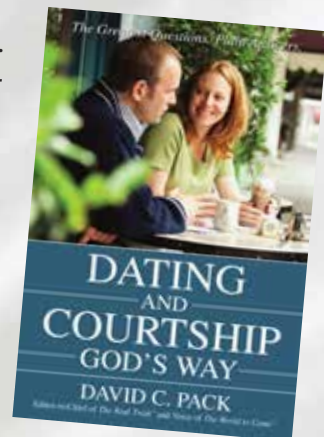
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How do I get to “I do”?

The path to getting married can be complicated. On average, a person will experience four disastrous dates, be in eight relationships, will have “fallen in love” twice, and will be heartbroken two times before settling down.

But this is not what God intended! Order your free copy of *Dating and Courtship – God’s Way* to learn straight from the Bible how to practice successful dating—free from heartbreak—and to prepare for a successful marriage.



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WHAT THE CHINA-U.S.

A trade war between the world's two biggest economies could spell disaster. Beneath the tariff battle, however, Washington and Beijing have a fundamental conflict of interests.

BY DAVID J. LITAVSKY

WHERE THERE IS war, there are casualties. And when it comes to the two largest economies butting heads over trade superiority, every country in the world can only hope to dodge the stray bullets zipping across no man's land.

The tit-for-tat tariffs between the United States and China has continued to ratchet up toward a full-out trade war through the summer. It began with U.S. President Donald Trump's first step toward his goal of reducing the trade gap with China by imposing a 30 percent tax on solar panels—China produces two-thirds of the world's solar panels. Soon after, Washington slapped tariffs on Chinese steel and aluminum.

China retaliated by placing taxes on \$2.4 billion in American exports, specifically those that would affect farmers.

Back and forth, the tax-slapping continued: Washington added taxes to everything from Chinese parachutes to sardines; Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang warned that Beijing will defend its "lawful rights and interests" with a return strike on a wider range of U.S. goods.

Public fears were stoked throughout the months-long ordeal, as both China and Europe—and the news media day after day—warned that an all-out trade war would trigger another global recession like the 2008 Financial Crisis. Further, Chinese authorities warned that if the dispute escalated, they would adopt unspecified "comprehensive measures." That prompted concern among American companies that retaliation might expand to disrupting their operations in China.

Indeed, the world economy is at the mercy of these two nations, whose markets make up almost 40 percent of the global GDP.

Yet the outcome of the battle is largely uncertain. On one side, some economists proclaimed U.S. economic growth as proof it was winning. New York-based managing director of global markets research for FTSE Russell stated to *USA Today*: "There's a lot of ways to judge this, and I expect a lot of twists and turns, but if we just look through the lens of the market, we've seen a much stronger U.S. stock performance."

On the other side, some pointed out that the trade war will hurt Washington and politically bolster Beijing, even though the U.S. is likely to win.

Forbes reported that the tariffs "hurt U.S. consumers" and reduce the competitiveness of domestic markets. It also suggested that the

TRADE WAR REVEALS

tariffs “are a side-show”—a “camouflage” for China’s government to continue running the market communist style, which tends to incur losses.

Indeed, beyond the media brouhaha, the U.S.-China trade war is merely one result of much deeper, longstanding differences.

Quiet Cold War

One top CIA expert on Asia said he believes China is waging a “quiet kind of cold war” against the U.S., using all its resources to try to replace America as the leading power in the world.

Beijing does not want to go to war, he said, but the current communist government, under President Xi Jinping, is subtly working on multiple fronts to undermine the U.S. in ways that are different from the more well-publicized activities being employed by Russia.

“I would argue...that what they’re waging against us is fundamentally a cold war—a cold war not like we saw during THE Cold War [between the U.S. and the Soviet Union] but a cold war by definition,” Michael Collins, deputy assistant director of the CIA’s East Asia mission center, said at the Aspen Security Forum in Colorado.

There is concern over China’s pervasive efforts to steal business secrets and details about high-tech research being conducted in the U.S. The Chinese military is expanding and being modernized and the U.S., as well as other nations, have complained about China’s construction of military outposts on islands in the South China Sea.

“I would argue that it’s the Crimea of the East,” Mr. Collins said, referring to Russia’s brash annexation of Ukraine’s Crimean Peninsula, which was condemned throughout the West.

Mr. Collins’ comments track warnings about China’s rising influence issued by others.

FBI Director Christopher Wray said China, from a counterintelligence perspective, represents the broadest and most significant threat America faces. He said the FBI has economic espionage investigations in all 50 states that can be traced back to China.

“The volume of it. The pervasiveness of it. The significance of it is something that I think this country cannot underestimate,” Mr. Wray said.

National Intelligence Director Dan Coats also warned of rising Chinese aggression. In particular, he said, the U.S. must stand strong against China’s effort to steal business secrets and academic research.

Susan Thornton, acting assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, said increasing the public’s awareness about the activities of the hundreds of thousands of Chinese students or groups at U.S. universities could be one way to help mitigate potential damage.

“China is not just a footnote to what we’re dealing with with Russia,” Ms. Thornton said.

Marcel Lettre, former undersecretary of defense for intelligence, said China has the second-largest defense budget in the world, the

PHOTOS: NICOLAS AFOURI-POOL/ (LEFT); BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI/AFP/ (RIGHT); GETTY IMAGES



largest standing army of ground forces, the third-largest air force and a navy of 300 ships and more than 60 submarines.

“All of this is in the process of being modernized and upgraded,” said Mr. Lettre.

He said China also is pursuing advances in cyber, artificial intelligence, engineering and technology, counter-space, anti-satellite capabilities and hypersonic glide weapons. Army Lieutenant General Robert Ashley, head of the Defense Intelligence Agency, told a congressional committee earlier this year that China is developing long-range cruise missiles—some capable of reaching supersonic speeds.

“The Pentagon has noted that the Chinese have already pursued a test program that has had 20 times more tests than the U.S. has,” Mr. Lettre said.

Century of Humiliation

To understand why Beijing is pushing toward expansion and fighting back against the U.S., it is vital to know the history of Sino-American relations.

The New York Times explained through the lens of a resident of the French Concession, “a leafy part of Shanghai whose name itself carries the humiliation of China’s biggest trade war. The ‘concession’ itself was one of many slices of territory, including Hong Kong and parts of other port cities, that China was forced to hand over to foreign powers after its defeat in the mid-19th-century Opium Wars. ‘China was so weak and backward then,’ [Ye Fangsu, a retired schoolteacher,] said...”

The article added that “for many Chinese, there’s a sense of history repeating itself. The Opium Wars, as every Chinese schoolchild is reminded, began as a British attempt to pry open the Chinese market. Much as it does today, China in the 17th and 18th centuries ran a huge trade surplus with the West, exporting large quantities of tea, porcelain and silk but importing little in return...By hooking China on opium, British and American mer-



“To understand why Beijing is pushing toward expansion and fighting back against the U.S., it is vital to know the history of Sino-American relations.”

chants redressed the trade imbalance even as they weakened the country’s social fabric. The Chinese revolted, but they were no match for Western gunboats—leading to the unequal treaties that have fueled China’s sense of historical grievance and patriotic ambitions ever since.”

This sense of grievance gave rise to Communist China in 1949, when Mao Zedong ousted the government and vowed a revolution that would bring an end to the “century of humiliation.”

In the following decades, China painted the U.S. as its arch-enemy.

Diplomatic relations were cut off. During the Korean War, Chinese soldiers flooded into North Korea and fought when UN, U.S. and South Korean troops advanced toward the border. China also amassed its army along its border with Vietnam during America’s involvement in the conflict there. The U.S. threatened to drop a nuclear bomb on China in 1955; Mao in effect retaliated by initiating the development of atomic weapons to assert the “national will” and stand up to the U.S.

It was not until a split in China-Soviet relations in 1969 that put Moscow in front of Washington as China’s biggest threat. This led to reconciliation with the U.S. in the early 1970s, beginning with allowing journalists to enter the Asian nation for the first time in more than two decades.

President Richard Nixon’s visit in 1972 officially restarted diplomacy. During the trip, Nixon acknowledged differences, but suggested the two could move together on “parallel highways” toward the same goal of peace.

In 1979, President Jimmy Carter granted China full diplomatic recognition and the turn of the century brought deeper trade relations. Beijing was granted permanent normal trade relations with the U.S., joined the World Trade Organization in 2001, and in 2006 surpassed Mexico as America’s second-biggest trade partner, exceeded only by Canada.

Between 1980 and 2006, U.S.-China trade expanded from \$5 billion to \$231 billion, and China’s economic growth exploded during this period.

However, animosity never truly disappeared as Beijing has used this prosperity to work toward its longstanding dream of becoming a superpower.

Butting Heads

The determination to rise above Western dominance lives on today through the efforts of President Xi.

■ Workers check the quality of newly manufactured wind turbine blades at a factory in Lianyungang in China’s eastern Jiangsu province (July 31, 2018).

PHOTO: AFP/GETTY IMAGES

He adopted the motto “China dream” in 2012 when coming into power, an ethos that Beijing aims to result in the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.”

This “rejuvenation” included constitutional reforms that allow President Xi to rule for life, as well as a crackdown on political rivals and separatists.

Mr. Xi has also put China’s military through its biggest overhaul since the 1950s, including the launching of a second aircraft carrier to bolster its dominance in the highly contested South China Sea.

Financial Times reported: “As well as turning China into a prosperous, technologically advanced nation, the ‘dream’ requires Taiwan, which Beijing insists is its territory, to be ‘reunified.’ It also requires Hong Kong, which was guaranteed a ‘high degree of autonomy’ for 50 years after the 1997 handover from the UK, to be integrated into the mainland.”

According to *Bloomberg* reporter Ting Shi, President Xi “has this great belief China totally deserves to restore its place in the world.”

For many Chinese people, aware of the nation’s beleaguered past, the reforms and developments have been a long time coming.

But none of this is sunshine and roses for Washington. President Xi’s removal of term limits and purges are eerie callbacks to communist-era strongmen like Mao Zedong and Joseph Stalin. Of course, Beijing’s increasingly aggressive activity in the South China Sea and its stated desire to repossess Taiwan are clear threats to American interests in the region—from trade security to the protection of democratic governments.

Long-term Planning

“At some point, Chinese leaders may want to get nationalistic and stir up anger against U.S. companies, but that’s a dangerous road,” James McGregor, chairman of the greater China region for the consulting firm APCO Worldwide, told *The New York Times* in its article “When It Comes

to a Trade War, China Takes the Long View.”

He continued: “Right now, Chinese leaders are just studying the battlefield. They are not running around with shock and awe.”

In addition to the trade war, Chinese take the long-term view in all other aspects of their relationship with the U.S. An *Economist* article described how the 19th century Opium Wars continue to shape China’s view of the West today, though those conflicts are largely forgotten in Britain and America.

“From the British point of view, [the battles] were minor compared with those of the 20th century,” the publication stated. “And they are on the other side of the peak and decline of Britain’s imperial power, which has tended to obscure them from view. But China has not forgotten the Opium Wars. The conflicts were a humiliation, exposing the hollowness of its claims to be the world’s most powerful empire. They set it on a quest, which continues to this day, to rediscover its strength.”

Chinese schoolchildren are taught this history: It is practically obligatory for them to make pilgrimages to sites that showcase examples of Western aggression. For example, the ruins of the Summer Palace in Shanghai—which was destroyed by British and French troops during the second Opium War—was memorialized by the Communist Party as a “national base for patriotic education,” along with 428 other such sites across the country.

Contrast this with how Americans view history. Less than 25 percent of Americans age 18 or older visited a historical park or monument in 2012.

Most schoolchildren or college students never visit Pearl Harbor, the World Trade Center in New York City, or significant monuments in the capital memorializing events that have shaped our history.

As a result, the events do not make an emotional and psychological impact, or are at worst completely forgotten. One university student explained in *Perspectives on History* the impact of visiting the Civil War battlefield in

Gettysburg: “As we toured the battlefield, I realized that visiting historical sites can not only enrich our understanding of a particular historical event, but it can also allow us to engage with history in a way that provides greater local contextualization and a visceral connection to the people who lived through it.” He also said it helped him “develop a deeper appreciation of the significance of the battle and the Civil War to American history and identity.”

In the same way, Chinese people who are more deeply in touch with their history still carry the intentions, motivations and emotions of generations past. *The Diplomat* explained: “Part of what is happening now derives naturally enough from the trajectory of any rising power—or a power that after years of investment and work is feeling like its time has come.”

Millennia of investment and work.

Despite China hosting the world’s largest population, as well as a history of accomplishments in navigation and technology that came centuries before Europe’s Industrial Revolution, it was America and Britain that helped bring about the Asian giant’s dynastical demise. Think about the U.S. specifically, a nation born merely in the 18th century that catapulted almost immediately to global acclaim and power.

It would seem only natural that China would hold on to a “we were here first” and “we bore the heat of the day” mentality.

But what few understand is Americans themselves have an ancient history, one that has been memorialized. Yet part of the reason we have forgotten this crucial aspect of our past is very few actually take the time to look at this memorial—even though it is easily accessible.

That memorial, the Bible, contains our ancient history. Read *America and Britain in Prophecy* at rcg.org/aabibp to learn more about the incredible historical roots of today’s preeminent superpower. It details the reason for the United States’ unprecedented rise to power, as well as the success all nations—including China—will enjoy in the future. □

HUMAN SUFFERING, EARTHQUAKES
ILLITERACY, CORRUPTION, TERROR
DISEASES, POLITICAL UPHEAVALS
FIRES, WHY YOU UNREST, CHAOS
CRIME, SHOULD KEEP VOLCANOES
FLOOD, WATCHING THE NEWS,
DRUGS, EVEN WHEN YOU ARE WAR
GANGS, SICK OF IT
DROUGHTS, POLLUTION, TURMOILS
SCANDALS, DISASTERS, POVERTY
PERVERSION, OVERPOPULATION
COMMOTIONS, REVOLUTIONS

Here is why you do not want to become another statistic of news fatigue.

THERE IS AN ever-growing feeling toward the news these days. Call it what you may: burnout, numbness, strain, desensitization or outright apathy.

In the United States, people who feel overwhelmed by the 24/7

news cycle significantly outnumber those who are comfortable with it. According to a 2018 survey by the Pew Research Center, nearly “seven-in-ten Americans (68%) feel worn out by the amount of news there is these days, compared

with only three-in-ten who say they like the amount of news they get.”

The little positive news we hear from time to time is not what is causing this. It is the unyielding avalanche of *bad* news that is nauseating citizens. There seems to be no end of headlines about political investiga-

tions, weather disasters, wars, terrorist attacks, tariffs, racial division, antibiotic-resistant superbugs, or whatever end-of-the-world scenario someone concocts.

As if that list was not bad enough, there has lately been a fresh wave of “post-truth,” untrue or fake news.

Another Pew study added to this: “Nearly two-thirds of U.S. adults (64%) say fabricated news stories cause a great deal of confusion about the basic facts of current issues and events. About a third of U.S. adults (32%) say they often see made-up political news online, while 39% sometimes see such stories and 26% hardly ever or never do. About half (51%) say they often see political news online that is at least somewhat inaccurate—a higher proportion than those who say they see news that is almost completely made up (32%).”

Of course, not all bad news is fake. But surely all fake news is bad, indeed *worse* than bad—it takes bad news fatigue to a whole new level of unbearableness.

There is also a perception of more news bias than ever before. A Gallup poll revealed that 66 percent of Americans feel news outlets do not do a good job separating fact from opinion. Realize 42 percent felt this way in 1984.

With all of this, you may just throw up your hands and disconnect—especially if you live in an affluent nation. In the West’s current booming economy, many enjoy relatively worry-free lives almost completely shielded from depressing news.

An unsound sense of security can set in. If negative events are not directly affecting you, it can be easy to think: “Why not save ourselves all that agony and just enjoy life? Why stress so much?”

Others swamped with busyness tend to think they have no time to keep up with current events and assume it is just “same old, same old.”

Day in and day out, newspapers, television anchors, internet sites and radio talk-show hosts deliver an endless stream of bad news. The cacoph-

ony can make you struggle to care about the latest earthquake, the latest political scandal, the child soldiers in central Africa, the impoverished families in your city...

This is news fatigue. While it is tempting to tune it all out, looking away from the madness can be more harmful than you realize.

Tuned-out Audience

For decades, David T. Z. Mindich has seen the dangerous trend of completely tuning out from the news. In his book, *Tuned Out: Why Americans Under 40 Don't Follow the News*, he stated, “Older Americans are still reading newspapers and have been doing it all their lives. But the generational shift is severe: While more than 70 percent of older Americans read a newspaper every day, a habit they picked up in their youth, less than 20 percent of young Americans do so now...It used to be that most 25-year-olds, and certainly 35-year-olds, followed the news. But for the past few decades, most have not. Eighty percent of young people don’t read the newspaper today, and there is no evidence that they will read 20 years from now, either.

“It would be less troubling if the 80 percent of young people who do not read newspapers every day watched TV news or logged on to news Web sites. Most don’t.”

Mr. Mindich highlighted a sobering result: “While young Americans

“You do not want to be oblivious. Those who tune out lose sight of the fact that stories are made of real, life-altering events happening to real people.”

in past decades knew as much as their elders on a range of topics, this is no longer the case.”

Some years ago, the experience of a writer for *The Australian* proved Mr. Mindich’s worst fears had become reality: “The anniversary of the [2011] Christchurch earthquake reminded me that 48 hours after the disaster last year I asked my 17-year-old daughter, if she had any thoughts for her fellow Anzacs.

“She looked at me unknowingly.

“‘Are you aware,’ I said, ‘that your Kiwi brothers and sisters in the city of Christchurch have experienced a very serious earthquake which has devastated much of the city, and killed quite a number of its citizens?’ She continued to look at me quizzically.

“At this point I got angry. Not so much at her, but at the media life she leads. No newspapers, no evening news, no current affairs, no non-music radio...nothing that would provide a clue to any events that one would think should be of general interest.”

Not sure about his daughter’s ability to come out of her clueless state, the writer provided a diagnosis: “She is a monomedia consumer. Facebook seemingly provides her with all she needs to know.”

Yet younger generations are not the only monomedia consumers. Older adults are now also succumbing to this trend.

You do not want to be oblivious. Those who tune out lose sight of the fact that stories are made of real, life-altering events happening to real people.

Finding Meaning

For thousands of years, devastating events have occurred: the September 11 attacks, atrocities during World War I and II, the Great Depression, the Great Potato Famine, the Bubonic Plague, the Crusades, among others. Dead Sea core data even suggests evidence of ancient natural disasters comparable to mega-earthquakes.

“Looking farther back, one of the seismically active eras revealed by the core samples appears to have been

about 4,000 years ago,” a researcher told *National Geographic*. “If you believe the biblical chronology, this is roughly [the time of] Sodom and Gomorrah,” he said. “During this period, according to the Book of Genesis, God ‘rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed all.’”

Regular readers of *The Real Truth* know we use biblical principles to explain current events and trends going on in the world. Using God’s Word as a lens to make sense of a confusing world is one crucial way to defeat news fatigue.

The Bible, itself a historical book, accurately documents that for millennia mankind has been unable to stop the tide of bad news.

The apostle Peter described how a man named Lot, while living in the same cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, was “vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds)” (II Pet. 2:6-8). This means Lot made himself watch what was going on around him, no matter how painful. He forced himself to tune in to the bad news of his day.

The story of Lot in Genesis details that his conduct allowed him to be accounted worthy of deliverance. Only he and his daughters escaped a fiery disaster that destroyed those famous ancient cities.

Jesus Christ spoke of a similar time to come in the book of Luke. But instead of a localized disaster, He spoke of global trends: “When you shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by” (21:9).

Christ described a tumultuous period of history to come before “the end.”

He said it would be a time of WAR—whether that be Syria, Israel and Iran, trade wars and so on. He also said it would be a time of COMMOTIONS—such as unpredictable wildfires in California and Greece, Venezuela’s economic collapse, volcanoes going off in Hawaii and Guatemala, gang

violence in Chicago, more than 31,000 people slayed in Mexico in 2017, immigration crises, and so on. He also told His audience to not give in to TERROR, which alludes to terrorist attacks or even the threat of an attack from a rogue nuclear state.

Though Jesus was talking to his followers almost 2,000 years ago about “these things,” the rush of bad news He foretold *did not come in their time*. It is coming ON US, and it is looking more and more exactly as He described it.

Think. Almost 2,000 years ago, people did not have access to the news as we do now. There were no ancient newspapers, magazines, cellphones, TV, radio, or internet they could tap into for their daily news. How could they fully watch all that was going on around them?

Those cues had to be meant for *those who would read His instruction today*, in the context of what would be happening all around them. This means US!

Yet those who are hiding themselves from the news deluge are missing out on this *crucial* knowledge! Detecting Bible prophecy being fulfilled is what can motivate you to escape the far worse news that is coming.

Whether you are a novice news watcher or have succumbed to fatigue and want to change, there is a tool just for you.

How to Stay Alert

The writers and editors of the magazine you are reading understand—BELIEVE—Luke 21:9. We write relentlessly because the Bible foretold the tumultuous period occurring today. More important, God’s Word describes what is “the end” and how watching for it is vital. *The Real Truth* magazine is designed to help you do this!

Understanding the why behind current events should help you wake up and pay serious attention to the news with a sense of urgency—all while resisting the urge to tune it all out.

As sickening as the news can be, do not allow yourself to give in to the

tendency to tune out, stop listening, or forget what is occurring around you.

Recall the Pew study that showed almost 70 percent of Americans feel worn out by bad news. According to the same study, the overwhelming feeling “is more common among those who follow the news less closely than among those who are avid consumers.”

In other words, the more superficially you watch, the more overwhelmed you will feel!

Many major headlines contain minimal meaning. Political catfights and severe overreactions to current events are two examples. These tabloid tactics are meant to hold people’s attention. Often such stories come with political motives that intentionally get people emotionally charged.

If you are a casual news watcher, it means these are pretty much the only stories you will see. It is easy to get sick of them!

By digging a little deeper, you will be more informed on the news topics and more easily see past the political drama.

Also, watching with “the end” in mind will give you clarity, vision and hope.

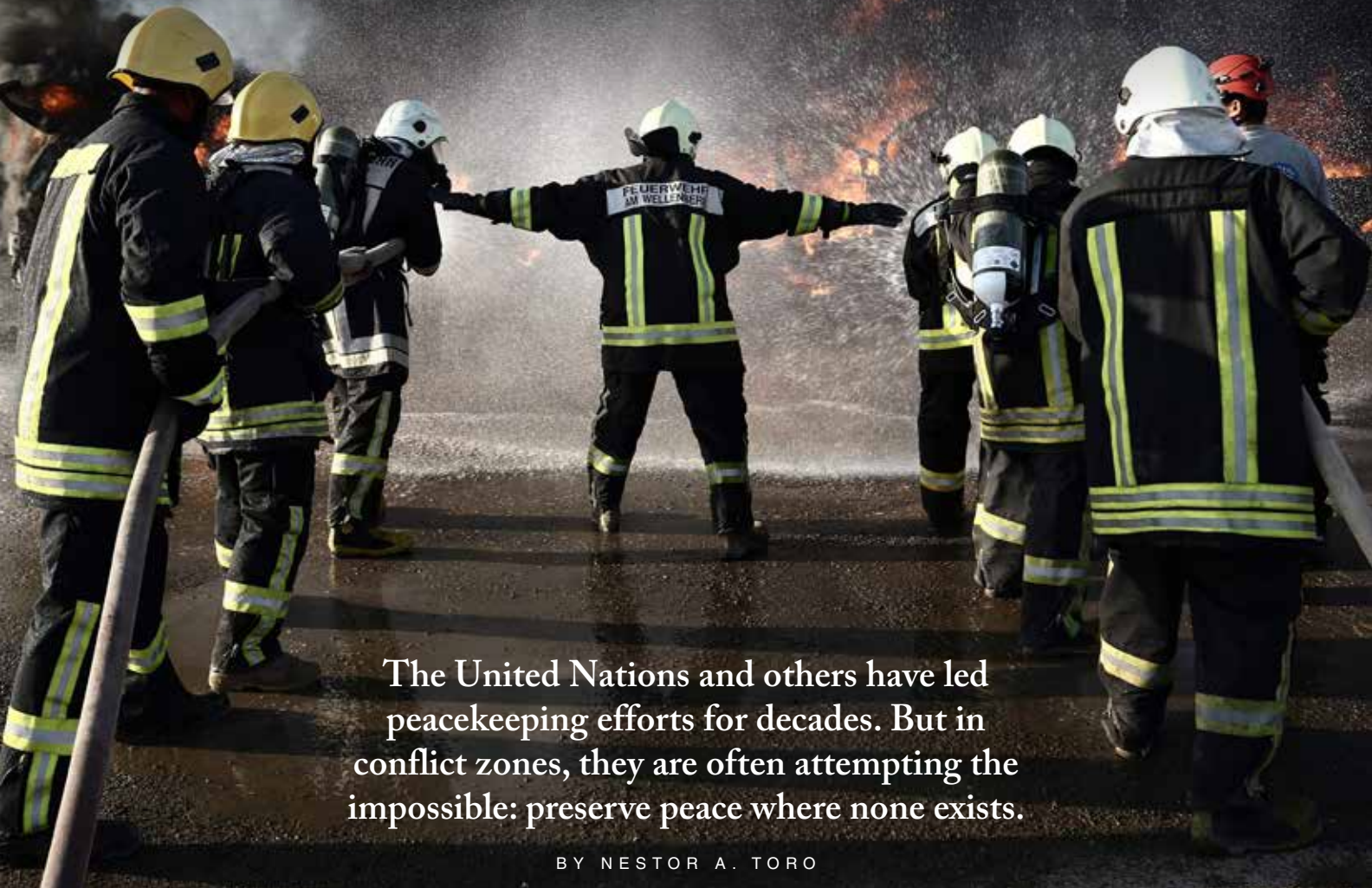
Start by educating yourself about what is “the end”—the very best news beyond the negative news occurring today. (Read *What Is the Kingdom of God?* at rcg.org/witkog to learn more.)

The Bible has much more to say on news events happening today, prior to “the end.” Knowing more about *why* world events are occurring will give true meaning to global trends and conditions. Also, using Bible prophecy as a guide, you can know what to watch—and what not to!

For a fuller understanding of soon-coming Bible prophecies, be sure to continue reading *The Real Truth* magazine. Also, check in to our website at rcg.org/realtruth for daily news postings.

You do not need to be another victim of news fatigue. We can help you understand the *why* behind the headlines and make sense of all this awful news! □

WHEN THERE IS “NO PEACE TO KEEP”



The United Nations and others have led peacekeeping efforts for decades. But in conflict zones, they are often attempting the impossible: preserve peace where none exists.

BY NESTOR A. TORO

THOUSANDS OF Bosnian Muslims gathered in Srebrenica on July 11, 2018, to mark the 23rd anniversary of Europe’s worst massacre since World War II and attend the funeral for 35 recently identified victims.

The remains of the men and boys slaughtered at the enclave in July 1995 were laid to rest in the


town whose name has become synonymous with the brutality of the 1992-95 Bosnian war. The coffins covered in green cloth were lined up at a memorial center and new burial pits were dug at the massive graveyard that already holds 6,575 victims found previously.

Srebrenica was a UN-protected, Muslim-populated town in eastern Bosnia besieged by Serb forces

throughout the war. Serb troops led by General Ratko Mladic overran the enclave, separated men from women and small children and executed about 8,000 men and boys within a few days. Some 30,000 people were violently displaced.

■ **CIVIL DEFENSE:** Newly recruited members of the Syrian Civil Defense (known as the White Helmets) take part in fire training exercises in the Syrian town of Marea (July 27, 2018).

PHOTO: NAZEER AL-KHATIB/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



“Peacekeepers
are not equipped
to operate
without peace.”

■ **GEARING UP:** A Canadian UN soldier prepares to take part in an operation in Gao, Mali (Aug. 1, 2018).

PHOTO: NAZEER AL-KHATIB/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

UN peacekeepers, nicknamed blue helmets because of their uniforms, were undermanned, outgunned and failed to intervene.

That was last century. The number of similar conflicts in which it is impossible for mediators—UN or otherwise—to achieve their purpose, or avoid becoming casualties themselves, has increased dramatically since then.

According to the UN: “More lives were lost during the 1990s than in the previous 4 decades combined. In the new millennium, the UN itself became a target: its premises attacked in Baghdad in 2003, Algiers in 2007, and Kabul in 2009. During the past four years (2013-2017) a consistent

increase in peacekeeper fatalities due to violent acts resulted in 195 deaths.”

Today, the number of countries involved in “violent conflicts” is the highest in 30 years, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on July 17, 2018. He also stated that the number of people killed in conflicts has risen tenfold since 2005 and that the number of “violent situations” classifiable as wars, based on the number of casualties, has tripled since 2007.

While speaking to reporters in Oslo, Norway, he added that “low-intensity conflicts” rose by 60 percent since 2007.

21st-century Complexities

In an exclusive interview with *Vice News*, Mr. Guterres explained how complex the world is today versus just a few decades ago.

“We have a multiplication of new conflicts,” he explained. “When I was young, we lived in a bipolar world. We had the Cold War: on one side the United States, on the other the Soviet Union. And when things might risk to be out of control the two superpowers would normally find a way [to deescalate].”

“Today we live in a world that is no longer bipolar, and you no longer have wars between countries. You have situations in which in one country there are plenty of different actors. You have government troops, sometimes international troops, ethnic groups, religious groups, political groups, and those conflicts are becoming more and more interlinked.”

Caught in the middle of these conflicts are peacekeeping forces, volunteers and children, three categories of

those who should never need to participate in any battle.

The secretary-general summarized the 21st-century peacekeeper conundrum like this: “Peacekeeping was conceived, as the name indicates, to keep the peace...so the idea is, let’s have a force of the UN—blue helmets—that is not supposed to fight. The peacekeepers were supposed to preserve the stability of a country that has reached peace. Now the truth is that most of the peacekeeping operations today are taking place where there is no peace to keep.”

Let those words sink in. NO PEACE TO KEEP.

The nations of the world are banding together in an attempt to bring normalcy to conflict zones so individuals can lead prosperous, happy lives.

Yet, tragically, there is no peace to keep.

Walking the proverbial mile in the shoes of a blue helmet in the African nation of Mali, a volunteer White Helmet working in Syria, or a child growing up in any place ravaged by war demonstrates the incredible complexities—often the impossibility—of peacekeeping missions today.

Blue Helmets in Mali

Extremist groups linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State group are active in Mali, often targeting local security forces and the world’s deadliest active UN peacekeeping mission.

“Here in Timbuktu, people are used to terrorist attacks” said Alassane Ag Idiasso, 30, who works with a private security group used by the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali, currently the deadliest in the world.

A branch of al-Qaida set off a car bomb at the headquarters of a new West African counterterrorism force last June, further destabilizing central Mali as extremist groups expand from remote northern regions where they have had strongholds for years.

A more assertive response by Mali’s security forces has led to accusations of extrajudicial killings, while neighbors turn on each other amid suspicions of joining extrem-

ist groups. At least 289 civilians including young children have been killed in communal violence since the beginning of the year, with some burned alive in their homes or killed while hiding in mosques, the United Nations reported.

Extremist attacks in the region have risen over the past year, while tensions grow between ethnic Fulani Muslims and other groups such as the Dogon and Bambara who accuse the Fulani of being recruited by jihadists.

“The Malian army attacks the civilians thinking that they are complicit with the jihadists, and the jihadists attack the civilians thinking that they are complicit with the army. It’s a chaotic situation,” the 32-year-old deputy mayor said. “People are afraid of kamikazes, conflicts in the polling station or even a post-election crisis.”

Five years ago, a French military intervention had pushed al-Qaida-linked fighters from their strongholds in the north and security appeared to be improving. But while the international community has invested millions of dollars in Mali’s government, the situation has deteriorated. French soldiers on patrol in the northeastern city of Gao were targeted just two days after the deadly attack on the G5 Sahel headquarters.

With the absence or weakness of state security in some areas, “some communities have had to make a choice to work with extremists or militias,” Andrew Lebovich, Mali expert and visiting fellow with the European Council on Foreign Relations told *The Associated Press*, adding that Malian forces have made it worse by “targeting [Fulani] in central Mali and by making it clear the state was unwilling to provide security.”

The government has confirmed security forces’ participation in the extrajudicial killings in June of 25 Fulani men in the central Mopti region, and the UN has urged authorities to prevent similar attacks.

“These major crimes threaten communal cohesion in Mali and facilitate jihadist groups’ recruitment efforts. They also undermine the role

the international community plays in Mali, including its training programs for the security forces,” Mr. Lebovich wrote in a recent report. “Continuing failure to deal with these issues will only make peace harder to achieve.”

Imagine being a blue helmet deployed to Mali. Amid these conditions, you would soon find yourself asking, “What peace is there to keep?”

White Helmets in Syria

White Helmets essentially act as “Syria’s peacekeepers.” The group, which had more than 3,000 volunteers in opposition-held areas, has saved thousands of lives since 2013 and documented government attacks on civilians and other infrastructure. Its volunteers have been repeatedly targeted, and more than 250 have been killed on duty.

White Helmets volunteers trapped in southern Syria after the government seized areas they operated in say they live in fear of being caught in the dragnet of government forces and they are desperately seeking a way out. The peacekeeping volunteers are considered staunch enemies by the Syrian government.

The government and its allies have waged a concerted campaign against the volunteers for years, accusing them of being agents of foreign powers, being terrorists for working in rebel-controlled areas and of staging chemical attacks.

Hundreds of the volunteer rescue workers—who have toiled in conflict-ravaged opposition areas for years—have failed to make it out of southern Syria in a complex international evacuation.

A recent evacuation of more than 400 White Helmets was executed under the cover of darkness across the tightly sealed frontier with the Golan Heights in July as a government offensive unfolded.

In the quickly changing battlefield, the volunteers were unable to access roads to the frontier in time for the first-of-its-kind evacuation that involved international coordina-

tion between six countries—Israel, the U.S., Britain, Germany, Jordan and Canada. Advancing government forces and an affiliate of the Islamic State group expanding in the region quickly seized territory as the armed opposition crumbled or surrendered in the face of a month-long government offensive.

Two of the volunteers who could not make it told *AP* they tried but could not reach the frontier. The two, who have been part of the group for years, had been cleared for evacuation. But they were caught between the ISIS-affiliate militants and government forces.

They were confined to about 3.8 square miles where they could move between several small villages safely.

Such individuals live incognito, using off-roads to avoid government checkpoints, and move in tight circles, often with protection, looking out for any signs of government troop movements. Their villages are besieged by government troops and Russian military police. After living for years under an opposition administration, the Syrian flag now flies in their villages.

One of the two, who oversees a team of 30 volunteers, said he is scrambling to find ways to save them and their families.

“I have four kids and I am wanted. The [government] has declared war on everything that is civil defense,” he said, using the other name for the White Helmets. He spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of being arrested.

The trapped volunteers often meet at night to discuss ways to leave, though they have few options.

“Some show their fear, some hide it. Some try to keep morale high,” said the father of three.

“We are facing an unknown destiny,” he said. “If we knew we face death that would be accepted. But our fate is unknown: torture, detention, maybe death or maybe survival if we are lucky,” he said. “Life without hope or dreams is more difficult than dying.”

Again, if you were one of these White Helmets, what kind of peace would you be able to keep?

Children in Armed Conflicts

More than 10,000 children were killed or maimed amid armed conflicts worldwide in 2017, while others were raped, forced to serve as soldiers or caught in attacks on schools and hospitals, a June United Nations report said.

A total of more than 21,000 violations of children’s rights were reported in 2017—a sharp increase from the previous year, according to the annual “Children and Armed Conflict” report.

Among the casualties tallied in the report were child soldiers as young as 11 fighting in Yemen’s civil war and in other countries, the UN said.

“The point is, these kids should not be treated like children of a lesser God; they deserve the same rights as every kid to live their lives at least meaningfully and to be given a chance at recovery,” said Virginia Gamba, the UN special representative for children and armed conflict.

She said the report left UN Secretary-General Guterres feeling “outraged.”

The 21,000 violations of children’s rights included 10,000 who were slain or maimed, especially in Iraq, Myanmar, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen, the report said.

The total was a dramatic increase from 15,500 such cases counted in 2016. “The secretary-general is outraged at this number, a significant increase compared to previous years,” said his spokesman, Stephane Dujarric.

Among the report’s findings:

■ Almost half the 881 verified child casualties in Nigeria resulted from suicide attacks, including the use of children as human bombs. Over 1,900 children were detained because of their or their parents’ alleged association with the Boko Haram militant organization.

■ At least 1,036 children were held in Iraqi detention facilities on national security-related charges, mostly for their alleged association with the Islamic State group.

■ 1,221 children were recruited and used as soldiers in South Sudan.

■ The al-Shabab extremist group in Somalia allegedly abducted more than 1,600 children, some recruited and armed and others who became victims of sexual violence.

■ Children in Myanmar, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen were prevented from receiving life-saving support.

■ Syrian children were trapped in besieged areas amid deteriorating living conditions.

Ms. Gamba said government forces in various nations were responsible for about 9,000 violations.

If you were a child growing up in such calamitous conditions, you and your entire generation may have never even *seen peace*—let alone know how to keep it.

Not Enough

These heart-wrenching stories from across the globe speak for themselves. If there was ever anything that could have been called “peace” in these places, it is now long gone and nowhere to be found.

Mr. Guterres made a great point. Peacekeepers are not equipped to operate without peace.

War and peace are opposites. The two cannot coexist. You either have peace, or you have war. Yet both are *outcomes*, not sources, of different social conditions.

In the case of Mali, for example, religious antagonism is one such social condition. Religious tensions are often a major factor in wars across the globe. It is a sad irony. Most religions claim to be belief systems working to establish peace, order and the wellbeing of individuals. Far too often, the *opposite* is the case!

The Bible is a religious text used by many to establish their worldview. The book has been misquoted and misinterpreted to justify some of the

“War and peace are opposites. The two cannot coexist. You either have peace, or you have war.”



■ **AMONG THE RUBBLE:** Members of the Syrian Civil Defense evacuate a child during a training session in the rebel-held eastern Ghouta, near the capital Damascus (Nov. 22, 2016).

PHOTO: SEYLLLOU/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

worst wars mankind has ever witnessed. Yet it also speaks of a solution to today's crisis.

In Matthew 5:9, Jesus Christ stated: “Blessed are the *peacemakers*: for they shall be called the children of God.” Realize what is being said here. What this world's conflicts lack are *not* more peacekeepers. What is needed are PEACEMAKERS.

There is a big difference: a peacekeeper knows how to *keep* peace that already exists. A peacemaker knows how to **MAKE** peace when there is none.

Some people have the natural ability to enter a situation where there is peace and remove it. Sadly, there are plenty of those kinds all over

the world. Others can enter the same situation and maintain an existing peace—we call them peacekeepers, and good ones are not easy to find.

Peacemakers are another story. It takes a special kind of individual with unique, specialized training, wisdom, tact and skill, to enter a situation where there is no peace whatsoever, and make it happen regardless of the circumstances. Those are the ones the Bible speaks of. Such people do exist, and they are rare birds. We desperately need more of them now.

Peacekeepers are simply not enough. As the world turns into a more peaceless place, true peacemakers are what is needed. But where are they found?

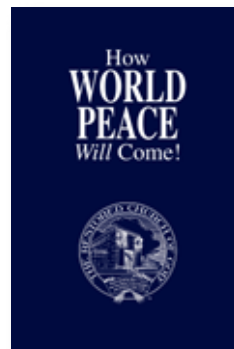
The Bible also explains why world conflicts will

continue to escalate before conditions on Earth take a dramatic turn for the better. That change will involve real peacemakers, with unmatched ability to establish peace, whom God is now actively preparing to intervene as you read these words.

This fascinating, soon-coming worldwide peacemaking effort was foretold millennia ago. If you want to see the atrocities this article described end, you will want to know all about it.

International peacekeeping efforts will only go so far without true peace being made first. Only after that intervention, which the Bible reveals is coming soon, will there finally be peace to keep.

To find out more, read *How World Peace Will Come!* □



Order a *Free Copy!*
rcg.org/hwpwc

UNRELENTING

The New Reality of U.S. Wildfires

Wildfires on the West Coast are growing worse. The reason for this trend is more than a century in the making.

BY SAMUEL C. BAXTER

EXHAUSTED and hungry, some 14,000 firefighters have been working 24-hour shifts battling deadly California wildfires and becoming resigned to fire seasons that start earlier, burn longer and unleash increasingly unpredictable blazes.

“There’s a lot going on up here, endless fires, and they’re all characteristically pretty much the same—windy, hot and dry,” firefighter James Sweeney said before heading out for a meal and a nap.

Mr. Sweeney, from St. Petersburg, Florida, is a “hotshot,” part of an elite team of highly trained wildland firefighters who spend the fire season battling the fiercest blazes in the country.

Weary after more than a day on the fire lines, the 43-year-old said when his Gila, New Mexico-based crew does leave California, he expects to go north into Oregon, where new fires are kicking up.

“These days it’s crazy,” he said. “We give up our whole life all summer.”

Wildfires tearing through trees and brush, rampaging up hillsides and incinerating neighborhoods: The names and places change but the devastation is showing signs of becoming the new normal in California and throughout the West.

In early August, twin fires being treated as one incident north of San Francisco became

the largest wildfire in state history, destroying 443 square miles—nearly the size of the city of Los Angeles.

For many of the firefighters slamming down 9,000-calorie meals between shifts, the nonstop effort has become routine.

Last year, a fast-moving series of fires in Santa Rosa, just north of San Francisco, and elsewhere in Northern California killed 44 people and destroyed more than 8,000 structures. Last December’s Thomas Fire near Santa Barbara burned almost 440 square miles, becoming the largest wildfire in California history.

In his 19 years on the job, Cal Fire Captain Chris Anthony said the most significant change is that hotter, drier conditions now mean that firefighters are trained to take a “tactical pause” to reconsider before charging in against the flames.

“Fire has become a lot more unpredictable,” he said. “In the past we could plan, but these days a fire can take a sudden and deadly turn.”

That is what happened July 26, when the fire near Redding pivoted and exploded in size, taking down hundreds of homes and killing five people, two of them firefighters. Another firefighter was killed earlier in the month battling a giant fire near Yosemite National Park.

Firefighter Jason Campbell was on the front lines near Yosemite when the Carr Fire





Each symbol represents a wildfire over 1,000 acres that has occurred to date in 2018.

Sources: Fire, Weather & Avalanche Center; Google, INEGI; Northwest Interagency Coordination Center; Oregon Department of Forestry
Graphic: The Real Truth/Sarah O. Vidal



destroyed his home, an RV and a boat near Redding. Redding Police Chief Roger Moore also lost his home.

Captain Jarrett Grassl, a 19-year veteran who works for the Higgins Fire District in Northern California, said his crew ran into homeowners trying to save their own properties. The threat to homes reflects the shrinking divide between wilderness and urban areas.

“Every year it seems to be a bigger problem,” Mr. Grassl said, in 110-degree weather with zero precipitation.

Fighting wildfires is almost always dangerous and grueling, but experienced firefighters said the Carr Fire has been even hotter, drier and more erratic than they are accustomed to.

Crews used shovels, hoses and chain saws to corral giant walls of flame that burned through canyons and up steep gulches. The air was thick with smoke and dust as they hauled heavy



■ **INTO THE INFERNO:** Top left, firefighters prepare to battle a wildfire near Buckhorn Summit, California (July 30, 2018). Top right, a home burns during the Carr Fire (July 27, 2018). Bottom, properties near the Lake Keswick Estates area are burned out from the Carr Fire (July 27, 2018).

PHOTOS: PAUL KITAGAKI JR./THE SACRAMENTO BEE VIA AP (TOP LEFT); JOSH EDELSON/AFP/GETTY IMAGES (TOP MIDDLE, BOTTOM)







gear up and down unstable hillsides, grabbing gulps of water whenever they could. They largely worked in silence, with the sound of crashing tree limbs and roaring flames drowning out radios.

Nevada County Fire Captain Nathan Menth calls California's weather system "the prolonged summer." Replenishing fire hose gear after spending the night protecting a Redding neighborhood, he said he was surprised by how quickly the fire spread.

"The winds came in," he said. "It was out of control."

But 13 years into his career, that chaos is something he has come to expect.

■ **FIGHTING FLAMES:** Top left, a long exposure photograph of the Santa Clarita wildfire at night in California. Right, a firefighter walks along a containment line while battling the Carr Fire (July 28, 2018). Bottom left, a 15-year-old boy carries a water bucket while fighting to save his home from the Ranch Fire near Clearlake Oaks, California (Aug. 4, 2018). Bottom right, a resident looks over the burnt remains of his friend's house in Spring Valley, California (Aug. 7, 2018).

PHOTOS: JUSTIN SULLIVAN/GETTY IMAGES (TOP LEFT); AP/MARCIO JOSE SANCHEZ (TOP RIGHT); NOAH BERGER/AFP/GETTY IMAGES (BOTTOM LEFT); JOSH EDELSON/AFP/GETTY IMAGES (BOTTOM RIGHT)

Why It's Growing Worse

Just a month into the budget year, California has already spent more than one-quarter of its annual fire budget, at least \$125 million, state Department of Forestry and Fire Protection spokesman Mike Mohler said.

Following years of drought and a summer of record-breaking heat, immense tracts of forests, chaparral and grasslands have become tinder that allows even a small spark to explode into a devouring blaze, authorities said.

Governor Jerry Brown repeated predictions from fire officials that California can expect a future of devastating fires, in part because of climate change. He told reporters that “nature is very powerful, and we’re not on the side of nature.”

Yet researchers are quick to not entirely blame warmer temperatures for worsening wildfires.

Time explained: “Urban development in vulnerable areas can make fires more devastating, and many of the state’s most destructive fires were started by humans including the Carr Fire. Max Moritz, a specialist in cooperative extension at the University of California’s Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources, says hotter temperatures have made fire seasons longer, too. Scientists see a direct link between rising temperatures and the amount of dry brush and ample fuel, which makes the fires fast-moving and often more explosive.”

“There’s good, solid research linking temperature increases to trends in fire activity,” Mr. Moritz told the magazine. “But it’s really long-term trends.”

Another counterintuitive trend is that the fires have grown worse even after intense rains brought California out of a historic drought.

SFGate helped explain why: “No matter how damp a winter may be, a hot summer could dry out or kill vegetation and become easier to burn. Last year, the state had a wet winter—a rarity that came after a several years-long drought that Governor Jerry Brown had declared was finally over. California

still experienced its hottest summer on record several months later—and saw its largest fire ever scorch Napa, Sonoma and Lake counties in Northern California. This past year, the winter was unseasonably dry, and experts say that means the 2018 fire season could grow more intense.”

How We Got Here

Hotter temperatures. More urban development. People carelessly or deliberately sparking blazes. These *are* all factors in why wildfires are growing worse, but they overlook a major underlying cause—one that is over 100 years in the making.

In the late 1800s, the U.S. government established a policy of fire suppression. *The Washington Post* quoted a Joint Fire Science Program report that called wildfires the “moral and mortal enemy of the forest.” Wooded areas were also valued for their economic value as standing timber.

This thinking has colored America’s approach to forest management for decades. Fight any fire that starts instead of letting it burn. It also meant not using prescribed burns to clear out overgrowth. The result is forests thick with fuel waiting for a spark.

Scientists estimate that at least 10 to 15 million acres need to burn every year in order to return forests to a more natural condition, *The New York Times* reported. While the U.S. government recorded that 9.7 million acres burned in 2017 and 10.1 million in 2015, the public perception is that these numbers are way too high—and the issue is complicated by the amount of people living in heavily forested areas.

An article from *The Washington Post* explained how yesterday’s fire suppression policies impact blazes now: “What’s different about today’s fires is the intensity with which they’re burning. One reason is that fire suppression has changed Western forests. Take the ponderosa stands of the Southwest: Historically, low-intensity blazes, ignited by lightning or indigenous peoples, burned every five to 10 years, thinning the forest of young saplings and brush and leaving

just 150 large trees per acre. Today, in the absence of flames, those stands are choked with as many as 1,200 trees per acre—too thick to walk through without risking a branch in your eye.”

Cal Fire Chief Thom Porter summarized the problem to *KPIX 5*: “After aggressively suppressing fires for the last 100 years we have put our forests in a state of peril.”

“By abstaining from controlled burns year after year, unchecked growth has multiplied, dried out and created a tinderbox,” the news outlet wrote. “The overgrowth has fueled deadly, out-of-control wildfires like the Carr Fire near Redding that took the lives of a four- and five-year-old.”

Mr. Porter was further quoted: “Prescribed burns alone will not stop that, but it is a tool that we can use to reduce the effect of those large fires.”

Cal Fire now has a goal to clear 20,000 acres per year, but it will likely take a decade or more to start seeing results. Also, factors of higher temperatures and more people living in areas prone to wildfires make attempts to catch up increasingly difficult.

Seeing the results of these fires is devastating—both with homes and businesses ruined as well as injury and death. Yet the wildfires on the West Coast reveal a common trait of humankind. We try to fix problems and end up causing even worse problems in the process. Fire suppression is just one example. Antibiotics giving rise to worse and worse superbugs is another. War usually spawns more conflict in the long-run.

As a rule, when human beings are involved, any attempt to solve problems begets more problems and makes the situations even more complex.

Ask: Are we doomed to live with worsening difficulties?

The better question is *WHY?* Man is capable of incredible genius, yet his very worst problems—war, famine, disease and increasingly deadly forest fires—remain. This is a question every person alive should strive to answer. Read *Why Mankind Cannot Solve His Problems* at rcg.org/uun for more. □

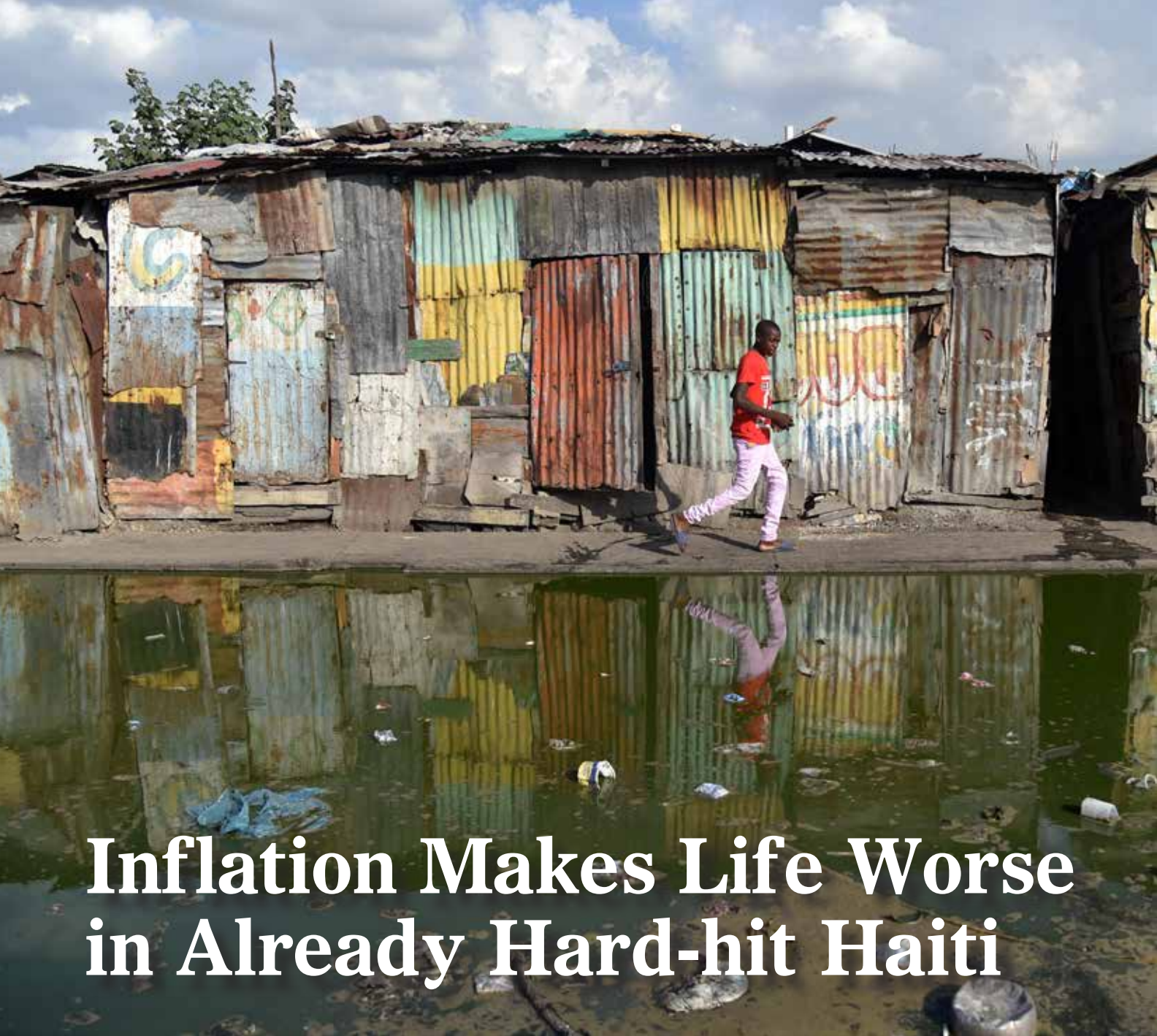
“TRICK?” OR “TREAT”?



Americans spend \$9.1 billion on Halloween each year. It is the second largest holiday, after Christmas. Most believe it is just another harmless childhood indulgence—much the way they view birthday parties or Valentine’s Day. Yet what is the true origin of Halloween? Is it harmless fun—or something much different? How did it become a common practice?

All these questions lead to one more: Should *you* observe Halloween? You need to know the answer!

RCG.ORG/TOTUH



Inflation Makes Life Worse in Already Hard-hit Haiti

CHICKEN IS a staple of the Haitian diet but its price has doubled in four years. Cooking oil and rice have gone up 10 percent the last 12 months. A liter of milk costs more than half the daily minimum wage, putting it out of reach for most of the country.

The cost of living seems like it is spiraling out of control to many Haitians, making life even more of a

struggle in the Western Hemisphere's poorest nation.

"It's really hard," Cassandre Milord, an accountant in a small shop in Haiti's capital, said of the inflation that has been in double digits since 2014. "You never know how much money you need to go to the market. The prices go up every day."

It is a nearly universal complaint across Haiti, and it lies at the root of the four days of deadly protests over steep fuel price hikes that shut down

■ A boy walks on a street in the La Saline neighborhood of Port-au-Prince close to the Market of La Saline (Oct. 26, 2017).

PHOTO: HECTOR RETAMAL/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Port-au-Prince in early July and raised the specter of the mass unrest that has paralyzed the country in the past. Inflation is a fact of life in much of the world, but amid so much misery it resonates painfully here with everyone from people selling small bags of rice in the street to owners of small businesses—everyone except the elite few.



“There’s no money to send the kids to school,” Arceline Charles said as she sat in a crowded downtown street selling eggs from a cardboard tray. “The country is a complete disaster.”

The government of President Jovenel Moise, who took office in February 2017 after a messy, contested election, set off protests when it abruptly announced double-digit increases in the prices for gasoline, diesel and kerosene. It was part of an agreement with the International Monetary Fund to eliminate fuel sub-

sidies to boost government revenue, in exchange for more support from member nations.

Officials may have thought the public would be distracted by that day’s World Cup match featuring local favorite Brazil, but the reaction was explosive: People flooded into the streets, erecting flaming barricades and clashing with police. At least seven people died and dozens of businesses and cars were looted, burned and destroyed.

Prime Minister Jack Guy Lafontant, facing a no-confidence vote in parliament, resigned along with his Cabinet. But the government has yet to explain why it failed to accept the IMF recommendation to enact the price hikes gradually or whether it still intends to comply with recommendations that it modernize its economy by improving tax collection and increase spending on infrastructure, education and social services.

Mr. Moise appealed for calm as he looked for a new prime minister. “I can understand the situation facing many of our unemployed compatriots. Hunger and misery are crushing us,” he said in a national address in Creole, the French-based language spoken by the majority of Haitians.

The president, a businessman and farmer who sold himself in his campaign as someone with the knowledge and expertise to lift the country, faces a steep challenge.

Haiti is one of the most unequal countries in the world, with the wealthiest living in walled-off mansions while about 60 percent of its nearly 10.5 million people struggle to get by on about \$2 a day. A January report by the U.S. Agency for International Development said about half the country is undernourished.

The fuel price increases, with diesel slated to rise about 40 percent and kerosene about 50 percent, would have rippled through an economy that is largely stagnant. Agriculture, the most important segment, is suffering from a long-standing drought and the devastation caused by Hurricane Matthew to one of the most fertile parts of the country in 2016.

The Central Bank has sought to contain inflation but prices are rising around 16 percent a year. And the bank’s policy of devaluing the currency, the gourde, has in the eyes of many only made the situation worse because Haiti relies heavily on imports.

Even those fortunate enough to work or to own a business find it increasingly difficult to survive. The minimum wage is about \$150 a month, far below what is needed to support a family in Haiti.

“It is a situation of massive impoverishment, with many sectors of the middle class becoming poorer and an increasing percentage of people who really can’t eat,” said Camille Chalmers, an economist and director of a non-governmental group that promotes the rights of workers.

Ms. Milord, the accountant, said she already spends about a quarter of her daily pay, equivalent to about \$3, on transportation and lunch. “Imagine how people get by who only make the minimum wage,” she said.

Business owners say they, too, are feeling the effects. Maxime Cantave, who opened a car wash and adjacent cafe in the Delmas area of the capital, said his business is down by a third over the past two years.

“People don’t have any money,” he said as two vehicles were getting cleaned and the cafe was empty on a particular afternoon, a time when both would normally be full.

Mr. Cantave returned to his native country from Florida after the devastating earthquake in January 2010, hoping to take advantage of the surge in international aid and private investment flowing into Haiti as part of the reconstruction. That investment has largely tapered off, hurting him as well as people like Benoit Vilceus, who runs a boutique hotel and a company that does construction and interior design.

Mr. Vilceus says his businesses were already struggling but he had to temporarily halt a construction project in the city of Les Cayes because of the recent unrest.

“This has been building up for a long time,” he said of the unrest. “It was just a matter of time.” □

The Rise of Free-range Parenting

A more hands-off parenting trend has emerged in response to years of society favoring a micromanaging “helicopter” approach. Here’s what fathers and mothers need to know to strike a healthy balance.

BY FRANK LYDICK WITH EDWARD L. WINKFIELD

A MOTHER LEFT HER 4-year-old child in the car for about five minutes on a cool day in March while running an errand. Another woman dropped off her 9-year-old in a park to play with other kids on a summer day while she was at work.

Having no childcare, a different mom left her two children unsupervised while she went on a job interview. In yet another instance, a parent left her three daughters watching a movie in the family minivan while she went to buy a coffee.

In each case, reported by *The New York Times*, these parents were chastised by authorities. They were scolded by police called to the scene, required to do hours of community service, charged with felony child abuse, or saw their children placed in temporary foster care.

So are these all delinquent parents who should feel ashamed of their actions? While you would need to know the full details of each event, it usually depends on your perspective.

For increasing numbers, these encounters are viewed as matters of convenience or, as the offending parents may put it, opportunities to foster independence in their children. However, the prevailing view is to see these as incidents of neglect.

Much of the discord is due to a clash in parenting philosophies and perceived dangers lurking in society.

The hovering, helicopter parenting approach, which is characterized by heavy parental involvement and close monitoring of a child’s whereabouts, experiences and problems, is at odds with the emerging style—free-range parenting.

“Free range parenting is allowing your child to fall down and allowing them experiences where they can learn firsthand not hovering and telling them. Children don’t learn by telling.” This is what a New Jersey mother of a 7-year-old told *Vice News*. She wants her child to walk home after being dropped off at a bus stop that is about 900 feet away.

Her decision is being opposed by the local school district that claims child safety, not legal liability, is the driving force behind their decision. When asked if she thinks other parents agree with her approach, she told the news outlet, “I don’t think [other parents are] on my side, I do think that I am a little bit rogue...but I think that that’s my choice, that’s my call.”



If helicopter parenting is one end of the spectrum, free-range is the other. As with the livestock the term was originally coined for, children under this philosophy are raised in what parents deem to be natural conditions with freedom of movement. Their goal is for their children to be raised in an environment that is unencumbered, with minimal interference.

For proponents of free-range parenting, this method is seen as the best way to teach independence and help build the skills necessary to function in society.

Worth the Risk?

Factors such as child abduction and abuse, the ability to track a child's activities and whereabouts through social media, and overall more dangerous times are being blamed for some parents' cautious approach when it comes to their children.

The data, however, suggests that these concerns may be overblown.

Of the roughly 75 million children in the U.S., only 105 were abducted by a stranger or slight acquaintance in 2011, the Department of Justice reported. According to author Warwick Cairns, a child must be left alone in a public place for 750,000 years before being abducted by a stranger. Other numbers suggest a child is more likely to be killed in a car accident on the way to a store than waiting in one that is parked.

But for many parents, who obviously love their children, the numbers do not matter.

As of now, many in society lean more toward the hovering approach. Yet this is changing. Parents across the country, who also obviously love their children, have grown weary of extreme hands-on tactics in raising their kids.

In March 2018, Utah became the first state in the U.S. to pass a free-range parenting law. Under the new legislation, parents have the choice to allow their kids to do things others may deem neglectful such as playing in a park or walking to school alone.

The Push for Free-range

After Utah passed its law, groups in states from New York to Texas are pushing for similar steps to be taken in their states.

Free-range parenting promotes the idea that giving kids the freedom to do things alone makes them healthier, happier and more resilient. It is seen as a perfect antidote for anxiety-plagued parents and stressed, overscheduled kids.

In its current form, free-range parenting emerged nearly a decade ago. It started when Lenore Skenazy penned a column about letting her 9-year-old son ride the New York City subway alone. The article started a firestorm. Since then, she has become a vocal advocate for free-range parenting.

Critics say letting kids strike out on their own can expose them to serious dangers, from criminals to cars. As demonstrated, parents have been investigated by child-welfare authorities in several high-profile cases, including a Maryland couple who allowed their 10- and 6-year-old children to walk home alone from a park in 2015.

But lawmakers and policy groups in several states say the protective pendulum has swung too far, and it is time to send a message that parents who raise their children in a healthy environment can grant them more freedom.

Utah's law specifies that it is not neglectful to let well-cared-for children travel to school, explore a playground or stay in a car alone if they are mature enough to handle it.

Free-range parenting differs from the concept of latchkey kids, or those who take care of themselves after school, in that free-range generally emphasizes getting kids outside in the neighborhood as a way to develop independence, Boston-based clinical psychologist Bobbi Wegner said.

Fears about letting kids make their own way partly date back to cases like Etan Patz, who was among the first missing children pictured on milk cartons after disappearing while he walked to his New York City bus stop alone in 1979. Today, missing children

are pictured on billboards along interstate expressways or shown on daily news broadcasts, continuing to foster these fears.

A recent poll taken by *Parents Magazine* found that almost 75 percent of parents believed their children were at risk of being abducted, despite statistics to the contrary. With those fears at the forefront of their thinking, who could blame them for being overly involved?

Helicopter Parenting Today

Helicopter parenting appears to be most prevalent in the United States. Internationally, parents seem much more willing to give their children space. Recently, *The New York Times* published reactions from many foreigners surprised by the levels of supervision prevalent in America.

"My daughters, ages 10, 8, and 5 walk (together) from our apartment to the nearby park, play there, and come back, all by themselves, and have been doing that for at least a year. No one seems to mind, and I like this initiation to freedom and responsibility that it brings them," a French father told the news outlet.

Describing the difference in approaches in supervision between American and Swiss parents, another person noted: "What really struck me was when I started to notice groups of mothers having coffees together: The [American] mothers sat next to each other facing outward, watching their children the whole time. The Swiss mothers sat facing each other around a table having a nice chat, with their backs to the children playing around them."

A woman living in Tokyo said: "Here in Japan, kids are required to be at least 6-years-old before they are allowed to ride the trains alone. They often travel in groups, and they socialize and play quietly and appropriately."

Allowing a 6-year-old to ride a train alone in a city of 9 million people would likely test the limits even of those on board with the free-range approach. It would no doubt be con-

sidered outrageous, even criminal, by those prone to helicopter parenting.

Those who choose this latter approach would likely tell you that it is not just for safety reasons. Closely monitoring their children is also done to help increase the child's likelihood of success in life. With education and the need to separate oneself from the pack becoming more essential in the workforce, parents are increasingly eager to give their kids a leg up with lessons in everything from coding to cello.

But those at the forefront of the free-range movement point to concerns with this aspect of helicopter parenting as well.

"We sign our kids up for all these activities—tutoring, different things—to create this perfect resume from a very young age, but it's really at a detriment to the kid's mental health," Dr. Wegner said.

Studies have shown that parents who fuss over their child's every activity can detrimentally affect their self-confidence and ability to succeed on their own later in life. Additionally, a parent who schedules each moment of his or her child's life often does not take the time to sit down and simply talk or play.

In the book *Train Your Children God's Way*, David C. Pack sheds further light on the subject in relation to the millennial generation: "Parents, teachers—even children's television shows—repeatedly taught millennials the importance of having self-esteem, to have a can-do attitude, to be confident in themselves. Time and again they were told, 'You are special.' The intentions were good, but the effects were terrible: a generation that expects to be praised for the least bit of effort, yet falls apart at the sound of a raised voice telling young workers where they went wrong and how they can do better."

Children subjected to such cod-dling are ill-prepared to function in the real world without their parents' constant intervention. Each may look like an adult, but have little clue how to behave as one.

Parents Letting Go

As a direct reaction to helicopter parenting, supporters of the free-range approach are calling for a transition back to allowing children more freedom. It is an idea that cuts across the ideological spectrum.

"When I was a child, you let your dogs and your children out after breakfast and...they had to be home for dinner," said a liberal New York state assemblyman. "I felt I gained a lot more from just playing on the street than my children did from being in organized sports activities."

Brandon Logan with the conservative Texas Public Policy Foundation is working with lawmakers for a bill next year.

"We expect adults to be independent, and we expect parents to raise their children to be independent, and you can't do that whenever children are being micromanaged," Mr. Logan said.

A conservative group is also pushing for a bill in Idaho, and an Arkansas lawmaker whose effort failed plans to bring it back again.

Proponents are all taking a close look at Utah's law, which sailed through the legislature and was signed by the governor of the majority-Mormon state known for big families and wide-open spaces. It does not specify how old kids should be to do things alone, which lawmakers say will allow authorities to weigh each case separately.

Discretion like that is important, said Stephen Hinshaw, a University of California, Berkeley, psychology professor. Not every child is ready to ride his bike alongside busy roads, and participating in activities such as music lessons can teach children important skills.

"Parents have to be smart about what is helping foster self-reliance and what is putting kids in a dangerous spot," he said.

Amy Coulter, a stay-at-home mom of four girls and a boy in Utah, said she does not call herself a free-range parent. But she does avoid intervening

with teachers on her older kids' grades and encourages her kids to use their own money to buy things at the grocery store. "I want them to know that they're capable," she said of her children, who range in age from 5 to 14.

Krista Whipple, who recently moved to Utah, said she has liked the concept of free-range parenting for years, but it was tough to practice it in her old Los Angeles neighborhood when most kids stayed behind fences. "I didn't want to raise my kids all cooped up, but it always made me think twice," said Ms. Whipple, a program manager at a St. George youth homeless shelter who has two boys and a girl who are 6, 4 and 3.

"Kids are not in constant danger, and it's OK to let them outside, and it's OK...to let them get lost," she said. "They'll find their way home."

What Approach Is Best?

Does wanting to be more involved with your child to the point of hovering automatically make you a bad parent? Are those promoting free-range parenting saying parents should not care for their kids? In both cases the answer is almost certainly no.

The blowback against helicopter parenting may simply be the result of society observing the shortcomings in the kids, now adults, who grew up in this environment.

In the final analysis, the question is: Does the latest free-range movement comprise the secret to successful parenting?

Yes and no.

It is easy to see how smothering a child by being obsessed with his every movement and every detail of his lives can be taxing for both the child and parent. Seeing this approach in action and the results it brings, it is natural to think that loosening the reins on a child—letting him "fall down" and learn from his mistakes, venture out on his own, and plan his own future—would be a viable option.

Yet this extreme is equally problematic. It can ignore the real dangers in allowing children to roam free in a dangerous world, and, just as

harmful, assumes children have the wherewithal and judgment to make life decisions.

What both sides, helicopter and free-range, clearly demonstrate is that elements of both philosophies are necessary. In other words, a balanced approach is best. Parental involvement and oversight are necessary while still allowing a child the room to fail.

In the pursuit of parental success and honing the best way to raise their children, many parents have lost sight of the five keys to effective parenting: teach, teach, teach, *teach* and TEACH!

Teaching has elements present in both helicopter and free-range parenting. It involves providing instruction and structure. It also involves providing the environment or “classroom” for students, in this case children, to

implement what they have learned. If children fail in this environment, the consequences are not life-threatening or overly detrimental. And when children are ready to make their own decisions, it is with the close guidance and supervision from wise and experienced parents.

Parents can feel comfortable leaving their children on their own more often, when children have been taught and have proven to be responsible in more independent situations.

The saying, “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; *teach* a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime,” applies to children. Teaching a child is key to their success later in life.

Knowing children must be taught is one thing, but parents also wonder what to teach them. *Train Your Children God’s Way* has the answers.

The comprehensive book provides an overview of the difficulties in raising children in the modern age as well as detailed instruction on childrearing.

Here is another quote from the book that speaks directly to the notion of teaching and thus preparing a child for adulthood: “Your children are not machines—they are not robots. They cannot be programmed to do exactly what you want, when you want. They are free moral agents. In the end, after all your efforts are complete, *they* will make the final decision of whether to walk in the path you lay out for them or not, whether they will obey God or not. Your job is to best *prepare* them to make the right decision!”

For this and similar helpful information, order your free copy of this helpful book today at rcg.org/tuyc. □

PERSONAL

Continued from page 2

first, in an unsteady, toddling fashion). Only later does he finally learn to run (spiritually).

Paul compares conversion to running a race (I Cor. 9:24). At some point, the runner must develop speed because Paul says, “run, that you may obtain [win].” Such is the Christian way. Slow, steady growth, through daily practice, produces progress in the life of the person 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! Be ready to apply yourself—to push to grow and overcome. Do not expect it to be easy, like falling off a log. Grow in knowledge as well (II Pet. 3:18).

Resisting Temptation

Jesus taught His disciples to understand the pulls of human nature at work within them. Notice: “...that which comes out of the man, that defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed

evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness” (Mark 7:20-22).

These same attitudes, pulls of the flesh, and wrong patterns of conduct also work within you and me. They leave us fertile for temptation by Satan. Therefore, many kinds of temptations will be thrown at you all through life. You must successfully resist them. They will often come when you least expect them. The devil will try to strike where you are weakest—most vulnerable—least prepared. You must be on guard—ready! Do not assume you are stronger or more prepared than you are. Consider: “Wherefore let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall” (I Cor. 10:12).

Now notice how temptation can turn into sin: “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust has conceived, it brings forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death” (Jms. 1:14-15). Put out wrong thoughts. Do not ease up or assume victory before they are gone!

The apostle Peter added, “Be sober, be *vigilant*; because your adversary the

devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour” (I Pet. 5:8). And James instructed, “*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you*” (4:7). Peter further instructed, “Whom RESIST steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished *in your brethren that are in the world*” (I Pet. 5:9).

This verse offers encouragement: You are not alone in your struggle to overcome sin. All human beings face the same problems. Understand! “For all have sinned” (Rom. 3:23) and “sin is the transgression of the law” (I John 3:4). God promises, “For sin shall *not* have dominion over you...” (Rom. 6:14).

Here is how Paul explained forces at work within him: “For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I...the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do” (Rom. 7:15, 19).

This pictures what we all face after conversion. When you feel like this, battle! Resist! Use God’s power within you. Call out to Him for help and always remember that you must: “Draw near to God, and He will draw

near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double minded” (Jms. 4:8). Fulfilling this verse is not an overnight process. It takes *time* and much effort.

Seek God through earnest, regular, believing prayer. Commune with Him daily. Pray without ceasing (I Thes. 5:17-18). Study your Bible (Matt. 4:4). Drink it in as God talking to you personally in the same way prayer is you talking personally to Him!

Christ Qualified to Replace Satan

Resisting the temptation of the devil was central to Jesus overcoming sin. Matthew 4 contains the account. The devil repeatedly *tempted* Christ, and in various ways. Read the account. At the end of several attempts by Satan to break Christ’s will, the account climaxes.

After being offered all kingdoms of the world, Christ rebuked Satan, stating, “Get you hence, Satan” (vs. 10). Jesus told the devil to “get out.” At this point, the temptation ended and the devil departed. Christ had successfully resisted!

Be prepared to tell Satan to get out of your life as often as you have to. Resist him by submitting to God in all things!

Jesus passed a very real test! He overcame the world, His flesh, and the devil in overcoming sin and qualifying to pay for the sins of the world. You can overcome in the same way Christ did.

Seven Steps to Permanent Change

Applying the following seven basic steps will help you overcome any problem. They represent principles that will work in the process of overcoming no matter the size of your problem or problems.

If you diligently apply them, they will be a formula that will help you to permanently overcome in your life.

(1) Honestly face the problem. Many people will not do this. They hide their eyes from reality. Notice: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jer. 17:9). Most

willingly deceive themselves about their problems. Look your problems right in the eye and see them for what they are.

(2) Do not get discouraged. It is very easy to get disheartened—discouraged—upon acknowledging your problems. This is natural. Paul wrote of those “troubled on every side, yet not distressed...perplexed, but not in despair” (II Cor. 4:8). You may feel this way facing your problems, but do not get discouraged. Move to the next step.

(3) Set your will. Absolutely determine that you are going to defeat each particular problem and that each will *not defeat you!* Take a do-or-die approach. It has been said that the hardest battle is the *first* battle. Set your will to address each sin successfully. Tell yourself you are going to

**“Absolutely
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defeat it—you are going to rip it from your character. But again recognize you cannot fight the battle on your own. This leads to step 4.

(4) Form a partnership with God. If you set out to overcome on human strength alone, you will fail. Paul wrote, “I can do *all things through Christ* which strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13). Jesus said, “I can of My own self do nothing...” (John 5:30). On another occasion, when speaking to His disciples about those with certain things to overcome, Jesus said, “With men this is impossible; but WITH GOD ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE” (Matt. 19:26). Believe Jesus’ words. If He could do nothing on

His own, neither can you. Be sure you have formed a partnership with God—that you are not working on your own.

(5) Start right where you are. Admit the problem is whatever size it is. Neither overstate nor understate it. If it is a BIG problem, admit it! This is part of honestly facing the problem. If you are trying to overcome any pull of the flesh or temptation that has existed for a long time—that has been part of you for many years—admit the size of the problem. It has been said, “The longest journey begins with a single step.” That is true for the Christian. No matter how long it takes, or where you are when you start, begin wherever you find yourself. If you have wasted time before addressing the problem, admit it and “redeem the time” (Eph. 5:16).

(6) Be willing to pay the price. The Bible describes some who grow weary and “faint in the day of adversity” (Prov. 24:10) and that “their strength is small.” Notice: “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Gal. 6:9). Everything of value in life comes at a cost—a price. Sometimes this involves pain, suffering. Pay the price. Even Christ, the Bible says, learned “obedience by the things which He suffered” (Heb. 5:8). No one enjoys pain, but sometimes it is inescapable in the overcoming process.

(7) Do not give up before you have succeeded. Solomon wrote, “For a just man falls seven times [the Hebrew actually means many times], and rises up again...” (Prov. 24:16). Do not give up. NEVER quit! Wrestle, battle and struggle until you have completely overcome whatever obstacle, weakness, sin or problem you are facing!

Follow these points, always employing one step at a time. They have helped many win the war of overcoming!

A Lifelong Battle

Jesus also taught that he who *endures* to the end shall be *SAVED*

(Matt. 24:13). A life of growing and overcoming is a constant, daily struggle against fleshly temptation. But Christians are now being judged: “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that *obey not* the gospel of God? And *if the righteous scarcely be saved*, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” (I Pet. 4:17-18).

Paul knew he was being judged. Let’s read: “...Know you not [of course most do not] that they which run in a RACE run all, but *one* receives the prize? So *run*, that you may obtain [win]. And every man that strives for the mastery [championship or victory] is temperate in all things. Now they [non-Christians] do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we [Christians] an incorruptible. I therefore so RUN, not as uncertainly; so FIGHT I...lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away [failure or loser]” (I Cor. 9:23-27), and “...let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which does so easily beset us, and let us RUN WITH PATIENCE the RACE that is set before us” (Heb. 12:1).

Paul fought mightily against sin. He saw two opposing forces at work within his mind. Notice the intensity he brought to the struggle: “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwells no good thing: for *to will is present with me*; but how to perform that which is good I find not...I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members” (Rom. 7:18, 21-23).

The apostle Paul saw Christianity as “wrestling” (Eph. 6:11-12) against the wiles of the devil and said to, “PRESS toward the mark for the *prize* of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:14). He knew it takes great effort to win a long race.

Paul represents a classic example of how one of God’s greatest servants

fought to overcome sin. At the end, he could say that he had “fought a good fight” and had “finished his course” knowing a “crown” awaited him (II Tim. 4:7-8). But this did not happen without much running, wrestling, pressing, fighting and warring against the human nature he strove to overcome.

He also knew his race was a marathon, not a sprint.

What About You?

Humans require 15 to 20 years just to reach their full height. This long, physical growth process probably included a number of “growing pains.” No doubt, you fell and skinned your knee or bloodied your nose many times before reaching adulthood. *Christianity is no different!* Do not become discouraged and quit growing, any more than a child should quit life simply because he may have fallen or skinned a knee. When your child falls, you tell him to get up—this is part of life. *Christianity is no different!*

Children always want to grow up faster than life’s timetable permits. Though childhood is wonderful, it seems most young people cannot wait for adulthood. *Christianity is no different!* But full, mature Christian adulthood only comes after a long period of practicing the right way.

Perfection is a goal that carries with it a way of life that governs one’s every thought, action and word. God looks on the heart, the intent of a person who is yielded to Him. As long as he is spiritually growing and overcoming—and led by God’s Spirit—he remains a converted, begotten son of God.

It is only through regular prayer, Bible study, meditation and even fasting (going without food and water for a period) that the Christian can overcome the three foes—self, society and Satan—lying in wait for him every day of his life.

The Restored Church of God, which publishes this magazine, has ministers available to answer any questions you might have regarding the truth of conversion and overcoming. But they will not call on you. You must request it. God does not pressure, persuade, beg, cajole or force anyone to obey Him. He has made all human beings free moral agents. This includes you. The all-knowing, all-wise, loving Creator has given men the choice, and ability, to decide for themselves. He leaves it up to us to act on knowledge given. Thus, we never pressure people into joining us. But you may freely contact us.

You will find these two pieces of literature very helpful: *What Is True Conversion?* and *You Can Overcome and Prevent Sin*. Both are available at rcg.org.

Eventually, all peoples will sit before Jesus Christ. Some will have qualified to rule and some will not. Notice: “When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit *upon the throne of His glory*: and before Him shall be gathered *all nations*: and He shall separate them one from another...and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, you blessed of My Father, *INHERIT THE KINGDOM* prepared for you [all who have overcome] from the foundation of the world” (Matt. 25:31-34).

The GOVERNMENT of God will soon be restored to Earth. All who prepared themselves will “inherit the kingdom.” Only the *overcomers*, those who successfully submitted to God and resisted Satan throughout their lives, shall take part in this glorious future: “He that *OVERCOMES* shall *inherit all things*; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son” (Rev. 21:7).

Will you start down the path to overcome sin and *inherit all things*? □



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AMERICAS

U.S. Expected to Become World's Top Oil Producer Next Year

The U.S. has nosed ahead of Saudi Arabia and is on pace to surpass Russia to become the world's biggest oil producer for the first time in more than four decades.

The latest forecast from the U.S. Energy Information Administration predicts that U.S. output will grow next year to 11.8 million barrels a day.

"If the forecast holds, that would make the U.S. the world's leading producer of crude," says Linda Capuano, who heads the agency, a part of the Energy Department.

Saudi Arabia and Russia could upend that forecast by boosting their own production. In the face of rising global oil prices, members of the

OPEC cartel and a few non-members including Russia agreed last month to ease production caps that had contributed to the run-up in prices.

The idea that the U.S. could ever again become the world's top oil producer once seemed preposterous.

"A decade ago the only question was how fast would U.S. production go down," said Daniel Yergin, author of several books about the oil industry. The rebound of U.S. output "has made a huge difference. If this had not happened, we would have had a severe shortage of world oil," he said.

The United States led the world in oil production for much of the 20th century, but the Soviet Union surpassed America in 1974, and Saudi

Arabia did the same in 1976, according to Energy Department figures.

By the end of the 1970s the USSR was producing one-third more oil than the U.S.; by the end of the 1980s, Soviet output was nearly double that of the U.S.

The last decade or so has seen a revolution in American energy production, however, led by techniques including hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, and horizontal drilling.

Those innovations—and the breakup of the Soviet Union—helped the U.S. narrow the gap. Last year, Russia produced more than 10.3 million barrels a day, Saudi Arabia pumped just under 10 million, and the U.S. came in under 9.4 million barrels a day, according to U.S. government figures. □

HEALTH ISSUES

Scientists Update How Much Exercise Older Adults Need to Avoid Disease

New research has shown that older adults who exercise above current recommended levels have a reduced risk of developing chronic disease compared with those who do not exercise.

Researchers at the Westmead Institute for Medical Research inter-

viewed more than 1,500 Australian adults over age 50 and followed them over a 10-year period.

People who engaged in the highest levels of total physical activity were twice as likely to avoid stroke, heart disease, angina, cancer or diabetes, and be in optimal physical and mental shape 10 years later, experts found.

Lead Researcher Associate Professor Bamini Gopinath from the University of Sydney said the data showed that adults who completed more than 5,000 metabolic equivalent minutes (MET minutes) each week saw the greatest reduction in the risk of chronic disease.

Currently, the World Health Organization recommends at least 600 MET minutes of physical activity each week. That is equivalent to 150 minutes of brisk walking or 75 minutes of running.

"Essentially we found that older adults who did the most exercise were twice as likely to

be disease-free and fully functional," she said.

"Our study showed that high levels of physical activity increase the likelihood of surviving an extra 10 years free from chronic diseases, mental impairment and disability."

"With aging demographics in most countries, a major challenge is how to increase the quality and years of healthy life," Associate Professor Gopinath said.

"Our findings suggest that physical activity levels need to be several times higher than what the World Health Organization currently recommends to significantly reduce the risk of chronic disease.

"Some older adults may not be able to engage in vigorous activity or high levels of physical activity.

"But we encourage older adults who are inactive to do some physical activity, and those who currently only engage in moderate exercise to incorporate more vigorous activity where possible," she concluded. □



The Great Barrier Reef Is Losing Its Ability to Recover, Could Cost Australia Billions



The Great Barrier Reef is losing its ability to recover after bleaching events, cyclones or pest outbreaks, according to a report published in *Science Advances* on July 18.

Scientists at The University of Queensland, the ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reefs Studies, and the Australian Institute of Marine Science have found a decline in the ability of Great Barrier Reef Marine Park reefs to recover over an 18-year period, from 1992 to 2010.

Dr. Juan Ortiz, lead author from The Australian Institute of Marine Sciences and UQ's School of Biological Sciences, said that during this time, average coral recovery rates showed a six-fold decline across the Great Barrier Reef.

"This is the first time a decline in recovery rate of this magnitude has been identified in coral reefs," he said.

While this trend generates obvious environmental concerns, it could also bring about massive economic costs.

In 2017, Deloitte Access Economics valued the Great Barrier Reef at about \$42 billion. The firm estimated the natural wonder added \$4.7 billion per year to Australia's economy, mostly from tourism.

A 2014 study published in *Global Environmental Change* said the number should be much higher. It stated that

reefs should be valued at \$352,000 per hectare per year. The reef along the shore of Queensland covers 35 million hectares, which would put its value at over \$12 trillion annually.

Researchers say the recovery decline is driven by a combination of the lingering effects of disturbances such as coral bleaching and cyclones as well as the ongoing effect of chronic pressures including poor water quality.

Professor Peter Mumby of the ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies said that this was serious cause for concern, but not all reefs are failing.

"I believe there is scope for management to help remedy the situation," he said.

"Our results indicate that coral recovery is sensitive to water quality, and is suppressed for several years following powerful cyclones.

"Some reefs could improve their recovery ability if the quality of the water entering the reef is actively improved."

Study co-author Dr. Nicholas Wolff, from The Nature Conservancy, said that some areas of the reef are faring better than others, but their overall finding was that action needs to be taken.

"While there was variability among regions, the decline in recovery rate

was consistent in all coral types included in the study," he said.

Dr. Ortiz said that the frequency of disturbances was predicted to increase.

"The future of the Great Barrier Reef is threatened without further local management to reduce chronic disturbances and support recovery..."

The research was based on monitored data collected from more than 90 reefs across the Great Barrier Reef. It does not even account for the mass bleaching event in 2016 that was the worst on record, causing an estimated loss of one-quarter of the reef's shallow-water coral.

Loss of coral can impact human populations.

"Many hundreds of millions of people are dependent in some way on the goods and services provided by coral reefs, with over 100 million directly dependent on coral reefs for their survival," think-tank Reef Resilience explained on its website. For example, "In developing countries, coral reefs contribute about one-quarter of the total fish catch, providing food to an estimated one billion people in Asia alone."

The 2016 mass bleaching event off Australia's coast reduced the population of a number of fish species, including clownfish and butterflyfish, which are essential to reefs' complex ecosystem. □



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