

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2019

THE

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REAL TRUTH™

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING

FACES OF 2018



**Why Migrants
Want to Be in America**

**"The Beginning of Sorrows"
—Here Now!**

**Sickness or Good Health:
You Decide!**

**Was Holiday
Shopping Worth It?**

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REAL TRUTH[™]
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VOL. XVII | NO. 1 | JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2019

A R T I C L E S

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■ A group of Central American migrants climb a barrier on the Mexico-U.S. border in Tijuana, Mexico (Nov. 25, 2018).

PHOTO: PEDRO PARDO/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Why Migrants Want to Be in America

Central Americans are willing to risk all in pursuit of what almost no other country can offer.

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FRONT COVER: A student from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School addresses other students in Parkland, Florida, during a nationwide protest of gun violence (Feb. 21, 2018).

PHOTO: RHONA WISE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

CREDITS: All photos from Getty Images unless otherwise noted. Articles on pages 4-7, 12-29 contain information from The Associated Press.

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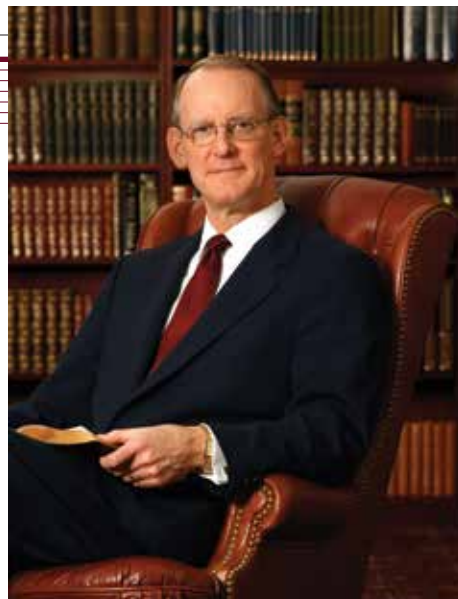
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PERSONAL FROM

David C. Fack



“The Beginning of Sorrows”—Here Now!

THE WORLD HAS changed. Mankind has entered a dark period that few recognize for what it is. Troubles are sweeping the globe with noticeably greater force. Deceit, division, disorder, instability, lawlessness, corruption and conflict of every kind are intensifying. Why?

Millions believe Bible prophecy holds the answer, but do not know how. Do supernatural events signal the “time of the end?” Or do *specific conditions* already present do this? What did Jesus say? And what did He say would come **FIRST** in the march of end-time prophecy?

Growing millions are *troubled*, even *terrified*, by what is happening almost everywhere. Studies reveal that just over two-thirds in most nations are now feeling *much* more anxiety and fear. Millions of others pursue pleasure, heads buried in the sand, to help them ignore the growing storm so obviously descending on the world. Two thousand years ago, Jesus Christ foretold why this worldwide pleasure pursuit—as well as the fear and terror that would help drive it. But conditions will soon get *much* worse—and *fast!*

What follows are not my ideas. I am only explaining what is revealed plainly in your Bible.

First in Sequence

Jesus was asked in Matthew by His disciples about conditions just before His Return to Earth. He stated: “And you shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that you be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in diverse places” (vs. 6-7).

Verse 8 calls these terrible trends “the beginning of sorrows.” All of them will grow much worse *before* Christ returns. All of them are growing worse **NOW**.

Notice that Jesus said “be not troubled” when these events occur. The original Greek means “to wail, clamor, be frightened” (all Greek definitions are from *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*).

Mark repeats Jesus’ warning almost verbatim: “You shall hear of wars and rumors of wars, be you not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet” (13:7).

The list in Mark’s account is similar to Matthew’s, yet it adds “troubles” (vs. 8). This word can mean a “disturbance of water” or “mob sedition.” Think of Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Michael, or the tsunami

that struck Indonesia. Think of the violent protests in France, Zimbabwe and Venezuela.

Luke—a third gospel—adds the term “commotions” (21:9). The Greek here means “instability or disorder.” Again, this is describing *today’s* world.

All three accounts mention earthquakes—and there certainly are earthquakes all the time—but that is just one facet of what Jesus meant here. The term is translated from *seismos*, from which comes seismograph. It means a commotion of the air or ground. This includes a wide range of natural disasters, floods, fires, tornadoes, volcanoes and tsunamis.

These are powerful passages. Very few notice them. And even fewer believe them. Yet God inspired Christ’s prophetic warning to be recorded three times in His Instruction Book!

Get this all-important point. Wars, rumors and commotions—all kinds of instability and disorder—**FIRST** grow to where they engender *terror*. Then Christ will return.

An Era of Violence

Headlines SCREAM that the world is rapidly accelerating into this period, which will only grow worse. Terror is the natural result. Fear will come to gnaw at billions of people. But Christ’s small Church knows what the future holds—and what to do about it. This is why they believe His instruction to “*fear not, little flock!*” (Luke 12:32).

Later in Luke 21, Jesus told individuals to carefully *watch* these conditions: “Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares” (vs. 34). Why? “For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. **WATCH** you therefore, and pray always, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man” (vs. 35-36). “All these things”

includes *other* horrors Christ foretold in Luke 21 that are not our subject.

Tensions of every kind are increasing everywhere—particularly in nations of the West. Instability and disorder are most visible in the United States—the world’s most powerful nation ever. In 2016, America elected a new president. He received under half the popular vote but won in the electoral college. For this and other reasons, everyone in a country that was once a beacon of stability and order now feels the sharp, angry division growing daily.

Understand. America faces impossible gridlock that will only grow

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worse. It will not get better. Just once in American history has such sharp division existed—the Civil War. The pitched battle between the right and left touches people of every background and economic class.

An all-out war in the West on values of every kind is underway. And so is another war by the media on the present U.S. administration. Just the amount of instability and disorder these two things bring is enormous.

Look around the globe. The other conditions Christ mentioned are EVERYWHERE. War includes Israel versus Palestine and Ukraine versus Russia—but it also means relent-

less drone strikes throughout many nations. There are famines in Yemen and Venezuela. Diseases include Ebola exploding in Africa, HIV surging in Europe, and measles increasing worldwide. Think of how many more headlines could be mentioned here!

When Matthew and Mark say there will be “nation against nation” it is not talking about war, which is already on the list. The Greek here is “ethnos” against “ethnos.” There are *constant* battles between ethnic groups. The U.S.’s immigration debate is just one example. Also think of the Catalanian uprising in Spain, persecution of Rohingya in Myanmar, the Turks against Kurdish peoples, and so forth.

Add to all of these the earthquakes, volcanoes, fires, cyclones and all other manner of natural disasters.

What This Means for You

Come to grips with the truth of prophecy. Do not miss what is going on all around you. Jesus Christ was right!

In a world wracked with terror and frightening events, recall that Jesus assured His tiny end-time Church, “Fear not, little flock,” adding, “... it is your Father’s good pleasure to give *you* the kingdom” (Luke 12:32). “Little” comes from the Greek word *micros*. Jesus built a small, micro Church—not a large one. (Read *Where Is God’s Church?* at rcg.org/wigtc for more on this subject.)

Soon, the events and headlines cited in this *Real Truth* issue will be old news—replaced by bigger and worse stories. God is bringing a violent wakeup call no one should be able to miss—but sadly most will. This need not be *you*. Jesus said you can understand world events and avoid the fear and terror associated with them.

As the chaos intensifies in a BIG way—when *terror* and *trouble* prevail everywhere—know that only one publication is proclaiming the truth about these things. This is it! Keep reading the articles in *The Real Truth* and online at rcg.org/realtruth. □

WHY MIGRANTS WANT TO BE IN AMERICA

Central Americans are willing to risk all in pursuit of what almost no other country can offer.

BY NESTOR A. TORO

A YOUNG HONDURAN man was worried, and you could see it on his face: Clutching his 1-year-old son, he looked back apprehensively toward the barrier he just crossed. He was on United States soil and he knew that he did not have authorization to be there.

It was the middle of the night on November 29, at the U.S.-Mexico border. The man, holding his toddler close, decided to take a chance, looking for a different, better life than the one he had back in Honduras or in a bleak, overcrowded shelter in Tijuana. He knew he would likely be arrested, but it was worth the risk if it meant he could apply for asylum in the U.S.

Earlier in the night, several swam around or climbed over the border barrier and were quickly detained by Border Patrol agents.

But the young man, his son bundled up against the night chill in a hooded jacket, leggings and boots, waited. When he saw an opportunity, he climbed over the border barrier as people on the Mexican side held his son, then handed the child through the bars. After a swift look back, he disappeared into the night, walking up a slope toward a second barrier wall on the U.S. side.

He is among more than 6,000 migrants from Central America who are in Tijuana, just across the border from San Diego, California. The group, which started spontaneously in Honduras with about 160 people leaving the gang-plagued city of San Pedro Sula, is the largest to ever reach the Mexican border in hope of crossing into the U.S.

■ A caravan of more than 1,500 Honduran migrants moves north after crossing the border from Honduras into Guatemala (Oct. 15, 2018).

PHOTO: JOHN MOORE/GETTY IMAGES





Mexican officials are expending resources to shelter them as they wait to enter the U.S. But the migrants, after weeks of being packed in an open-air sports complex designed to hold 3,500, are becoming increasingly desperate.

On November 25, U.S. border agents fired tear gas on hundreds of migrants protesting near the border with Mexico after some of them attempted to get through the fencing and wire separating the two countries. The showdown threw into sharp relief two competing narratives about the caravan of migrants hoping to apply for asylum but stuck on the Mexican side.

Liberals say conservatives assume migrants are dangerous and want to send them back home, which liberals argue defies the principles America was founded on. Conservatives say liberals want them to come in freely, which conservatives say would allow gang members and other criminals to enter and endanger society.

Tension over border policy supercharged U.S. midterm elections.

“I think it’s so unprecedented that everyone is hanging their own fears and political agendas on the caravan,” said Andrew Selee, president of the Migration Policy Institute, a nonpartisan think-tank focused on immigration. “You can call it scary, you can call it hopeful, you can call it a sign of human misery. You can hang whatever angle you want to on it.”

But what both sides of the political spectrum miss is that the extent to which the caravan is willing to go emphasizes something unique about the United States of America.

Determined to Go

Despite the conditions in the camp and the difficulty of securing asylum in the U.S., most migrants feel the alternative—staying in their home countries—is not an option.

Primarily from Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua, they faced rampant poverty, political instability and some of the highest violence rates in the world.

Miguel Ortiz of Honduras reclined in a pig trailer with his wife and son.

They were headed to the U.S. for a better life where they could work for more than just putting food on the table.

“I decided to come [with the caravan] to help my family,” Maria Yesenia Perez, a 41-year-old who left La Ceiba, Honduras, told *The Associated Press*. She and her 8-year-old daughter were hoisted onto the back of a semitrailer on their way to the border.

Astrid Daniela Aguilar, who was traveling with two cousins ages 3 and 4, lined up alongside the highway to await a chance at hitching a ride.

“You can’t find work there,” she said of her home country of Honduras.

“Many are running for their lives,” *Chicago Tribune* reported. “El Salvador has the highest homicide rate on the planet. ‘Migrants from all three countries cite violence, forced gang recruitment, and extortion, as well as poverty and lack of opportunity,’ reports the New York-based Council on Foreign Relations. Vicious criminal gangs live off drug trafficking, kidnapping and extortion, and governments hobbled by corruption can’t stop them. About 60 percent of Hondurans and half of Guatemalans live in poverty.”

Perhaps the main reason for the exodus of people is a lack of food. “The focus on violence is eclipsing the big picture—which is that people are saying they are moving because of some version of food insecurity,” Robert Albro, a researcher at the Center for Latin American and Latino Studies at American University, told *The Guardian*.

Nearly 60 percent of Guatemalan migrants cited drought as their reason for leaving.

One Honduran farmer abandoned his lands after repeated failures of his crops, maize and beans.

“It didn’t rain this year. Last year it didn’t rain,” he said. “My maize field didn’t produce a thing. With my expenses, everything we invested, we didn’t have any earnings. There was no harvest.”

He “hit the road in early October and joined the migrant caravan,” the news outlet continued. “He left behind a wife and three children—ages 16, 14

and 11—who were forced to abandon school because [he] couldn't afford to pay for their supplies."

Conditions in the Camps

Aid workers and humanitarian organizations must bear the brunt of helping maintain the stress of an influx of needy people. Lice infestations and respiratory infections are rampant at the Tijuana complex.

The one large, wedding-style tent pitched in the middle of a sports field and several smaller ones with a capacity for just a few hundred people were far from adequate for the swelling number of migrants who keep arriving daily. Most were camped in makeshift enclosures made of lashed blankets and sheets of plastic or flimsy tents. Others have slept on sidewalks because they could not find space in the complex or decided it was more comfortable outside.

The United Nations children's agency, UNICEF, said it was "deeply concerned" for the well-being of more than 1,000 migrant children.

"These children have limited access to many of the essential services they need for their well-being, including nutrition, education, psychosocial support and health care," UNICEF said. Making the situation worse, the agency's workers had to compromise as it lost space on a baseball field after the arrival of more migrants.

"The overcrowding here causes them to get into places where they shouldn't like under the bleachers" where it is filthy, a health volunteer said. "There's overcrowding and very few hygiene norms...With the water and the cold there are going to be too many infections, a lot of fevers. There is going to be a need for antibiotics."

Rene Vazquez, 60, a Tijuana resident who was volunteering at the stadium, said Mexico's federal government ignored the problem by allowing the caravan to cross the country without stopping. Now the city of 1.3 million is stuck with the fallout.

Mr. Vazquez plays on a soccer team that uses the sports complex, but since his soccer team can no lon-

ger practice there, he was spending time passing out donated pizzas and roasted chicken to the migrants.

A health volunteer said opening another shelter could help, but he was not sure how many of the migrants would go, especially if it is located far from the border.

"The thing is, they don't like to separate from the larger group and the border here," he said, noting that the migrants feared being tricked and deported. "They prefer to suffer to be here."

The Dilemma

Even if the U.S. wanted to let all the migrants in, the process would not be easy.

The migrants must put their names on a waiting list to apply for asylum that already had some 3,000 people on it before the caravan arrived in Tijuana. With U.S. officials processing fewer than 100 claims a day, the wait time for the recent arrivals stands to take months.

For the most part, the migrants are waiting to enter the U.S. legally. One of them, Ilse Marilu, 24, who arrived with her 3-year-old daughter, planned to stay in Tijuana until caravan leaders arrived and offered help on how to seek asylum in the U.S.

"We are going to enter through the front door," Mrs. Marilu said to *The Associated Press*, insisting she would never try to enter the country illegally.

However, others like Henry Salinas, 30, of Honduras, have different intentions. He said that he intended to wait for thousands more in the caravan to arrive and that he hoped to jump the fence in a large group at the same time with the goal of overwhelming Border Patrol agents.

The likelihood of this occurring increases with time as migrants continue to hold out in camps. And as it does, the response from the U.S. will likely become more assertive.

President Donald Trump even warned that the U.S. may close the border—which could disrupt billions of dollars in trade—should the group at the border become more aggressive.

Immigration on America's southern border has always been a complex



■ A group of Central American migrants cross the dry riverbed of the Tijuana River in an attempt to reach the U.S. (Nov. 25, 2018).

PHOTO: PEDRO PARDO/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

challenge, as examples from the past show.

Since 2016, thousands of Haitians who also tried to get to the U.S. ended up settling in Tijuana. At the same time, the city has taken in thousands of Mexicans deported from the United States.

“For years, Central America has endured a humanitarian crisis,” *Chicago Tribune* stated. “It was easy for Americans to ignore, but now we realize how civil strife, poverty and organized crime in our backyard endanger us.”

“From 2014 through 2017, reports The Wall Street Journal, immigration authorities in the U.S. and Mexico apprehended more than 335,000 migrants from El Salvador alone. Since 2014, the number of U.S. asylum applications from those countries has quadrupled.”

As the U.S. continues to grapple with how to handle the increasing influx of refugees, it must recognize what the travelers see in the country that makes them want to come here so badly.

What Immigrants See

Even when Mexico offers refuge, asylum or work visas to migrants, most vow to continue on into the U.S. Clearly the United States has something migrants seek that cannot even be obtained anywhere else.

Some see material prosperity. “We can earn more [in the U.S.] and give something to our family. But there [in Honduras] even when we want to give something to our children, we can’t because the little we earn it’s just for food, to pay the house and the light, nothing else,” said Nubia Morazan, 28, of Honduras to *AP* as she prepared to set out with her husband and two children.

Immigrants see that Americans are not spending almost everything they make on transportation, with little left for food. And that they never have to borrow money from gang members who charge exorbitant interest. (If you are unable to repay \$250 to a gangbanger in Honduras, your debt becomes \$700 accompanied by death threats.)

Migrants see an overall better quality of life in the states. They realize that even those who live in “bad” American neighborhoods merely long to move to a better one in the country rather than abandon their citizenship and take off.

Americans are generally not willing nor have a need to slog hundreds of miles underneath a baking sun or clamber aboard foul-smelling garbage trucks to travel toward another country.

Clearly, immigrants see the U.S. with different eyes than most Americans. To them, Americans have been *blessed* with what no other country can claim.

Destitute peoples of other nations recognize and are reaching for those blessings—and understandably so.

And the fact that many Americans are wary of so many thousands of people trying to enter the country at once helps prove that they are holding onto something special. Americans understand they are blessed with stability, wealth and peace to an extent very few other nations have, and they want to keep those blessings. Some fear losing jobs to immigrants. Some are anxious about threats to their security, comfort and national pride.

Both sides do have a legitimate desire to enjoy such good things. But neither pauses to consider where these blessings originate.

Source of Prosperity

The fact that the U.S. rose quickly to become the most powerful and prosperous nation in history in a relatively short period of time is an anomaly to historians. But most do not realize that this was foretold to occur—millennia ago!

The editor-in-chief of this magazine, David C. Pack, detailed this in his book *America and Britain in Prophecy*. In it, he states: “The most sought-after destinations for immigration by the oppressed peoples of the world for over a century have been America, Britain and various commonwealth countries. The very mention of these nations became associated with freedom and prosperity!”

The book further explains that these blessings were promised to the descendants of a righteous man who lived

over 3,000 years ago: “Remember God’s promise to Abraham: ‘that in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because you have obeyed My voice’ (Gen. 22:17-18).”

The book also states: “Abraham’s heirs were to be: (1) A great people, in tremendous strength and numbers—‘as the stars of the skies’; (2) they were to be a source of help to other nations—they would, in type, ‘benefit all the nations of the earth’; and (3) they were to possess the ‘gates of their enemies’—key strategic sea ‘gates,’ which would help establish and fortify world dominance! Through identifying the PEOPLE receiving these blessings—the descendants of Abraham are discovered!”

Think: A single great, powerful nation with a large population. It benefits other nations around the world rather than crushes or conquers them—no other country has offered more humanitarian assistance than the United States. It controlled crucial trade routes, military strongholds, and natural barriers—the Panama Canal, Guam, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, Alaska’s Aleutian Islands and more.

For further proof that Abraham’s blessed descendants are the peoples of the United States as well as Britain and its Commonwealth nations, read Mr. Pack’s book at rcg.org/aabibp. It will also explain how these blessings came to be, and God’s purpose in giving them.

Those in the migrant caravan are striving to attain these unprecedented blessings, all given to the U.S. as a result of God’s promise to one faithful man.

Yet know that God does not intend to leave the rest of the world out on such benefits. The same Bible that foretold what so many immigrants are today seeking also has more to say about how God intends to bless all other nations and end their plight.

For more on this, read *Tomorrow’s Wonderful World – An Inside View!* at rcg.org/tww. □

Sickness *or* Good Health: *You Decide!*

Millions find themselves sick and miserable. A close examination of the facts reveals that some choose to be unhealthy. What about you?

BY KENNETH M. OREL

“WALK OFF 30 Pounds in Eight Weeks”—“30 Simple Ways You Can Prevent Cancer”—“Foods that Fight the Flu!” All the information necessary to live a healthy life fills books, internet help sites and magazine articles, yet every year millions suffer from obesity, heart disease, cancer, diabetes, arthritis, influenza and other maladies.

Why?

When it comes to health, everything you do produces an effect—good or bad. It is that simple. Food choice, exercise, water consumption and sleep habits *all* have an effect.

Generally speaking, the human body is an incredible machine capable of taking a lot of abuse. But as one grows older, the abuse begins to catch up. Years of eating empty foods and a lack of activity eventually can *cause* obesity,

disease, constant sickness, cancer, skin problems, sleep disorders, etc. These are all the *effects* of decisions you made.

Name something—anything—in your life that was not a direct result of a choice. Even choosing *not* to do something is a decision that produces an effect.

Generally, those who are cautious about decisions they make live full lives. They invest the appropriate amount of time to consider consequences that a decision could bring. These individuals “count the cost” of the actions they take (or do not take).

Then there are those on the other side of the fence who go through this process haphazardly, oblivious to the fact that what they do now will ultimately paint the picture of who they become. They drift aimlessly, allowing life’s circumstances to call the shots.

While some of these daily decisions are routine and minimally affect

us, others have a lasting impact. One of these vital areas is health. Unless you are successful in managing this aspect of your life, almost nothing else matters.

Whether you realize it or not, you *do* make the choice of whether you will enjoy vibrant health or endure poor health.

Health Today

The Western world’s overall state of health is disturbing. While many citizens of developing countries suffer from a lack of food and have little control over their well-being, those in wealthier nations have become negligent in managing their health. Millions of people are unhappy, overweight and constantly sick, with a lower quality of life compared to earlier generations.

What is missing?

A trip to the grocery store is revealing. Shoppers make one bad choice after another. Shopping carts are filled



with “non-foods” loaded with sugar, grains that have been depleted and bleached, unhealthy fats, and over-processed foods full of chemicals and strange ingredients.

Never have there been so many health-related problems. In the United States alone, the aggregate cost of medical care in 2017 was \$3.5 trillion. The U.S. offers the most advanced health-care in the world, and people spend a staggering amount of money on their health. Yet they keep getting sick.

Again, why is this?

Two Concepts of Treating Disease

There are two opposing concepts of treating disease. The TRADITIONAL CONCEPT of disease is not much different than voodoo. The only difference is that “evil spirits” have been replaced by evil germs, bacteria or viruses. The traditional concept is that disease *unpredictably* strikes *unsuspecting* victims—these are things that people “catch.” The job of the modern “medicine man” is to rescue the victim by killing or driving out the evil intruders (the germ or virus) with “magic” medical power from his arsenal of needles and prescriptions.

The newer BIOLOGICAL CONCEPT takes exception to traditional symptomatic drug therapy in treating disease. It is based on irrefutable proof that invading bacteria or viruses are not the *primary* cause of disease. Rather, it is weakened resistance, brought about by health-destroying lifestyles. Bacteria enter the picture only in the later stages. They help terminate organisms lacking a strong defense against them. Strong immunity is common to all *healthy* organisms.

Scientists and biologists know that bacteria are always present in our environment, as well as in a dormant state in all organisms. These bacteria are almost invariably completely harmless when natural health and resistance are maintained. However, they will step in and destroy the host organism as soon as its vitality and resistance weaken or diminish.

Rather than treating the symptoms with drugs, the biological concept emphasizes finding and correcting the CAUSE of the disease. The results

are sometimes realized quickly. Other times, results take longer to appear. In a nutshell, the *cause-and-effect approach* has been far more successful than treating the *symptoms*.

Good health is a precious attribute. You must maintain it. Otherwise, it deteriorates. Traditional living habits and environments are hostile to good health. Unless *you* make an effort to protect and maintain it, good health could easily disappear—even at an early age. Given the correct habits and environment, the body was designed to be self-healing and naturally healthy.

No Shortcuts

When confronted with a health concern—such as heart disease or diabetes—many turn to doctors who prescribe the latest drug. When that does not work, they turn to television infomercials and internet advertisements that promise, “Lose 50 pounds in 50 days!” or “Watch the fat melt off while not making a single change to your diet!”

Sadly, millions have their hopes dashed after spending money on what turn out to be empty promises. An entire industry profits on the premise that people do not want to change their lifestyles, but prefer a supposed quick-fix miracle solution.

Despite this, you must understand there are no shortcuts.

People are puzzled as to why they have no energy and are frequently sick. The greater tragedy is that ill health becomes *normal* to them.

The fact is, many *choose* to be in this condition. They *choose* to eat in an irresponsible way. They *choose* to be overweight and not exercise. They *choose* to suffer health problems that tax their internal organs and systems—respiratory, circulatory, digestive and many other interrelated systems that were “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psa. 139:14) to keep you healthy, active and alive.

However, due to neglect, ignorance or just plain laziness, time takes its toll. As the saying goes, the time comes to “pay the piper.” Eventually, the body breaks down and is no longer capable of functioning as it was designed. The result is sickness—cancer, stroke, heart

disease, diabetes—along with a myriad of other illnesses.

A quote from our article “What You Need to Know About Fasting” helps explain the true cause of poor health.

“Illness results from some kind of physical sin. God made the human body; therefore, He knows what is good for it. God created laws of health that yield blessings when obeyed. If broken, they bring curses—illness, sickness, disease. All too often, mankind violates these perfect laws—just like it rejects God’s spiritual laws. People often eat too much of one kind of food and not enough of another; or we eat the wrong food altogether. Breaking God’s dietary laws results in ILLNESS.”

There Is a Way Out!

No matter how bad the physical condition in which you may find yourself, it is never too late to do something about it. You are capable of improving your life and experiencing the great joy that God desires for you. He wants those who follow Him to prosper and be healthy (III John 2).

You can start heading toward a healthier lifestyle. There is hope!

The Bible provides guidelines that will lead to better health. For most people, this is a stunning statement. But the solution to overcoming poor health is available if you choose.

It takes courage to change course, especially if you have made poor health decisions your entire life. You should (1) accept the fact that you have been “doing it wrong” and commit to change, (2) understand there is a way out, (3) turn to the source of right knowledge—God’s Word—to learn how to make wise decisions, and (4) change!

If all this seems too daunting, start with one or two small changes and build from there. See “6 Guidelines to Wholesome Foods” on the following page for simple ways to improve your diet.

Read our booklet *God’s Principles of Healthful Living* (rcg.org/glohl) and David C. Pack’s thorough booklet *The Truth About Healing* (rcg.org/ttahe) to learn how you can live a vibrant and prosperous life from this day forward. □



6 GUIDELINES TO WHOLESOME FOODS

1 Most of your diet (preferably over 60 percent) should consist of foods in their natural, uncooked or lightly cooked state. Raw vegetables and fruits are superior to those that are cooked. Cooking destroys much of the nutritional value. Many vitamins are partly destroyed, minerals are leached out (if boiled) and all enzymes are destroyed by temperatures over 120 degrees Fahrenheit.

Sprouting is an excellent way to eat seeds, beans and grains in the raw form. (Sprouting involves harvesting seeds at the point of germination.) Another excellent way is to eat foods such as homemade sauerkraut. Certain foods, like potatoes and yams, dried beans and peas and grains, must be cooked.

The ideal of eating more than 60 percent of our vegetables raw is a goal that few are able to attain. However, rather than writing this off as impractical, try to increase your daily intake of salads, sprouts and raw fruits and vegetables. You will be glad you did!

Due to requiring different digestive enzymes, raw vegetables and fruits should generally be eaten at separate times. Health professionals point out that *one or two* vegetables appear to be better than a mixture of *four or five*. Likewise, a fruit salad of *two or three* kinds of fruit appear to be better digested than one with *five or six* kinds of fruit. Due to fruit's cleansing effect, a "one or two" combo fruit salad makes an ideal late evening snack.

2 If possible, foods should be whole, unrefined and grown near your environment. Imported foods can contain bacteria to which your body may not be accustomed.

When natives of a region eat domestically grown, natural, whole, unprocessed and unrefined foods, they enjoy wonderful health and long lives. When denatured, refined, processed, manmade foods (such as white sugar and white flour, and canned and processed foods) enter their diets, disease becomes rampant.

3 Pure water, though rare, is vital to the human body. Drink a generous amount daily—some suggest one ounce of water for every two pounds of body weight (0.3 liter per 10 kilograms). Pure water for drinking and cooking should be natural water from a deep well or a mineral spring. Many health professionals recommend the drinking of reverse osmosis water because of so many unknown contaminants that affect our water supply and the unpredictable risk in buying what is labeled as “pure water.” When drinking highly purified water on a regular basis, consider taking a supplement that supplies trace minerals that would normally be found in pure water.

As mentioned, it is becoming more and more difficult to obtain uncontaminated natural water in today’s poisoned environment. Whether your water is from a well or supplied by the city, try to use a filter. Most filter systems are relatively inexpensive and are efficient—just remember to replace the inside section of the filter assembly every other month or so. Bottled water has been shown to be unreliable and inconsistent, though expensive. If you have to depend on water purchased at a store, consider purchasing it in large bottles from a reputable supplier of natural mineral spring water or distilled water.

News stories have repeatedly revealed incidents of water that had been labeled and sold as “spring water” being discovered to be nothing more than tap water from municipal water systems. Laboratory tests on bottled water have yielded some amazing results as to the contents of what is sold as pure water. Here is a sampling of dangerous impurities commonly found in marketed drinking water in minute amounts: benzene, carbon tetrachloride, propyl alcohol and wood alcohol (methanol).

6 Another food staple to consider is vegetable oil. Health professionals recommend *first cold-pressed* vegetable oils. Some of the favored cold-pressed oils are those from olives, sunflower seeds, sesame seeds and canola. As a general rule, olive oil imported from Italy or Spain is usually cold-pressed. Since natural cold-pressed oils are not cooked or processed, and can eventually turn rancid, check the date on each bottle or container.

Large food processors are permitted to use strong solvents to extract oil from certain nuts and seeds. While this method is more efficient than the cold-pressed method, it leaves behind solvent residues, which are then evaporated by high temperature. (This heat kills any residual



4 Milk is an excellent food. But those who are lactose intolerant should consider avoiding it. Raw milk is far superior to pasteurized and homogenized milk. The title “nature’s most perfect food” correctly belongs to *raw* whole milk—a nutritional gold mine. Unfortunately, most of us have to settle for an inferior product since interest groups like the American Dairy Association, with the approval of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), have successfully pushed raw milk off the commercial market.

An ideal way to take milk is in its soured form: as yogurt, kefir or acidophilus milk. Goat milk is better than cow milk as human food. While cow milk seems to be not recommended for patients with arthritis, rheumatic disease or cancer, goat milk contains both anti-arthritic and anti-cancer factors. Some feel that it may be therapeutic for these conditions. Look for goat milk that is fresh, rather than the refined variety that is canned or powdered. Many people who are lactose intolerant can tolerate goat milk.

5 Natural, raw, unprocessed honey is one of the best sweeteners available. It has amazing nutritional and medicinal properties that have been used for healing purposes. It has been well established that most centenarians (individuals 100 years of age and above) used honey liberally in their diets. Honey can increase calcium retention in the system, help prevent nutritional anemia, and is beneficial in fighting kidney and liver disorders. It can also be therapeutic for colds and poor circulation problems.

Consider how God associated milk and honey with the bountiful blessings of the land promised to Israel: “And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land *flowing with milk and honey*” (Ex. 3:8).

Milk and honey were ancient symbols of health and bountiful blessings. So are they today, especially in their most natural state, unprocessed by man.

vitamins that may have survived the strong solvents.) These residues include a generous supply of free radicals that are toxic to any organism. Coping with these toxins adds additional stress to the overtaxed immune system. For these reasons, items such as mayonnaise, potato chips, and French fries laden with vegetable oil should be avoided or greatly limited.

Many have difficulty understanding that fresh natural food can turn bad if left too long on a shelf. The reason processed foods have a longer shelf life is that only impotent carbohydrates are left behind once the nutritious parts are removed or cooked to extinction in the “refinement process.” Not much is left that is even subject to deterioration. □



FACES OF 2018

BY DAVID J. LITAVSKY

THE EYES ARE a window into the heart. You can learn a lot about people—particularly their thoughts, emotions and experiences—through the expression of their eyes and looks on their faces. If you could put a face on the events of the past 12 months, what emotions would you see?

Start with *fear* and *confusion*.

The heightened level of gun violence in the United States caused widespread panic. During the year, four mass shootings ranked in the top 25 deadliest in the nation's history. No other year had more than two shootings that resulted in more than 10 deaths.

And the attacks occurred in places generally deemed safe: two at schools (in Parkland, Florida, and Santa Fe, Texas), one at night in a bar filled with university students, and yet another in a Jewish place of worship.

A host of other developments around the world engendered more fear: new nuclear weapons in Russia, a trade war with China, Brexit fallout.

Concern mounted over whether Iran would respond to Washington's decision to pull out of the Iran nuclear deal and reimpose sanctions on Tehran, as well as the Palestinian reaction to the U.S. decision to move its embassy in Israel to Jerusalem.

Fear leads to *anger* and *frustration*.

Protests filled headlines. There were #MeToo movement accusations, student walk-outs against gun violence, and demonstrations against governments. Zimbabweans protested their new government's failure to fix their poor economic situation after it was passed over from ousted President Robert Mugabe to President Emmerson Mnangagwa. French citizens took to the streets in reaction to increased taxes and living costs, resulting in the worst urban riots in decades.

Such prolonged frustration gives way to political shifts both left and right.

Fueled by anger of widespread corruption and an increasing murder rate, Mexicans elected leftist Andres Manuel Lopez Obrado in a landslide vote. Europe experienced renewed nationalist political movements, even in left-leaning nations such as Germany. China's President Xi Jinping was given constitutional rights to be "president for life"—allow-

■ Yemeni children and their fathers hold weapons to show support for the Houthi movement in Sanaa (Sept. 27, 2018).

PHOTO: MOHAMMED HUWAIS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

ing him to become the most powerful leader in Beijing since Mao Zedong.

Amid frustration, people seek *hope* for a better future.

Spectators reveled in the participation of North Korean athletes in the Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea. People expressed hope that Cuba would become more democratized when the Castro regime finally ended and Miguel Diaz-Canel was sworn in as its president.

But what little hope glistens in the world's eyes barely lasts. Eventually, the repetition of the news cycle and a barrage of bad news becomes overwhelming. It is easy to become *indifferent*.

Many events have become so politicized, too, that watchers turn a blind eye to the cause of "the other side" and inadvertently dehumanize them. Worse, viewers can even think the other side "deserves it."

Lastly, horrific humanitarian situations can be ignored because they happen in distant places. After all, bad things seem to only happen to somebody else, somewhere else.

Thus the fear, anger, anguish, hope and hysteria that we could see in the world's eyes are lost in a swirl of statistics, headlines and politics.

We may hear that 400,000 children are severely malnourished in Yemen's unending civil war. But we miss the details of Yemeni children eating nothing but the leaves of a vine, boiled into a sour, acidic green paste in order to survive as their parents struggle to find food.

We may briefly gasp at the staggering death toll from Indonesia's earthquake and tsunami in September. But we miss the story of an engaged couple who were planning their futures together while walking on the beach only to be separated—probably forever—by the powerful waves.

We become mesmerized by stunning images of eerie blue flames near Hawaii's Kilauea volcano and the epic scale of the explosion of Guatemala's 11,000-foot-tall Volcan de Fuego. But then we miss learning how it feels for a Guatemalan family to flee for their lives and only hope that those left behind in the panic—whether parents, grandparents, children or babies—survived the 1,300-degree Fahrenheit volcanic flows.

The daily onslaught of events and numbers keep the people involved in them out of the picture. What ends up missing from the headlines and statistics are the stories of real people affected by real events.

Beyond the headlines and soundbites, we can begin to see the faces of 2018...



FIRES

There is a legend about this town: On a blazing summer day in the 1850s, a lumber mill crew with wagon and ox took a break under a grove of tall evergreens. The air was cool, the pine needles fragrant.

“Boys,” said the team boss, “this is paradise.”

Thus, more than 170 years ago, Paradise, California, was born. From the start, it was enriched with gold mined from nearby hills and lumber harvested from the forests. Over generations, thousands lived and loved here; they built homes and businesses, schools and houses of worship, parks and museums that proudly honored Paradise’s place in American history.

In a matter of hours, it all disappeared.

Nearly 9,000 homes. Hundreds of shops and other buildings. The Safeway supermarket. The hardware store. The Dolly-O-Donuts & Gifts, where locals started their day with a blueberry fritter and a quick chat.

This town of 27,000 literally went up in smoke in the deadliest, most destructive wildfire in California history. The death toll is 85. And memories are all that is left of many of the survivors.

Driving past the smoldering ruins of downtown, Patrick Knuthson, a 49-year-old, fourth-generation local, struggled to make sense of what he was seeing. He pointed out places that once were, and were no more: a saloon-style pub, his favorite Mexican restaurant, a classic California motel, the pawn shop, a real estate office, a liquor store, the thrift center and auto repair shop, the remodeled Jack in the Box burger outlet, entire trailer parks.

At the ruined Gold Nugget Museum, the ground was crunchy and hot, a few birds chirped nearby, and a half dozen soot-covered deer stood eerily still under a blackened tree.

Paradise was a town where families put down roots, and visitors opted to stay. Children could bike to the park, go fishing in the town pond, shoot bows and arrows at the nearby archery range. As they got older, they would kayak in the canyons or hike in the forests after school.

“We could tell the kids to go outside and play, and be back when the street lights come on,” said

■ Rescue workers carry a body in the burned remains of Paradise, California (Nov. 14, 2018).

PHOTO: JOSH EDELSON/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Kaitlin Norton, whose uncle is still missing. She does not know if her home still stands.

Like all places, Paradise had problems. There were issues with addiction and poverty, but residents felt safe. And while prices were rising, it was still affordable for many in a state where housing costs have soared.

“You would never miss a meal here,” said Terry Prill, 63.

Neighbors waved to each other in the morning, shouting hello as they headed off to work on tree-lined, winding streets and cul-de-sacs. Families kept tidy gardens and planted vegetables, trading their bounty up and down the block.

Louise Branch, 93, says Paradise was a lovely place to retire. “It’s a slow town, really. People have yards and dogs,” she said. “I especially liked it in the fall when the trees are full of color.”

Parks burst with bright orange California poppies and wildflowers in the spring, and soften with light snow in the winter. At 2,500 feet, on a ridge that rises above deep canyons carved by the Feather River and Butte Creek, Paradise offers cool respite from hot, dry weather in the valleys below.

“Paradise is everything the name implies,” said Tom Hurst, 67, who grew up there and raised horses at his 7-acre ranch. He has relatives in the local cemetery dating back to the early 1900s.

Now, crews search for live power lines and gas leaks. Rescue teams continue to pull human remains from cars and homes. Fire crews tamp out smoking piles, and a heavy layer of gray-brown haze hangs over the town.

The toxic, smoky air is a visceral reminder of what is missing in this place where the skies were so blue by day, and dark by night.

“The most cherished thing for me about Paradise were the summer nights my mother and I would sit out on the porch under the clear, starry night,” said Harold Taylor, who moved to Paradise eight years ago, caring for his mother until she died.

Patrick Knuthson said visitors always were amazed by the glittering stars and the meteor showers, brilliant streaks of light that shot across the summer skies.

“We used to tell people all the time, ‘We made sure to turn all of them on for you,’” he said. “It’s going to take a long time to get that back.”

STUCK IN GAZA

Demonstrations by Palestinians were breaking out every week since late March along the border between Israel and the Gaza Strip, with the deadliest confrontation leaving 59 people dead and nearly 3,000 wounded.

Behind the protests were longstanding tensions and repeated violence between Israel and Gaza's Hamas rulers—a militant political group that the U.S., Israel and the European Union label a terror organization.

Threats from Gaza have pushed Israel and Egypt to enact a stifling blockade restricting movement of people and goods.

Israelis living in the southern part of the country live under constant threat of rocket attacks streaming in from Gaza. Houses built since the 1990s include a reinforced room to retreat to during the near-daily attacks.

Meanwhile life must go on for Palestinians living under Hamas.

The 139-square-mile corridor of land along the Mediterranean Sea is wedged between Israel and Egypt, and is home to about 2 million people.

Unemployment is over 40 percent, tap water is undrinkable and Gazans receive only a few hours of electricity a day. Hospitals face constant shortages, the entry and exit of goods is limited, and parts of the territory are still waiting to be rebuilt after a 2014 conflict with Israel.

Gazans have little access to the outside world. They need to obtain hard-to-get permits to enter Israel, while travel through Egypt is restricted to just a few days a year.

Signs of distress are visible throughout Gaza's potholed streets. Young men sit idly on sidewalks, shopkeepers kill time on their smartphones as they mind their empty stores and the smell of sewage from the Mediterranean often wafts through the air.

Hamas has a tight grip on the territory, silencing dissent, banning public gatherings and promoting its conservative Islamic values.

"Despair isn't even the right word to describe what's going on here because things are getting worse and worse," journalist Omar Ghraieb told *Los Angeles Times*.

■ A Palestinian man holds his child as he watches a military parade by members of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad movement in Gaza City (Oct. 4, 2018).

PHOTO: ANAS BABA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



PROTESTS

They bowed their heads in honor of the dead. They carried signs with messages like “Never Again” and “Am I Next?”

Over and over, they repeated the message: Enough is enough.

In a wave of protests one historian called the largest of its kind in American history, tens of thousands of students walked out of their classrooms on March 14 to demand action on gun violence and school safety.

It was organized by the young survivors of the worst high school shooting in U.S. history, when a 17-year-old killed 14 of his fellow students and three teachers at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, on February 14.

Lorenzo Prado, a student who was mistaken for the shooter during the attack, recounted his fears when SWAT units cornered him: “The door started to rattle and the thought that came into my mind was that I was going to die,” he told *The Guardian*.

“The Swat team came in and I thought they were here to rescue me...but I find I am wrong. They told me to put my hands over my head...and when I went out the doors I had six Swat pointing their guns at me.”

He also explained the guilt he felt for events that day: “Guilt that I hadn’t called my mother...And guilt for Mr. Hixon [a 49-year-old wrestling coach among those killed] whose life I thought I had saved when I let...folks in [to the building where he was hiding] but he lost it when he went out again.”

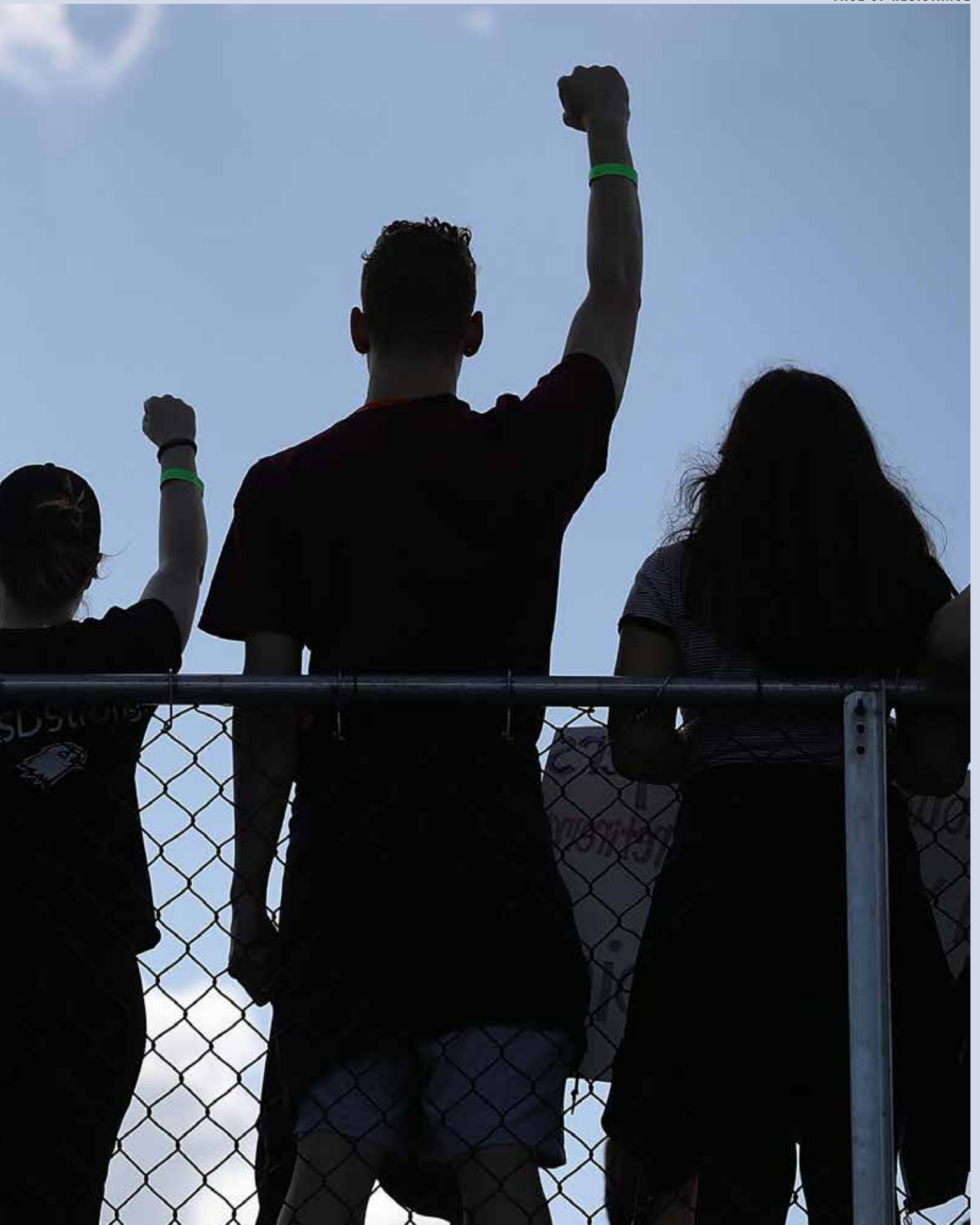
In the surge of activism, young people sought legislative changes on gun control: “We’re going to keep fighting, and we’re not going to stop until Congress finally makes resolute changes,” Maxwell Nardi, a senior student in Henrico, Virginia, told *The Associated Press*.

But not all felt the same. Twelve-year-old Olivia Shane, an avid competitive trap shooter, said: “People want to take away our guns and it’s a Second Amendment right of ours. If they want to take away our Second Amendment right, why can’t we take away their amendment of freedom of speech?”

■ Students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School participate in the March for Our Lives event in Parkland, Florida (March 24, 2018).

PHOTO: JOE RAEDLE/GETTY IMAGES







STORMS

“The whir of choppers and the buzz of chain saws were all that was heard...near the mining town of Itoyon [in the Philippines] as workers looking for bodies dug through the mud using shovels and their bare hands—the ground too wet for heavy machinery,” *The New York Times* reported on the aftermath of Typhoon Mangkhut, considered the strongest in 2018. It had sustained winds of 165 mph and gusts of up to 201 mph.

Continuing, the publication stated: “Workers recovered more than 40 bodies from rubble that was once a gold miners’ bunkhouse, destroyed by a landslide triggered by the storm.”

The typhoon arrived at the start of the rice and corn harvest season in the Philippines, and farmers were scrambling to save what they could of their crops. The nation has been trying to cope with rice shortages.

This powerful cyclone came during a year of devastating storms in the Atlantic, including Hurricane Michael, which was the most powerful hurricane on record to hit the Florida Panhandle, and Hurricane Florence, which flooded North Carolina for weeks.

A resident of Mexico Beach, Florida, which was hit by the powerful eye wall of Hurricane Michael, returned to find her house missing.

Her house “was a green two-story in a connected row of four,” *Tampa Bay Times* reported. She and her three-year-old daughter “moved all of their valuables upstairs, thinking they might get a little water” in the storm.

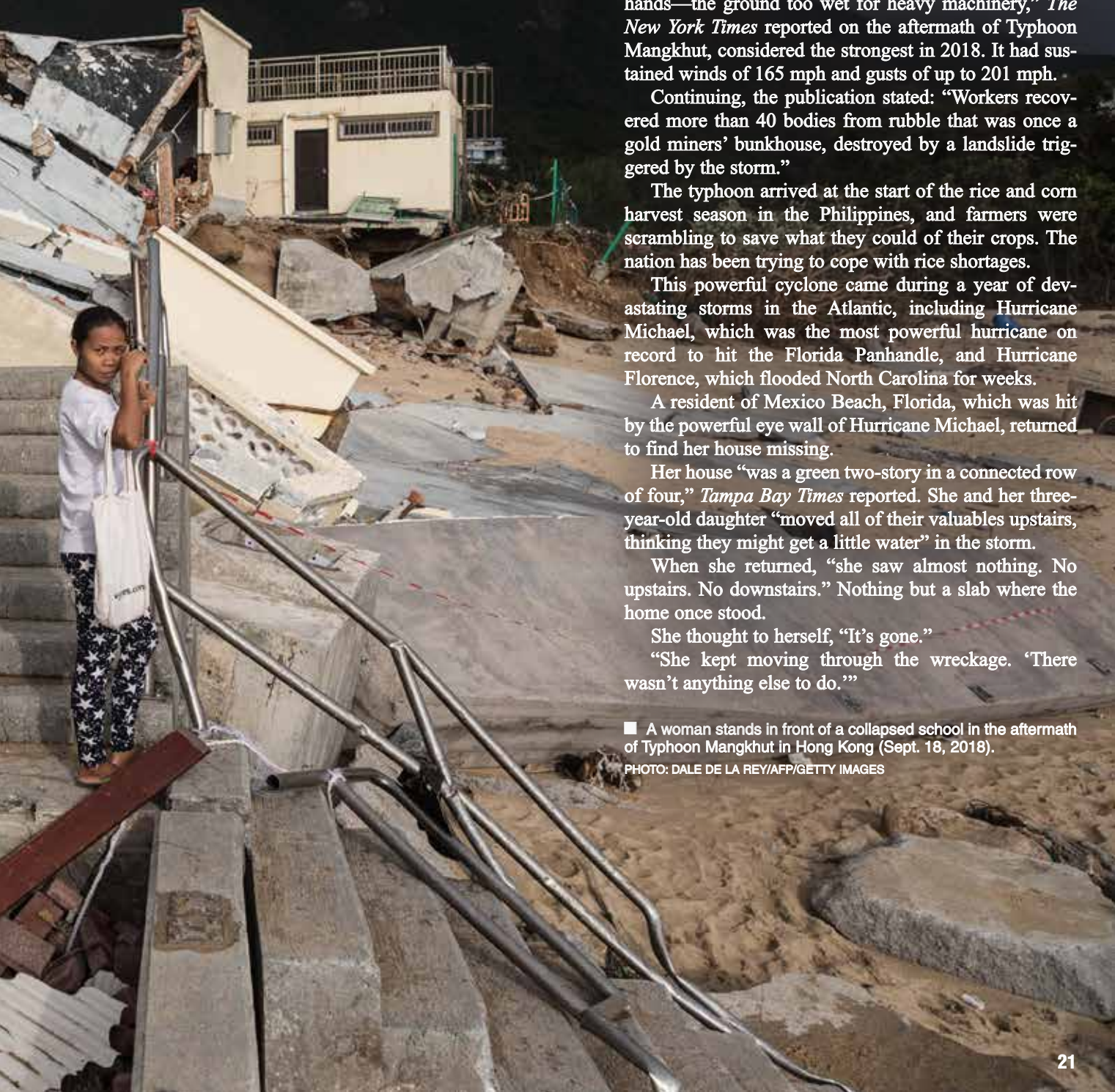
When she returned, “she saw almost nothing. No upstairs. No downstairs.” Nothing but a slab where the home once stood.

She thought to herself, “It’s gone.”

“She kept moving through the wreckage. ‘There wasn’t anything else to do.’”

■ A woman stands in front of a collapsed school in the aftermath of Typhoon Mangkhut in Hong Kong (Sept. 18, 2018).

PHOTO: DALE DE LA REY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES







IMAGINING A UNIFIED KOREA

Whereas in 2017 North Korea seemed poised to launch a nuclear war amid worsening tensions with the United States, 2018 brought an extraordinary show of unexpected unity between North and South Korea and diplomacy with Washington. Starting with North Korea's participation in the Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, the two Koreas suddenly began a process of ending 70 years of anger, suspicion and bloodshed.

This culminated in North Korean leader Kim Jong Un crossing the border into South Korea, hand-in-hand with President Moon Jae-in—the first time any North Korean leader had ever done so—as well as a meeting with U.S. President Donald Trump in Singapore in June. Most of the meetings concerned denuclearization and demilitarizing the heavily guarded border.

On both sides of the Demilitarized Zone, Koreans rejoiced at the thought of reuniting with loved ones.

Dozens of families were selected to attend a three-day reunion in August, with relatives meeting for the first time in at least 65 years. It was likely the last time they would see each other again.

Lee Keum-seom, 92, reunited with her son, whom she lost track of when he was 4 during the panic of the Korean War.

“I never imagined this day would come,” she told *AFP*. “I didn't even know if he was alive or not.”

South Koreans brought gifts for their poorer northern neighbors, such as clothes, medicine and food. Lee Soo-nam, 76, who met his older brother, told *Reuters* he “prepared for him some household medicine including digester and headache pills, nutritional supplements as well as some daily necessities.”

The joy of reunion does not last long, though, and millions more Koreans are still separated.

■ North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and South Korean President Moon Jae-in shake hands over the military demarcation line upon meeting for their first summit, in Panmunjom, South Korea (April 27, 2018).

PHOTO: KOREA SUMMIT PRESS POOL/GETTY IMAGES

“Fleeing war in North Korea in 1951, my aunt and her siblings scrambled aboard an American cargo ship pulling away from port, her parents and grandmother shouting their names to keep track of them in the chaos of the evacuation,” journalist Jean Lee explained to *NPR*. “They made it. But their grandfather stayed behind in Wonsan to protect the family property.

“He thought his family would return. They never saw him, or the rest of their family in North Korea, again.”

Mrs. Lee explained the difficulty of reunification: “But I know, from speaking to my own family, how conflicted and complicated their feelings are toward North Korea, and how diverse their points of view are. Each generation bears a different history and, as a result, dreams of a different future.”

Her aunt told her: “We’re not foreigners; we’re one nation. I hope we’re able to find peace.” But “even when we reconcile with a friend, we don’t laugh together the next day. There’s always some pent-up anger.”

■ Top, South Korean Choi Sung-Taek, 82, wipes tears of his North Korean sister Ahn Kil-Ja, 85, during a family reunion meeting at the Mount Kungang resort in North Korea (Aug. 25, 2018). Bottom, North Korean and South Korean delegations wave their flags along with the United Korea flag during the closing ceremony of the Pyeongchang 2018 Winter Olympic Games (Feb. 25, 2018). Right, North Korea’s leader Kim Jong Un walks with U.S. President Donald Trump during talks at their historic summit in Singapore (June 12, 2018).

PHOTOS: LEE SU-KIL-KOREA POOL/ (TOP); LOIC VENANCE/AFP/ (BOTTOM); SAUL LOEB/AFP/ (LEFT); GETTY IMAGES







MIDTERM SHAKEUP

The 2018 congressional elections were the most contested in history. Events from the fires in California to a caravan of thousands of migrants approaching the U.S. border from Central America were politicized. Political parties spent a record \$5.2 billion on the election cycle.

As a result, the voter turnout was the highest since 1914, with just over 50 percent of eligible voters going to the polls.

Candidates elected included a record number of women, as well as the first Muslim and Native American women elected to Congress.

Among those women is the youngest woman ever elected to Congress, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. A New York City native, she grew up in a working-class family. She had to take two jobs to help her family make ends meet after her 48-year-old father died of cancer during the 2008 recession.

“According to her website, after experiencing financial and healthcare struggles firsthand, Ocasio-Cortez realized how deeply policy decisions made at the highest levels of government impact everyday families living paycheck to paycheck,” *Time* reported.

The self-styled Democratic progressive “is not the only young up-and-comer shaking up the Democratic party in New York City and across the country,” the publication continued. “She is part of a growing trend of millennials, many of whom are persons of color, stepping up as outsiders to challenge long-standing representatives in their districts.”

■ U.S. Senate candidate Representative Beto O’Rourke asks people to raise their hands if they have already voted during a campaign stop in Waco, Texas (Oct. 31, 2018).

PHOTO: CHIP SOMODEVILLA/GETTY IMAGES



FACING OUR FUTURE

Looking beyond the headlines and learning the specifics of real people's lives can change the way we view news events.

Instead of disasters happening to somebody else, somewhere else, we can begin to realize *anything* can happen to *anyone*! It helps us empathize with those you can identify with—people composed of the same hopes, dreams, cares and concerns.

Empathy—the ability to understand and share the feelings of another person—is a crucial element to news-watching. As 2019 progresses, the trends experienced last year will continue. These events, from wars and domestic uprisings to weather disasters, were foretold in the Bible to occur and increase in frequency and magnitude. They will involve yet bigger numbers—death tolls, dollars spent, land area destroyed—making it easier to lose concern for the individuals affected.

So why watch bad news if this is the case? Because there is a purpose behind it.

God is giving space for man to try his own systems and ways. The results are seen today in the form of continuing misery, disease, war and poverty.

But God plans to put an end to all of this. The disciples of Jesus Christ asked, “What shall be the sign of Your coming?” (Matt. 24:3). They were looking forward to this culminating event because it meant the beginning of the end to the world's troubles.

Big, terrible events will continue to precede Christ's coming. But the transition to peace and prosperity will be BIG as well.

Realize: As much as individual people are affected by today's events, individual lives will be touched by the Kingdom that Christ will bring. God's Master Plan to fix the world's biggest problems involves helping people on an individual level.

The Bible shows examples of people's lives helped in this way.

Jesus Christ devoted much of His earthly ministry to healing people and often traveled to the homes of those who requested help. For example, He traveled to “Peter's

house, He saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever. And He touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them” (Matt. 8:14-15).

Following this, Jesus “healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses” (vs. 16-17).

The account summarized the works Christ did: “The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them” (11:5).

Elsewhere in the Bible, Christ revealed that this gospel applies to everyone: “And He [Christ] said unto them, Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel to *every* creature” (Mark 16:15).

Every creature, meaning every inhabitant of this Earth, will hear the gospel—or GOOD NEWS. This is an event that will happen SOON. Not a person will be left out of this good news, which involves helping individual people on a grander scale than any humanitarian group today could perform.

It will involve addressing the *causes* and providing care to each person willing to receive it. It will also involve replacing the failing governments of this world with an effective SUPERGOVERNMENT.

Continue to hold onto this awesome vision of the future! Read *How God's Kingdom Will Come – The Untold Story!* at rcg.org/hgkwc and prepare yourself to see the world transform, one life at a time. □

■ Top left, a hospital worker embraces her co-worker as they evacuate patients during the Camp Fire in Northern California (Nov. 8, 2018). Top right, a masked Palestinian protester holds a slingshot as tires burn in the background during a protest near the border with Israel (Aug. 31, 2018). Middle left, police officers carry a girl out of a collapsed school in Hong Kong (Sept. 16, 2018). Middle right, a protester attends the March for Our Lives rally in Chicago, Illinois (March 24, 2018). Bottom left, North Korean cheerleaders wave Unified Korea flags during the 2018 Winter Olympic Games (Feb. 15, 2018). Bottom right, police officers carry a victim of the eruption of Volcan de Feugo in the ash-covered village of San Miguel Los Lotes in Guatemala (June 4, 2018).

PHOTOS: JUSTIN SULLIVAN/ (TOP LEFT); MAHMUD HAMS/AFP/ (TOP RIGHT); LAM YIK FEI/ (MIDDLE LEFT); JIM YOUNG/ (MIDDLE RIGHT); ED JONES/AFP/ (BOTTOM LEFT); JOHAN ORDONEZ/AFP/ (BOTTOM RIGHT); GETTY IMAGES



THE PROBLEMS with Christmas go well beyond its pagan roots. In 2017 the average consumer racked up \$1,054 of debt over the holiday season. Worse, 44 percent accumulated well over this amount with 5 percent taking on more than \$5,000 in balances—all in a matter of weeks!

Holiday debt leaves retailers delighted and consumers miserable. Festive shoppers spend liberally during the holidays with every intention of paying it off over the coming months. Yet these good intentions often fall woefully short. More than a few are still paying off the *previous year's* holiday debt—with interest—by the time the next season rolls around.

Year after year, this financial indebtedness is driven by the pressure to make the holidays “special” for family and friends. But instead of a “happy holiday” season it is a season filled with stress leading to strained relationships and poor health. For instance, lawyers call the first working Monday of the year “Divorce Day” because of the increase in the number of people looking to end their marriages following the stress of Christmas and New Year’s Day.

Much of this anxiety is financially driven. According to Vital Smarts, 50 percent of Americans blow through the money they budgeted for the holidays. A third use credit cards to fill the gap—meaning the stress associated with increased debt is all but guaranteed to linger for many more months, if not years.

The overspending linked to the holidays only compounds America’s chronic spending problem.

There was a time when consumer debt was measured in millions. Then it was billions. By the end of 2018,

WAS IT WORTH IT?

BY EDWARD L. WINKFIELD



non-mortgage debt owed by consumers was projected to reach a staggering \$4 trillion!—with no sign of reversal.

Crushing Debt Is the “New Normal”

With debt ensnaring so many of his clients, a noted consumer bankruptcy expert now believes the middle class is better termed the “debt class.” He went on to share his thoughts on what worries him most about the worsening debt crisis.

“A growing number of the clients we see have all the trappings of a middle-class lifestyle—they’re gainfully employed, own a home and from the outside seem fiscally responsible—but it’s built on a foundation of debt and bad financial decisions.”

Underscoring the role of credit cards in compounding the problem, he added, “Most clients in significant debt trouble today would not be in that situation had they simply funded their lives by cashflow instead of credit.” He is not alone in this observation. Time and again, financial counselors see the impact of what has been termed the credit card trap. The ease of swiping a piece of plastic blinds many to the very real consequences of their financial decisions.

Life has become unaffordable to many seeking a lifestyle beyond their financial means. Cheap debt only fuels their temptation. Instead of restraint, consumers have become comfortable using credit to fill the gap between what they want and what they can truly afford. Credit card companies, seeking to capitalize on this lack of discipline, happily extend increased lines of credit to customers shifting their maxed-out credit card balances. These extended limits give spenders little to no reason to change their money habits. Soon, what was a \$5,000-\$10,000 problem becomes a \$15,000-\$20,000 (or more) problem for consumers attempting to juggle their bills.

As a result of this vicious cycle, what once were extreme cases of financial indebtedness have become the “new normal” as consumers routinely accumulate debt that would take a lifetime to pay off.

Digging Out

A Federal Reserve survey published last year revealed that 35 percent of Americans would not be able to pay their bills if faced with a \$400 emergency. Personal savings rates are a meager 2.5 percent. These and other factors explain why so many are forced to live paycheck to paycheck.

\$830 Billion

Total U.S. credit card debt

\$4,789

Average credit card balance

4.5 Million

Bankruptcies between
2013-2017

69%

Families with less than
\$1,000 in total savings

21%

Divorces caused by
financial difficulty

If this describes you, it can feel impossible to know where to begin. No one *wants* to be in debt. Owing vast sums to others can put an unbearable burden on individuals and families. Can you work your way to a better tomorrow? Yes. But it will take work.

The path toward a debt-free future starts with a proper understanding

of what belongs to you and—just as important—what does not.

Most are programmed to believe that what they have—the things they earned—belong to them. This is only partially true.

Understand. Everything we possess is not ours “free and clear.” Does it surprise you to hear this? It should not. The concept of “partial ownership” is easy especially when you consider that most Americans need help with expensive purchases such as a home or a car. The vast majority are forced to go into partnership with a bank or other financial institution willing to let them borrow the funds needed for the purchase with a promise from the consumer to pay it back. From there the financial institution holds a lien, giving them partial ownership of these otherwise unaffordable items.

Grasping this simple concept on a grander scale will open your mind and bring you to a better perspective on your current and future possessions.

Everything you own in fact does not belong to you—even if you paid for it outright. There is a Being—a “lien-holder” if you will—that truly owns everything and is happy to allow us to use it. This Being is God who at one point declared, “For all the earth is Mine” (Ex. 19:5). He also said, “Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD’s your God, the earth also, *with all that therein is*” (Deut. 10:14). The Earth and everything on it belongs to God.

At best, we only have “partial ownership” over all our possessions.

Embracing this partnership with God in terms of your possessions, including your finances, is the first step to working your way out of financial misery. Many have trusted Him in this regard and do not regret it.

For more on a proper view of your finances and practical ways to free yourself from the scourge of debt, order our free booklets *End All Your Financial Worries* available at reg.org/eayfw and *Taking Charge of Your Finances* at reg.org/tcoyf.

These easy-to-follow texts will help you come out of insurmountable debt and toward a much happier life. □

HEALTH ISSUES

Suicide Hits 50-year Peak, Pushes Down U.S. Life Expectancy

New York (AP) – Suicides and drug overdoses pushed up U.S. deaths in 2017, and drove a continuing decline in how long Americans are expected to live.

Overall, there were more than 2.8 million U.S. deaths in 2017, or nearly 70,000 more than the previous year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported. It was the most deaths in a single year since the government began counting more than a century ago.

The increase partly reflects the nation's growing and aging population. But it is deaths in younger age groups—particularly middle-aged people—that have had the largest impact on calculations of life expectancy, experts said.

“These sobering statistics are a wake-up call that we are losing too many Americans, too early and too often, to conditions that are preventable,” Robert Redfield, the CDC's director, said in a statement.

The 2017 suicide death rate was the highest it has been in at least 50 years, according to U.S. government records. There were more than 47,000 suicides, up from a little under 45,000 the year before.

Trending Down

For decades, U.S. life expectancy was on the upswing, rising a few months nearly every year. Now it is trending the other way: It fell in 2015, stayed level in 2016, and declined again in 2017, the CDC said.

The nation is in the longest period of a generally declining life expectancy since the late 1910s, when World War I and the worst flu pandemic in modern history combined to kill nearly 1 million Americans. Life expectancy in 1918 was 39.

Aside from that, “we've never really seen anything like this,” said Robert Anderson, who oversees CDC death statistics.

Of the nation's 10 leading causes of death, only the cancer death rate fell in



PHOTO: DAVID MAIALETTI/THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER VIA THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

2017. Meanwhile, there were increases in seven others—suicide, stroke, diabetes, Alzheimer's, flu/pneumonia, chronic lower respiratory diseases and unintentional injuries.

An underlying factor is that the death rate for heart disease—the nation's number-one killer—has stopped falling. In years past, declines in heart disease deaths were enough to offset increases in some other kinds of death, but no longer, Dr. Anderson said.

What's Driving It?

Experts such as William Dietz, a disease prevention expert at George Washington University, see a sense of hopelessness.

Financial struggles, a widening income gap and divisive politics are all casting a pall over many Americans, he suggested. “I really do believe that people are increasingly hopeless, and that that leads to drug use, it leads potentially to suicide,” he said.

Drug overdose deaths also continued to climb, surpassing 70,000 in 2017, in the midst of the deadliest drug overdose epidemic in U.S. history. The death rate rose 10 percent from the previous year, smaller than the 21 percent

jump seen between 2016 and 2017. Intentional drug overdoses account for about a tenth of the suicides, said Holly Hedegaard, a CDC injury researcher.

Other Findings

The agency also said:

- A baby born in 2017 in the U.S. is expected to live about 78 years and 7 months, on average. An American born in 2015 or 2016 was expected to live about a month longer, and one born in 2014 about two months longer than that.

- The suicide rate was 14 deaths per 100,000 people. That is the highest since at least 1975.

- The percentage of suicides due to drug overdose has been inching downward.

- Deaths from flu and pneumonia rose by about 6 percent. The 2017-2018 flu season was one of the worst in more than a decade, and some of the deaths from early in that season appeared in the new death dates.

- Death rates for heroin, methadone and prescription opioid painkillers were flat. But deaths from the powerful painkiller fentanyl and its close opioid cousins continued to soar in 2017. □

AFRICA

Sexual Violence Spikes in South Sudan

Nhialdiu, South Sudan (AP) – The medical charity Doctors Without Borders announced that 125 women and girls had been raped in South Sudan over 10 days in November in a dramatic spike in sexual violence. They were attacked as they made the long walk to a food distribution site in Bentiu.

Rape has been used widely as a weapon in South Sudan. Even after a peace deal was signed in September to end a five-year civil war that killed nearly 400,000 people, humanitarians have warned of higher rates of sexual assault as growing numbers of desperate people try to reach aid.

The potholed road where the recent assaults took place were shrouded by trees and elephant grass, which provide cover for perpetrators to lurk.

Several local women said the violence is escalating.

Nyalgwon Mol Moon said she was held at gunpoint in November while two men in civilian clothes, their faces covered, stole her clothes, her shoes and the milk she meant to sell at market. Standing beside the road, pointing to her borrowed, oversized sneakers, she said she now tries to take alternative routes on her weekly walks to Bentiu.

She has no other choice. Food in Nhialdiu and nearby villages is scarce. Most people could not cultivate last season because of fighting and too much rain.

That means a walk of almost 24 miles to Bentiu town. Unable to carry the heavy rations back in one trip, most women leave some behind with relatives and make several journeys throughout the month.

No one has taken responsibility for the wave of assaults that the United

Nations and African Union have condemned as “abhorrent” and “predatory.”

South Sudan’s government has acknowledged the assaults occurred in areas it controls. But it blames them on “unregulated youth” who fought alongside warring factions before the peace deal, Laraka Machar Turoal, deputy governor of Northern Liech state told the *AP*.

Youth who were never officially integrated with armed groups have been left idle, guns in hand, to take what they want by force, Mr. Turoal said.

Bentiu was one of the hardest-hit areas in the civil war, and the city has changed hands several times. Government and opposition forces remain at odds, even as factions across the country try to reconcile. □

INTERNATIONAL

China and Russia Military Power Catching up to U.S.—EU Seeks to Build Rival Army

The United States could lose a war against China or Russia, according to a report by the National Defense Strategy Commission.

The bipartisan commission was created by Congress to evaluate the Trump administration’s 2018 National Defense Strategy, which includes an overhaul of the U.S. military and prioritizes defense against China and Russia.

“The U.S. military could suffer unacceptably high casualties and loss of major capital assets in its next conflict. It might struggle to win, or perhaps lose, a war against China or Russia,” the report stated. “The United States is particularly at risk of being overwhelmed should its military be forced to fight on two or more fronts simultaneously.”

According to *SFGate*: “The commission argued that despite a \$716

billion American defense budget this year, which is four times the size of China’s and more than 10 times that of Russia, the effort to reshape the U.S. defense establishment to counter current threats is under-resourced. It is recommended that Congress lift budget caps on defense spending in the next two years that in the past have hobbled the military’s ability to plan for the long term.”

The report came as tensions with Moscow and Beijing were high. In addition, European Union leaders vouched for the establishment of a European armed force that could counter the threat of Russia and rival the U.S.

French President Emmanuel Macron spoke on *Europe 1* radio station of the need to create a “true

European army” that emancipates its dependence on NATO.

“We have to protect ourselves with respect to China, Russia and even the United States of America,” he continued.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel backed his call, telling lawmakers in EU Parliament “we have to work on the vision of one day creating a real European army.”

U.S. President Donald Trump, who has sought for EU nations to contribute more to NATO, called the proposal of an EU army “very insulting.”

Yet *EUobserver* noted: “Experts often deem the concept of a European army to be unrealistic. But political leaders will continue to use the notion, because it has one great advantage: it strikes citizens’ imaginations.” □



“WE SHALL BEAT OUR SWORDS INTO PLOWSHARES”

These words, which mark a special sculpture on the grounds of the United Nations headquarters in New York City, come from the biblical book of Isaiah. Yet even more than a lofty ideal or nice-sounding idea, this Bible verse will come to pass—and soon. Read *How World Peace Will Come!* to learn exactly how this will occur.

Visit rcg.org/hwpwc to order your free booklet!

