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THE

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# REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING



**Can Earth Sustain the  
POPULATION  
BOOM?**



Aerial view showing overpopulated neighborhoods in Venezuela's capital, Caracas. (Aug. 27, 2022).

YURI CORTEZ/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

**8,000,000,000 and Counting  
Can Earth Sustain the Population Boom?**

The global population milestone provides a perfect lens to view the trends of 2022, 2023 and beyond.  
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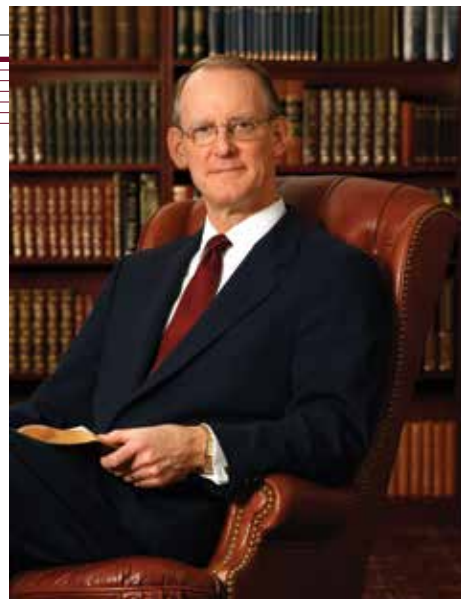
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David C. Fack



# Have You Committed the Unforgivable Sin?

**M**ANY WORRY they have committed the “unpardonable sin.” We read their letters. But just what *is* this sin? Do only converted people commit it—or can non-Christians? The answers are not what you think.

Jesus spoke of a sin that “shall not be forgiven... neither in this world, neither in the world to come” (Matt. 12:31-32). This sin is most often referred to as “the unpardonable sin.”

Widespread confusion surrounds this subject. So many people worry that they *may have* committed, or *did* commit, the unpardonable sin. Yet most have not known how to *recognize* the sin that “shall not be forgiven.”

As a longtime pastor who has worked with many thousands, I have counseled scores of people who were racked with fear, anxiety and concern that they were guilty of this sin. It was often very painful to watch confusion, misunderstanding and guilt unnecessarily grip people who still sincerely wanted to serve God, *after* believing they had committed this unforgivable sin. In many cases, they were absolutely *certain* that they were guilty of it. Invariably,

after counseling with them, it was clear that they were not. But convincing them of this was sometimes not easy.

I have often had to explain that the very act of *being concerned* is its own proof that one has not gone far enough to be guilty of this sin. Still, many continued to agonize that they had been condemned by God—with no hope of being restored to the Christian path. It often took long hours—*much* counsel and explanation—to reassure them that they had not committed the unpardonable sin! I was not always able to convince them. Some still *gave up* seeking and obeying God because they had lost hope!

What then is this sin? Can one *know* if he has committed it—or *know* that there is still hope because he has not? These are vitally important questions—and they require clear, plain answers!

## Mass Deception

More than two billion people profess to be Christians. While they have slight differences in doctrine, they share generally similar beliefs.

The truth is, most never truly *study* the Bible. Many others never even open it. Most professing Christians have *no idea* what it teaches—on almost any subject. Their beliefs are derived from assumptions based on what they have been told the Bible says.

This is perhaps most true about *what a Christian is*. Before the subject of the unpardonable sin can be understood, the definition of a Christian must be established. Again, billions believe—profess—that they are Christians. They can also readily give *their* definition of a Christian, but cannot give the *Bible* definition.

Certainly ALL who profess to be Christians want to be saved! This goal cannot be separated from either the question of what is a Christian or that of what is the unpardonable sin. Pause a moment to consider these points: If one is not a *true* Christian, then the issue of the unpardonable sin may be largely irrelevant. This is something we will clarify later.

On the other hand, if one *is* a true Christian, but commits the unpardonable sin, however it is defined, he will *not* be saved. This much is not hard to understand—but it is very important. So, understanding the sin that “shall not be forgiven” most certainly *is* relevant to the real Christian! *He* must be very careful not to commit this sin.

Surely no sincere person who understands even the most basic teachings of God thinks that He will save those who are *not* Christians (Acts 4:12). Since only *true* Christians will be saved, then we must know what is a true Christian. As with any doctrine, we must examine God’s Word to find the answer. Then we will be prepared to discuss the unpardonable sin.

### What Is a Christian?

Let’s understand how *God* defines a Christian. There is a single verse to which we can turn that defines a Christian. But it is not the popular idea taught in the so-called “Christian” world.

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

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

But what does this *mean*? And is this all there is to Christianity and conversion, with nothing more to understand?

Human beings do not have life inherent within them. They are not born with an immortal soul (Gen. 2:7; Ezek. 18:4, 20; Matt. 10:28). Since you are not immortal, your life will span a certain allotted time, after which you will die. That is absolute (Heb. 9:27). Unless God intervenes in your life, you have no future—no hope—beyond a limited time of about 70-80 years.

You *must* receive the Holy Spirit. But *how*?

Most believe that there are no requirements—no *conditions*—to being saved. This is not true. The following verses prove that there are *three preconditions* that must be met just to receive the Holy Spirit.

On the day that Christ established the New Testament Church, the Apostle Peter gave a powerful sermon. It was so convicting that 3,000 were baptized. Before baptism, many had asked Peter, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). His instruction was, “*Repent, and be baptized* every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” This is God’s plain command to (1) *repent* and (2) *be baptized*—in this order—to receive

the gift of the Holy Spirit! Mark 1:14-15 adds that Christ taught one must also (3) *believe the gospel* of the Kingdom of God.

From baptism onward, the new convert is led by the Holy Spirit. Once we are ready to discuss the unpardonable sin, this will be critically important to remember.

### What Repentance Means

To *repent* simply means to change. A repentant mind reflects a completely different, changed attitude. It has gone from the way of pleasing *self*, to seeking to please *God*. It wants to submit to God and His Way!

Human nature is vanity, jealousy, lust, greed, envy, resentment, foolishness and more. It is the way of grasping for self—looking out for self. Notice: “For to be carnally minded is *death*; but to be spiritually minded is *life and peace*” (Rom. 8:6). The spiritually minded have the Holy Spirit. God’s Spirit is called the “Spirit of truth” (John 15:26; 16:13) and will *lead* the convert “into all truth.”

Perhaps the most important truth that a Christian can be led to see is a proper understanding of himself—and the forces at work within his human nature. Ephesians 2:2 reveals that Satan is the “prince of the power of the air.” As the “god of this world” (II Cor. 4:4), he broadcasts a “spirit of disobedience” into the masses around the world. His way is *opposite* to the way of God. He broadcasts a *spirit* of hostility and rebellion against all things that are of God. Satan teaches the way of *GET*, instead of the way of *GIVE* (Acts 20:35).

The converted, *spirit-led mind* resists this broadcast (I Pet. 5:9; Jms. 4:7). It is a mind that wants to grow. It exalts God, humbles itself and seeks to please God in *every* possible way. Such a mind wants to draw near to God through prayer, study, fasting, meditation and regularly exercising God’s Spirit—the five tools of Christian growth! It abhors itself (Job 42:5-6)

Please see **PERSONAL**, page 33



# The Missing Ingredient for Good Health

The human body needs a certain amount of nutrients, vitamins and minerals every day to function well. But there is one important element of physical wellbeing that is largely ignored: GOD'S WORD. Its pages contain vital guidelines on good health that, if followed, will help you to be happy and brimming with life.

Read our booklet *God's Principles of Healthful Living* for more!

[rcg.org/glohl](http://rcg.org/glohl)

# Weathering the Misinformation Age

Developing your media literacy will help you better understand what is occurring in the world today.

BY JUSTIN M. FRAZIER

**W**AR DOMINATES the news. Battlefield reporters tell heart-wrenching stories of prisoners, executions and women and children starving as soldiers defend their homes. The media pushes for the United States to do something.

This may sound like 2022, but this is actually describing the Cuban War of Independence in the late 1800s.

America eventually decided to get involved—the USS Maine arrived off the coast of Cuba’s Havana Harbor as a show of force. But a fiery explosion sunk the ship and killed 268 of the 355 Americans aboard.

Papers alleged the enemy sunk the ship with torpedoes and bombs. Headlines screamed “Remember the Maine!” and “Spanish Murderers!”—inflaming public opinion. The U.S. declared war on Spain the month after the Maine sank.

William Randolph Hearst and John Pulitzer, two giants of the news business, pushed this story to sell papers. While the stories were based on the information available at the time, they tended to be exaggerated for effect. The first “media war” had begun. (Decades later, naval investigators concluded the explosion was likely caused by a fire onboard, not sabotage.)

In the years prior, newspapers had begun printing cartoons in color and half-tone photographs. The ability to *see* the news rather than just read it made these stories nearly leap off the page. Sensationalized headlines and bold fonts added to the impact of the images. According to W. Joseph Campbell, professor of communication at American University in Washington, D.C., this also involved “an inclination to take an activist role in news reporting.” From this emerged the phenomenon that became known as “yellow journalism.”

Sounds like today, right? Yellow journalism is alive and well in the modern world, most often in the form of “fake news.” And it is far more pervasive because of the internet. Each day brings a multitude of developing stories, with countless “activists”—news organizations, commentators and social media content creators—presenting their view of what happened.

Such entities spread the truth as they see it, or more accurately, as they *want* you to see it. Intermixed in all of this is solid, quality reporting, showing you what is really going on in the world. The deluge of information makes finding objective truth nearly impossible. This is even more challenging when a story turns political.

People want to believe what they hear is entirely accurate, and purveyors of slant, sensationalism and outright falsehoods use this vulnerability to promote misinformation—incorrect or misleading information.

Young people can be susceptible to this due to a lack of life experience to discern when someone is lying. Older people, while they can still be vulnerable, grew up in a generally more trustworthy society.

Jesus Christ proclaimed that “the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). But, in a world full of misinformation and even *disinformation*—misinformation with the intent to deceive—how can anyone today know the truth of a matter?

Think of developing your ability to find truth in the news as “media literacy.” Just as literacy includes reading and understanding the written word, media literacy involves consuming media and parsing it for meaning and accuracy.

The apostle Paul told the church in Thessalonica to “prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (I Thes. 5:21). While this primarily applies to Bible doctrine, you can also use this verse as a guiding principle to what you read and see in the news.

Yet digging out the truth of every story, article, book, documentary or



anything else would take more time than anyone has—you will never reach the truth about absolutely *everything*. But you can ensure that you are not led astray into wrong thinking.

God wants you to correctly understand what is happening in the world today. We will look at basic tools for developing your media literacy skills. They will help you cut through the noise of misinformation.

#### **Hone Your Analytical Skills**

First, learn to ask questions. Anything true can stand up to sincere questioning, while media designed to hide the truth falls apart under scrutiny. Make sure your questions pursue the truth behind the story rather than simply seeking to justify a position you already hold.

When you read a story, listen to a podcast or view a cable news program, ask questions about the presenter's intent. What was their goal with this story? Why did they create it, and what do they want me to think as a result of consuming it?

While you cannot read the author's mind, asking questions like these forces you to prosecute the motives involved. Once you gain an understanding of what the author wants you to think, then ask, "*Why* do they want me to believe this?" Good media is thoughtfully produced and exists for a positive reason such as shining a light on an important topic that has been largely overlooked. Try to determine what the reason is behind the article, video or podcast. It helps to understand that the story has more depth than what you see at face value.

Most news outlets also have an inherent slant. Some more, some less. Take the time to research and evaluate your favorite ones. Resources like AllSides, Ground News, or Media Bias/Fact Check can help determine which way a news company leans and how trustworthy they are. These third parties rank news outlets on political lean, factuality versus opinion, and analysis. Primarily visiting news sources you know you can rely on becomes a shortcut to fact-filled, trustworthy stories.

Well-written stories from professionals trained to report and interpret the day's events usually have some analysis that can bring clarity to a murky story. However, too much analysis or opinion can distort or even outright *ignore* facts that may not fit a narrative. You cannot get a clear and factual view from a story with lopsided reporting or analysis.

Make it your goal to find stories with significantly more facts than opinions or analysis. Opinions and analysis can bring a fuller understanding of events, yet they tend to focus on details and facts from the presenter's point of view.

Since nearly every organization has political leanings, strive to look at the news from the left, the right, and a center point of view to best understand a story.

If your preferred news organization leans one way, find one that leans equally the opposite way and another that is more evenly balanced. If you already read news from a reasonably neutral source, find reliable sources that present viewpoints from the left and right. Even though you probably will not agree with everything said, you will be better informed and have a deeper understanding from knowing what the "other side" thinks.

As the world gets more polarized between liberals and conservatives, you should strive for a balanced news diet. While partisan headlines are salacious and juicy, they tend to be full of empty calories. Ultimately, they will pull you away from balanced, logical thinking. They will pull you away from the truth.

#### **Think Before You Act**

Most people consume their news online, which makes it easier to find, read and share stories. Take a close look at what the headline is *really* saying when you come across a story. Does it sound too fantastic to be true? Does it sound designed to get you to click on it only to redirect you to something else entirely?

A lot of study goes into the type of headline that will get people to click. Publishers need to sell your eyes to

advertisers, so they craft intriguing titles to get you to load their pages. Learning to recognize so-called click-bait titles strengthens your media literacy.

But even reputable sources with good articles know how to get your attention with a headline. News organizations know that many do not read more than the titles of articles online, so they craft headlines that grab your attention but do not always accurately describe the story.

Sometimes a title even sets you up to think the article has one point of view, but reading it actually dismantles those arguments. Headlines can be deceptive, so you must read the whole article or watch the entire video and then look for corroboration from other sources.

## **“As the world gets more polarized between liberals and conservatives, you should strive for a balanced news diet.”**

Researching a story to know what happened requires effort—it is much easier to mindlessly hit “share” without doing due diligence. But you can be encouraged by the Bible example of the Bereans, who, when they heard the apostles' preaching, “received the word with all readiness of mind, *and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so*” (Acts 17:11).

They heard two “newscasters” announcing a gospel they had never heard before. When the Bereans researched this news and corroborated it with the Bible, “many of them believed” (vs. 12). They did not just hear the title of the speech and repeat it to others without thoroughly digging into what they heard and proving

it. This effort made them “more noble than those in Thessalonica” (vs. 11).

Likewise, with news and current events, be sure to search widely before drawing conclusions.

#### **Proving the Truth**

The yellow journalism of the past was dangerous for those who heard it. It contributed to armed conflict. The Spanish-American War and the Philippine-American War that came from the aftermath of the sinking of the USS Maine left over 250,000 military and civilians dead. The fake news of today can be just as perilous.

While you may not be led by a biased story to take up arms against another country, believing falsehoods will produce a skewed view of the world. Left unchecked, this can lead to bad decisions and unbalanced personal behavior. You must consciously, continually choose to seek truth. But first, you must define what truth *is*. This applies to truth in the news and, more important, truth in all things.

Jesus Christ said the Word of God—the Bible—is truth (John 17:17). This is a bold statement. Can you *prove* that God exists? And if so, can you *prove* that the Bible is His Word and *is truth*?

Yes, you can.

Our free booklet *Does God Exist?* answers the first question. Another free publication, *Bible Authority...Can It Be Proven?* shows you do not need to accept the Bible on blind faith—its veracity is provable. Only after *proving* that the Bible is true can you really understand what is behind the news.

*The Real Truth* is here to help. This magazine seeks to restore plain understanding by examining world events through the lens of the Bible. We strive to rise above political arguments and present the truth from God's perspective.

As you practice the tools we have examined, you will strengthen your media literacy. You will develop a better understanding of the world. You will be able to “prove all things” and “hold fast that which is good” in all the media you consume. □



# 8,000,000,000 AND COUNTING

BY SAMUEL C. BAXTER AND GARRICK R. OXLEY

**I**N 2022, a mother had a child who became the 8 billionth human being on our planet Earth.

The infant may have gasped its first breath in Somalia—a nation on the brink of famine, in the middle of a decades-long civil war, and still feeling economic effects from COVID-19 shutdowns.

Or the 8 billionth babe could have been birthed in India, which is poised to overtake China as the world's most populous nation in 2023. While India is poised to be an economic powerhouse, the growth comes with environmental costs: the nation is home to 35 of the world's 50 most-polluted cities.

Or the child could have been born in the U.S., a nation vexed with political infighting, 600-plus mass shootings, and well over a dozen weather disasters, each costing \$1 billion-plus in damages.

We can never know for sure where baby number 8 billion came to be, but the United Nations estimated we ticked over this milestone on November 15. The governing body used the symbolic date to reflect on the state of the globe.

There are some successes. According to the UN, "This rapid growth of the human population is a testament to achievements in public health and medicine, such as improvements in sanitation and disease control, better access to clean drinking water, and the development of vaccines, antibacterial drugs, and other effective medical therapies."

This, coupled with improvements in nutrition and higher standards of living,

has contributed to the unprecedented growth seen today.

We reached 7 billion only 12 years ago in 2011. We are headed toward 10.8 billion by 2080.

The report noted that 46 of the globe's least-developed nations are among the world's fastest-growing—with population booms worsening already existing problems.

"The relationship between population growth and sustainable development is complex and multidimensional," said Liu Zhenmin, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs. "Rapid population growth makes eradicating poverty, combatting hunger and malnutrition, and increasing the coverage of health and education systems more difficult."

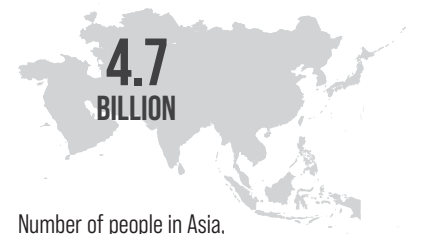
Every region has its own crises, which are set to grow increasingly complex as populations boom.

Daniel Wordsworth, World Vision International CEO, described the scale of the challenges in sub-Saharan Africa as like "a whole bunch of fishing lines that are all tangled up" (*Australian Broadcasting Corporation*). He said there is no "root cause driver" for these crises.

Now apply this analogy to the entire world. Everything becomes infinitely more complex when factoring in the entire globe—all 195 countries.

The 8,000,000,000 population provides a perfect lens to view what happened in 2022—and what humanity will face in 2023 and beyond.

## Can Earth Sustain the Population Boom?



Number of people in Asia, the world's most populous region.

## 10.8 BILLION

Estimated world population by 2080.



Estimated number of people forcibly displaced due to violent conflicts.

# WAR'S LONG SHADOW



Estimated casualties since  
Russia invaded Ukraine on  
February 24, 2022.



One child dies every 10  
minutes in Yemen.

“What do we hear today? It’s not just rocket explosions, battles, the roar of aircraft. It is the sound of a new Iron Curtain lowering and closing Russia away from the civilized world.

**Volodymyr Zelenskyy**

2022 WAS the year war returned to Europe, and few facets of life were left untouched.

Russia’s invasion of its neighbor Ukraine unleashed misery on millions of Ukrainians, shattered Europe’s sense of security, and made life more expensive in homes across Europe.

Yet the shockwaves of the conflict revealed just how interconnected our world of 8 billion people has become. Russia’s military move ripped up the geopolitical map, rocked the global economy and worsened the world’s migrant crisis.

“What do we hear today? It’s not just rocket explosions, battles, the roar of aircraft. It is the sound of a new Iron Curtain lowering and closing Russia away from the civilized world,” Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said as the invasion began.

Russia’s pre-dawn attack on February 24 shattered European peace and shocked the world. The war also confounded the near-universal expectation that Russian forces would quickly prevail. Ukraine put up fierce resistance, and Russian troops bogged down on the journey to the capital. Russia pulled back from the area around Kyiv in April, leaving blasted buildings, traumatized people, and hundreds of corpses that Ukraine and its allies say are evidence of war crimes.

The war revived Cold War-era enmity between Russia and the West, pushing Sweden and Finland to seek NATO membership and prompting NATO nations to flood troops and weapons into eastern Europe.

As winter approached, Ukraine’s military—bolstered by weapons, ammunition and training from the U.S. and other allies—pushed Russian forces out of the southern city of Kherson, a morale-boosting victory amid a grinding war that showed no sign of ending.

The war also sent global energy prices soaring as Moscow squeezed supplies to the West in retaliation for sanctions on Russia and support for Ukraine. Italy, Germany and other countries that relied on Russian oil and natural gas scrambled for alternative energy supplies. With millions of people suddenly struggling to pay their energy bills, governments came under intense pressure to step in with help.

Ukraine and Russia are key global suppliers of wheat, barley, sunflower oil and—in Russia’s case—fertilizer, and the war also drove up food prices and raised fears of global shortages. A UN-brokered deal to allow grain ships to leave Ukraine’s Black Sea ports was struck in July and, though shaky, held to prevent a worse crisis.

The war added millions to the world’s grim tally of displaced people. More than 14 million Ukrainians left their homes, according to the UN, with 7 million taking refuge in other countries.

Meanwhile, almost 100,000 people fleeing conflict and poverty in the Middle East, Asia and Africa crossed the Mediterranean in overcrowded and sometimes unseaworthy vessels, as the European countries they aimed to reach bickered over where they should go. More than 2,000 people died attempting the journey or were missing at sea.

The English Channel became another flashpoint, as smuggling gangs packed dinghies and other small boats with people from around the world who traveled to northern France in hope of reaching the UK. More than 40,000 succeeded in 2022. In response, the Conservative British government signed a deal with Rwanda to send people arriving by this route on a one-way trip to the east African country.

Yet the Russia-Ukraine War revealed another problem of having



A Ukrainian soldier looks at the bullet that was lodged in his chin after a successful operation at a hospital in Donetsk District, Ukraine (Oct. 9, 2022).

Paula Bronstein/Getty Images



Worldwide expenses on peacekeeping, humanitarian relief and refugee support over the past decade.



One-quarter of the global population lives in conflict-affected areas. Some of the worst-affected places include Ethiopia's Tigray region, South Sudan, Syria, Yemen and Afghanistan.

# 01

8 billion people on Earth: Having to choose which emergencies need aid money the most.

The war in Ukraine abruptly drew millions of dollars away from other long-standing crises. Somalia, facing a food shortage largely driven by the war, was perhaps the most vulnerable.

Come July, Somalia's aid funding was less than half of 2021's level while overwhelmingly Western donors had sent more than \$1.7 billion to respond to the war in Europe. Yemen, Syria, Iraq, South Sudan, Congo and the Palestinian territories were similarly affected.

These areas all have their own military conflicts that send negative ripple effects to surrounding nations and abroad.

"After the Taliban last year took control in Afghanistan, nations around the world imposed sanctions and cut off aid, leading to a severe food shortage in the country," Deutsche Welle reported. "Ongoing civil wars in Yemen, Ethiopia and Myanmar have also triggered acute

food shortages and displaced millions over the past years.

"And since Russia invaded Ukraine in late February, the gap between the funds required to respond to these crises versus the amount actually raised has widened."

At the end of 2022, the war in Ukraine's true toll on funding became clear. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said its appeal for humanitarian support to Ukraine reached 52.5 percent of the targeted \$6.14 billion.

For Yemen, only 46 percent of the \$4.2 billion humanitarian response plan has been funded and 48 percent for Afghanistan's required \$4.4 billion. In 2021, Yemen had 51 percent funded and Afghanistan had over 100 percent funded in a flash appeal.

And the gap between funds needed and what is met is growing. In 2016, 53 percent of global appeals were funded of about \$20 billion. In 2022, just 37 percent was funded of \$51.7 billion requested.

Top left, students of Ukrainian universities fleeing the war gather at the Medyka pedestrian border in eastern Poland (Feb. 27, 2022).

Wojtek Radwanski/AFP via Getty Images



Top right, a man pushes his bike through debris and destroyed Russian military vehicles on a street in Bucha, Ukraine.

Chris McGrath/Getty Images



Bottom left, a destroyed Russian tank begins to rust in woodland near Kyiv, Ukraine (June 7, 2022).

Christopher Furlong/Getty Images

Bottom right, a woman holds her baby among people who fled the war in Ukraine and members of the Ukrainian diaspora during Mass in Krakow's Orthodox church in Poland (April 3, 2022).

Omar Marques/Getty Images



Top left, people react outside a partially destroyed office building after several Russian strikes on Kyiv, Ukraine (Oct. 10, 2022).

Sergei Supinsky/AFP via Getty Images

Top right, Ukrainian servicemen carry the body of a Russian soldier through a village in the Kharkiv region (Dec. 15, 2022).

Sergey Bobok/AFP via Getty Images

Bottom left, two Ukrainian boys pose as they play at being soldiers at a makeshift checkpoint in Stoyanka, Ukraine (May 27, 2022).

Christopher Furlong/Getty Images

Bottom right, a destroyed Russian battle tank lays amid other armored vehicles beside a road in Irpin, Ukraine (May 25, 2022).

Christopher Furlong/Getty Images





# BILLION-DOLLAR DISASTERS

15+

Number of U.S. weather disasters that caused at least \$1 billion in damage in 2022.



Insured damages caused by just Hurricane Ian.

In the 1980s, the United States would average a billion-dollar weather disaster every 82 days. Now it's every 18 days.

**Adam Smith**

A HORRIFIC FLOOD submerged one-third of Pakistan—one of the costliest U.S. hurricanes on record made landfall—devastating droughts impacted Europe, China and Africa—and deadly heat waves hit all over the globe. These are only a few of the extreme weather events the planet experienced over the past 12 months.

“A disaster-weary globe will be hit harder in the coming years by even more catastrophes colliding in an interconnected world,” *The Associated Press* stated, citing a United Nations report.

“If current trends continue the world will go from around 400 disasters per year in 2015 to an onslaught of about 560 catastrophes a year by 2030, the scientific report by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction said. By comparison from 1970 to 2000, the world suffered just 90 to 100 medium to large scale disasters a year, the report said.”

Currently, about 90 percent of disaster spending is on emergency relief—only 6 percent goes to reconstruction and 4 percent on reconstruction, UNDRR Director Mami Mizutori told *AP* in an interview.

Instead of preparing for and preventing the next weather tragedy, the world is constantly reacting to the next big disaster—while still reeling from the last. And the economic costs are piling up.

While insurance and catastrophe giant Swiss Re reported that global disaster damages are down from 2021—\$268 billion last year, \$300 billion this year—the overall trend is upward.

The number of U.S. weather disasters that caused at least \$1 billion in damage was at 15 through

October, down from 22 and 20 in the last two years, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Because of Hurricane Ian, however, overall damage amounts are likely going to end up among the top three in American history.

“We’ve almost gotten used to extremes. And this year compared to many years in the past would be considered a pretty intense year, but compared to maybe the most extreme years, like a 2017, 2020 and 2021, it does look like...a slight adjustment down,” said NOAA applied meteorologist and economist Adam Smith, who calculates billion-dollar disasters for the agency. “We’re just getting used to it but that’s not a good way to move into the future.”

Wildfires in the United States were not as costly this year as the last couple years, but the Western drought was more damaging than previous years, he added. America’s billion-dollar disasters in 2022 hit nearly every possible category: hurricanes, floods, droughts, wildfires, heat waves, hailstorms and even a derecho.

Mr. Smith said NOAA has not finished calculating the damages from Hurricane Ian yet, but there is a good chance it will have more than \$100 billion in damage, pushing past 2012’s Superstorm Sandy that swamped New York and New Jersey, ranking only behind 2005’s Katrina and 2017’s Harvey for damaging hurricanes.

In the 1980s, the United States would average a billion-dollar weather disaster every 82 days. Now it’s every 18 days, Mr. Smith said. That cannot be attributed to inflation because damages are adjusted to factor that out, he added. It is nastier weather and more



development, people and buildings in harm's way, he stated.

Globally, "if you zoom in the last six years, 2017 to 2022, this has been particularly bad," especially compared to the five years before, said Martin Bertogg, Swiss Re's head of catastrophic peril.

Looking at damages, which are mostly insured losses, can give a skewed picture because how much a disaster costs depends greatly on the wealth of the area affected, less so than the scale of the disaster itself, said Debarati Guha-Sapir, who runs the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters at the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium.

More important, these figures are about dollars, not people, and that distorts the true picture, said Guha-Sapir and University of Washington health and climate professor Kristie Ebi.

Adverse weather conditions are experienced all over the globe. The Pakistan flood, which submerged one-third of a country that is bigger than Texas, was not the only thing that hit that developing country.

"What is insured is a small fraction of total infrastructure and the people killed in Pakistan," which lowers the damage amount despite 1,700 people killed, Ms. Ebi said.

"Pakistan just couldn't catch a break this year. A January snowstorm killed 23 followed by a lethal spring heatwave, then devastating floods from June to October took over 1,700 lives and untold livelihoods," said Jennifer Francis, a climate scientist at the Woodwell Climate Research Center in Cape Cod. "Many other surprising, less publicized, and alarming events wreaked havoc on local communities, such as the sudden collapse of the lucrative snow crab fishery in the Bering Sea, rapid demise of European glaciers, inundation of several coastal villages in Alaska by ex-tropical cyclone Merbok."

Yemen has suffered from droughts, soil erosion and worsening floods. According to the UN agriculture agency, this year's rainfall was 45 percent

higher compared to 2021. This nation illustrates how weather problems compound suffering from other issues.

At least 72 people were killed in flooding this year, and some 74,000 families in 19 of the country's 22 provinces were affected, with those living in displacement camps bearing the brunt of the deluge. There are 4.3 million people displaced, most made homeless by a raging conflict, according to UN figures.

Fueled by the impact of a longstanding civil war and extreme weather, a third of the population—19 million people—are not able to find sufficient food in 2022, up from 15 million last year. Those include 161,000 living in famine-like conditions, according to the UN food agency.

Also, widespread flooding in Australia after torrential rains in February and March caused an estimated \$4 billion in damage in the country's costliest-ever natural catastrophe. France suffered the most severe series of hailstorms ever observed, with insured losses reaching an estimated \$5.2 billion.

Urbanization across the globe puts more people in dense environments, which increases damage when disaster hits, Mr. Bertogg said. Then add urban sprawl that takes those cities and makes them geographically bigger and thus more vulnerable, he said. A good example of that is how wildfires started damaging more homes in California as more homes were built in rural areas, he said.

Plus more construction is being built on the coast and along waterways making them more vulnerable to storms and flooding, with Mr. Bertogg stating that he saw flooding as "the biggest threat for the global economy."

As always, the poorest nations are the ones hit the hardest.

Markus Enenkel of the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative told AP, "These are the events that can wipe out hard-earned development gains, leading already vulnerable communities or entire regions into a downward spiral."



Estimated number of excess deaths from summer heatwaves in France, Germany, Spain and Britain.



Damages and economic losses from historic flooding in Pakistan.



Deaths from 15 severe weather disasters in the U.S.

## 02

Top left, a man and his children inspect a flooded road near their home in Dungay, Australia (March 2, 2022).

Dan Peled/Getty Images

Top right, wreckage left in Hurricane Ian's wake is shown on the island of Matlacha in Florida (Sept. 30, 2022).

Win McNamee/Getty Images



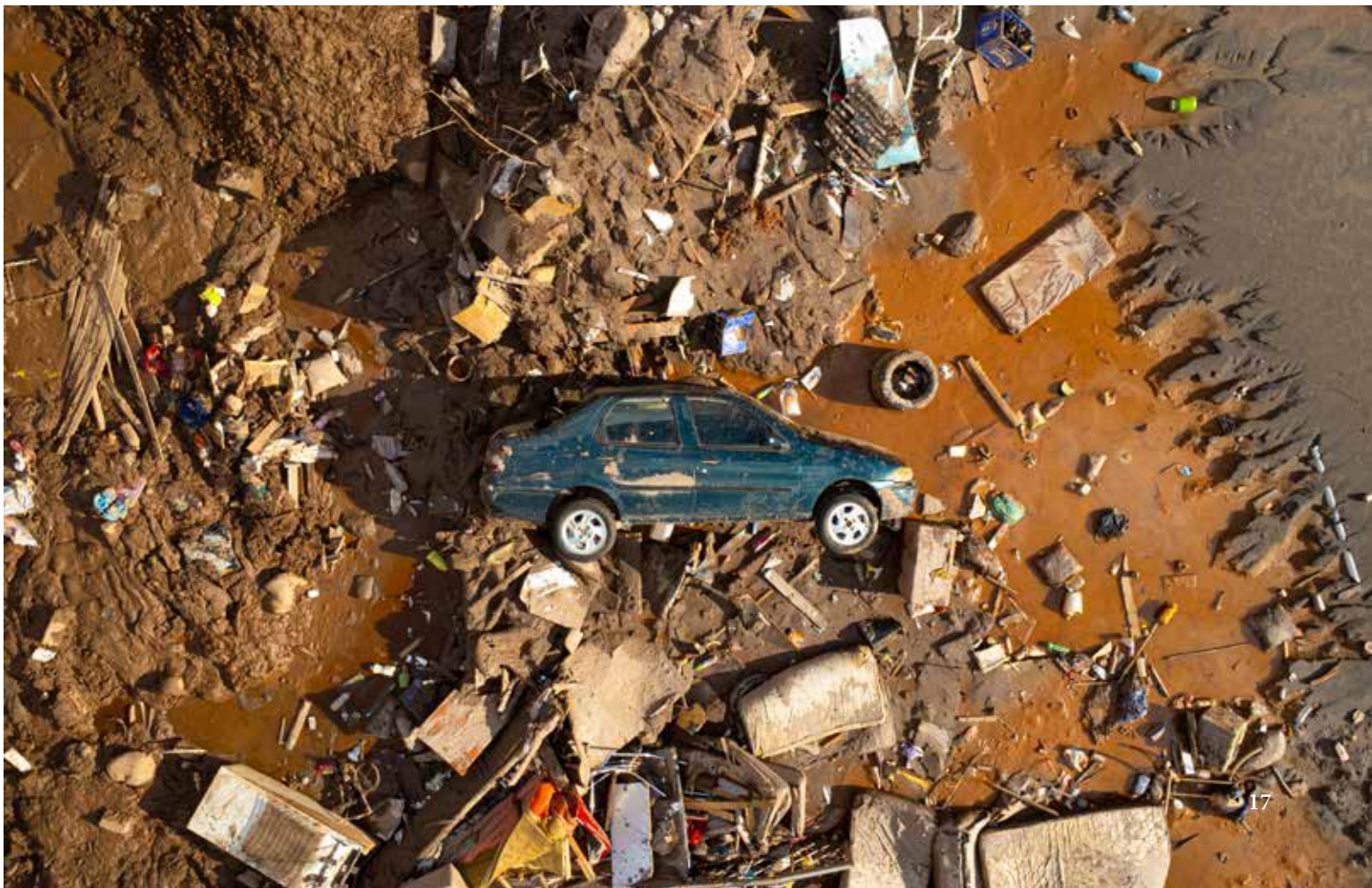
Bottom left, Cal Fire firefighters battle the Oak Fire near Mariposa, California (July 23, 2022). The fast-moving Oak Fire that burned outside of Yosemite National Park forced evacuations, charred over 11,500 acres and destroyed a number of homes.

Justin Sullivan/Getty Images

Bottom right, an aerial view of cars and rubble after the Rio das Velhas river overflowed in Honorio Bicalho, Brazil (Jan. 12, 2022).

Pedro Vilela/Getty Images





Top left, firefighters operate at the site of a wildfire in Pumarejo de Tera near Zamora, northern Spain (June 18, 2022).  
Cesar Manso/AFP



Top right, an aerial view shows people and vehicles in a flooded street following torrential rain in Medan city, North Sumatra (Nov. 19, 2022).  
Muhammad Zulfan Dalimunthe/AFP

Bottom left, a man helps dig out a plow after an intense lake-effect snowstorm hit Hamburg, New York (Nov. 18, 2022).  
John Normile/Getty Images



Bottom right, the All-American Canal conveys water through the Imperial Sand Dunes of California's Colorado Desert, a few miles north of the U.S.-Mexico border, near Felicity, California (Sept. 28, 2022).  
David McNew/Getty Images



# ECONOMIC DISPARITY

8.9%

Share of global population living in extreme poverty. Extreme poverty is defined as living below the International Poverty Line of \$2.15 per day.

2.3  
BILLION

Number of people facing food insecurity—roughly 29 percent of the global population.

“We are already overstretching what we have—the housing, roads, the hospitals, schools. Everything is overstretched.”  
**Gyang Dalyop**

“GLOBAL PROGRESS in reducing extreme poverty has virtually come to a halt,” the World Bank wrote in the introduction to their “Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2022” report.

Nearly 1 in 10 of Earth’s population live in poverty.

The report continued: “After COVID-19 dealt the biggest setback to global poverty in decades, rising food and energy prices—fueled by climate shocks and conflict among the world’s biggest food producers—have hindered a swift recovery.”

Developing nations are hit hardest by this complex and multifaceted problem. Poverty is inexorably linked to inequality. The World Bank added that “by 2030, nearly 7 percent of the world’s population—nearly 600 million people—will still struggle in extreme poverty. Within-country inequality increased in as many countries as it declined, but after decades of convergence, global inequality increased. The poorest have also suffered disproportionate losses in health and education with devastating consequences.”

The World Inequality Lab reported that the “poorest half of the world population owns just 2% of total net wealth, whereas the richest half owns 98% of all the wealth on earth.”

Compounding the issue, the explosion of population growth has seen much of its increase in poor and impoverished areas of the planet.

In the report “A World of 8 Billion” the UN wrote: “Because countries with high levels of fertility tend to be those with relatively low incomes per capita, over time the growth of the world’s population has become increasingly concentrated among the world’s poorest countries, most of which are in sub-Saharan Africa. As the global population grew from 7 to 8 billion, around 70

percent of the added population was in low-income and lower-middle-income countries. When the next billion is added between 2022 and 2037, these two groups of countries are expected to account for more than 90 percent of global growth.”

Take Nigeria. Over the next three decades, the West African nation’s population is expected to soar from 216 million this year to 375 million, the UN said. That will make Nigeria the fourth-most populous country in the world after India, China and the United States.

“We are already overstretching what we have—the housing, roads, the hospitals, schools. Everything is overstretched,” said Gyang Dalyop, an urban planning and development consultant in the country.

Nigeria is among eight countries the UN said will account for more than half the world’s population growth between now and 2050—along with fellow African nations Congo, Ethiopia and Tanzania.

Agriculture makes up nearly 20 percent of Africa’s GDP and more than half of Africans work in the sector, according to the World Bank. Most of this is low-productivity subsistence farming, and the region is a net importer of staples including wheat, palm oil and rice, the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization said.

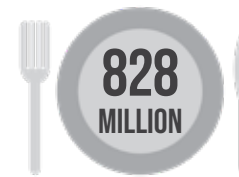
Productivity and crop yields have increased, but they are still the lowest in the world and the FAO says they come nowhere close to keeping up with the continent’s growing population. Without action, the World Bank says Africa’s food import bill, which stood at \$43 billion in 2019, could rise to \$110 billion in 2025.

“We have to wake up,” Akinwumi Adesina, president of the African Development Bank, told *Reuters*. “For

## “The World Inequality Lab reported that the ‘poorest half of the world population owns just 2% of total net wealth, whereas the richest half owns 98% of all the wealth on earth.’”



Number of people in Sub-Saharan Africa who live in extreme poverty. This makes up 60 percent of all people in extreme poverty globally.



Estimated number of people affected by hunger. 345 million of these are experiencing acute food insecurity.



Number of children under the age of 5 with stunted growth and development due to a lack of essential nutrients and adequate food.

me, the bare minimum is that Africa is able to feed itself.”

Double-digit inflation, known as a “tax on the poor” because it hits those with low incomes the hardest, has exacerbated inequalities worldwide. While consumers in wealthier countries can rely on savings built up during pandemic lockdowns, others struggle to make ends meet and a growing number rely on food banks.

The World Food Program estimates an extra 70 million people worldwide have been driven closer to starvation since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in what it calls a “tsunami of hunger.”

The Russia-Ukraine war, drought or too much rain, and high energy costs look set to curb global farm production again next year, tightening supplies, even as high prices encourage farmers to boost planting. Countries that are not as directly impacted will also feel the pain as imports and exports are affected.

Crops producing edible oils are suffering from adverse weather in Latin America and Southeast Asia. Production of staples, such as rice and wheat, is unlikely to replenish depleted inventories, at least in the first half of 2023.

“The world needs record crops to satisfy demand. In 2023, we absolutely need to do better than this year,” said Ole Houe, director of advisory services at agriculture brokerage IKON Commodities in Sydney. “[At] this stage, it looks highly unlikely, if we look at the global production prospects for cereals and oilseeds.”

With food prices climbing to record peaks this year, millions of people are suffering across the world, with poorer

nations already facing hunger and malnutrition.

“The consequences of food shortages are grim,” *The Economist* wrote. “Going hungry raises the risk of chronic conditions, such as heart disease and diabetes. Malnutrition does not just mean people eat too little and get thin. Particularly in cities, those who cannot afford nutritious meals buy cheap, packaged foods instead, and the poor are increasingly in danger of obesity.”

Food import costs were, as of this writing, already on course to hit a near \$2 trillion record in 2022, forcing poor countries to cut consumption.

Global wheat availability will be down for the first half of 2023. Flooding in Australia, the world’s second-largest wheat exporter, caused extensive damage to the 2022 crop and a severe drought is expected to shrink Argentina’s wheat crop by almost 40 percent.

A lack of rainfall in the U.S. Plains, where the winter crop ratings are running at the lowest since 2012, could dent supplies for the second half of 2023. For rice, prices are expected to remain high as long as export duties imposed by India, the world’s biggest supplier, remain in place.

Economic hardship has also been growing in Western nations. A recent survey conducted by Pew Research Center found that “one-in-four U.S. parents say there have been times in the past year when they could not afford food their family needed or to pay their rent or mortgage. A similar share (24%) say they have struggled to pay for health care their family needed, and 20% of those who needed child care say they haven’t always had enough money to pay for it.”

Top left, migrants cross from the Mexican side of the Rio Grande to turn themselves in to U.S. Border Patrol in El Paso, Texas (Sept. 21, 2022).

Joe Raedle/Getty Images

Top right, a group of homeless people rest near their pushcart outside an abandoned building in Quezon City, Philippines (Nov. 29, 2022).

Ted Aljibe/AFP via Getty Images



Bottom left, young people play football at Tekoha Marangatu Guarani indigenous village in the municipality of Guaira, Parana state, Brazil (Oct. 13, 2022).

Nelson Almeida/AFP via Getty Images



Bottom right, a woman cries while showing her empty fridge at the abandoned house she lives in with her family of eight in Ibimirim, Pernambuco state, Brazil (Aug. 31, 2022).

Carl de Souza/AFP via Getty Images





# GOVERNMENT SOLUTION?

3

A record number of British prime ministers in one year.



China's zero-COVID lockdown lasted this long before restrictions eased.

“ We do have the resources, but it requires a huge effort in political economy and geopolitics to actually get the resources where they need to go.

**Vanessa Perez-Cirera**

**D**URING A May address to the UN, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres stated: “The food crisis has no respect for borders, and no country can overcome it alone. Our only chance of lifting millions of people out of hunger is to act together, urgently and with solidarity.”

To feed all 8 billion people on Earth, the global community must act *now* and *together*. Something similar can be said for solving the problems of pollution, immigration, war and disease.

Yet here is the cold, hard truth of the problems plaguing mankind: If the global community could efficiently manage the Earth's resources, there *would* be enough to go around. The planet could even sustain many more billions.

This is not lost on today's world leaders.

“We do have the resources, but it requires a huge effort in political economy and geopolitics to actually get the resources where they need to go,” Vanessa Perez-Cirera, the global economics director at the World Resources Institute, told *Deutsche Welle*.

So the major problem facing a globe of 8 billion is not a resource issue. It is a *government* issue.

Be painfully honest. How likely is it that nations the world over can work in lockstep on any one problem—let alone *all* the problems they face?

The instability of governments *within* nations helps frame the answer. Britain had three different prime ministers in 2022. U.S. politicians spent much of the year focused on campaigning for midterm elections rather than governing. Israel held its fifth national election since 2019 (whether this will lead to forming a government remains to be seen). And China faced rare backlash from its citizens regarding its strict zero-COVID policy.

A world of 8 billion lays bare the limits of man's governments. Human beings are capable of impressive inventiveness and ingenuity. They can address certain problems related to public health and sanitation, which contributed to today's population boom. But let's face it: man cannot truly govern himself—the likes of inequality, hunger, oppression and division remain.

The prophet Jeremiah proclaimed this truth in the Old Testament: “O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: *it is not in man that walks to direct his steps*” (10:23).

This is one of the towering lessons God wants everyone to learn. Despite man's best efforts, he *cannot* direct his steps—he *cannot* govern himself.

While God wants everyone to grasp this lesson, it is *not* the end of the story. The central message of the Bible is of the soon-coming Kingdom of God—a world-ruling **SUPERGOVERNMENT** led by Jesus Christ (Dan. 2:44; Mark 1:14).

In fact, current population trends indicate that God must intervene in world affairs *soon*.

Consider. Although we are in the middle of a population boom now, growth has already begun to slow. It took 12 years to go from 7 to 8 billion, but it will be 15 years before reaching 9 billion. Experts predict the number will top out in the 2080s at about 10.4 billion. After that, the population is expected to plateau and then begin to drop.

Throughout all human history, there have always been more children than elderly. Mankind is on track to flip that trend for the first time—which is the *exact opposite* of what God wants.

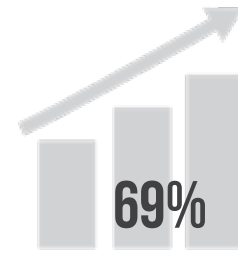
God's first directive in the Bible was to “be fruitful and multiply” and to “replenish the Earth” (Gen. 1:28). The reason for this command is found in verse 26, which says God made us in

His “image” and “likeness.” In other words, He wants to expand His Family.

Under God’s soon-coming government, population growth will no longer be a problem—it will be encouraged. Isaiah 9:7 states: “Of the *increase* of [God’s] government and peace *there shall be no end*, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever.”

At that time, resources will be fairly distributed to all. Micah 4:4 shows that everyone “shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid...”

As you meditate on today’s world—and what the coming year could bring—remember what God wants you to learn: Man cannot govern himself. Then, look forward to the Kingdom of God, when all of today’s terrible conditions will finally be put to rest. □



Number of likely voters in the United States who felt inflation was more important than unemployment leading up to the 2022 midterm elections.



Israeli Knesset members attend the swearing-in ceremony for the new Israeli government in Jerusalem (Nov. 15, 2022).

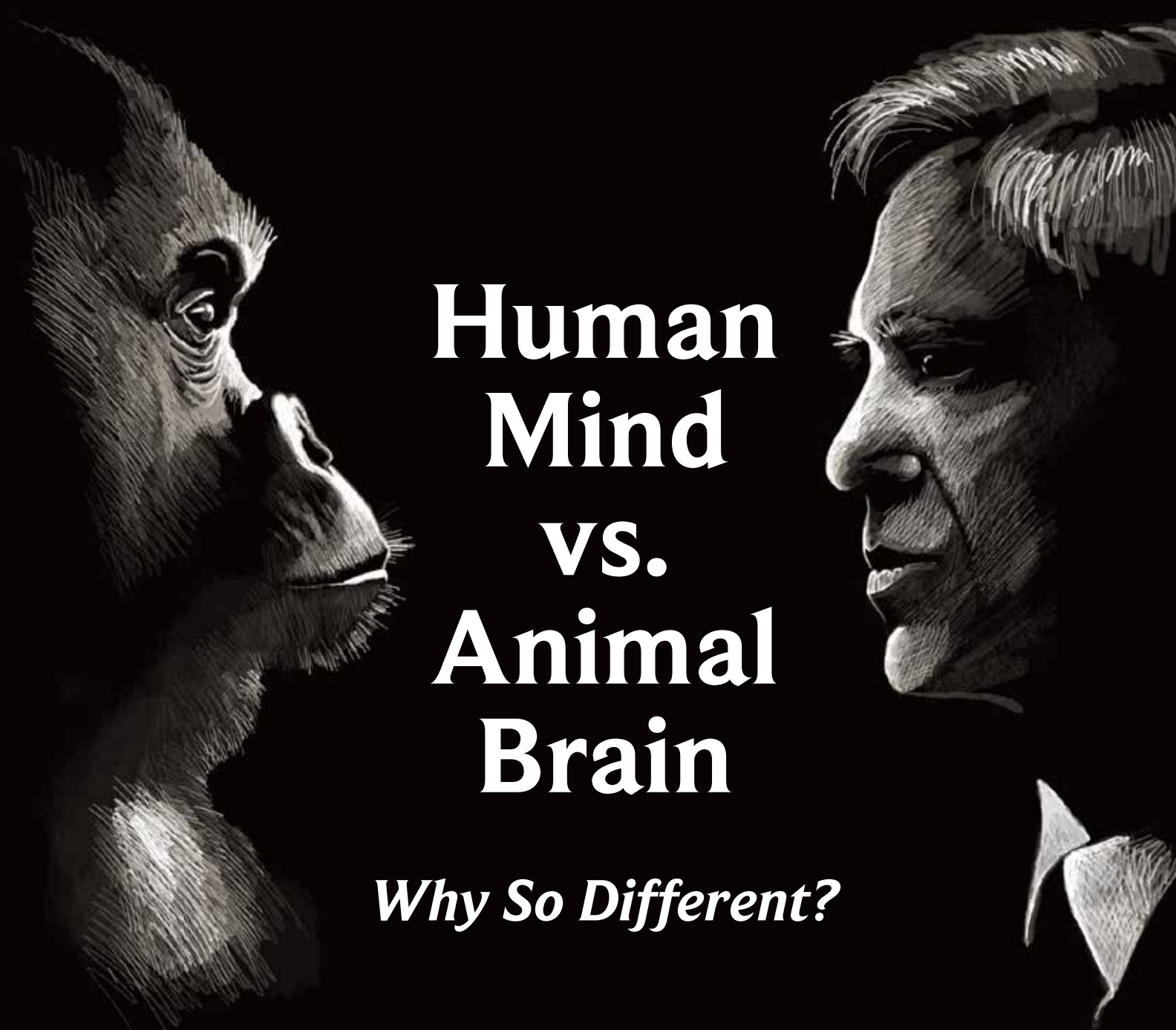
Abir Sultan/Pool/AFP via Getty Images



Britain’s Prime Minister Rishi Sunak speaks in the House of Commons in London (Nov. 9, 2022).

Andy Bailey/AFP via Getty Images

04



# Human Mind vs. Animal Brain

## *Why So Different?*

Human beings possess a capability far beyond animals. Many have attempted to explain what makes our minds so special, but few understand the truth.

BY BRADFORD G. SCHLEIFER

**B**OTH EVOLUTIONISTS and religionists agree that there is something about mankind that makes us different from animals. Each group offers explanations, certain the other side is wrong.

How can we know the truth?

More questions arise: What *is* the human mind? How does it relate to the

brain? Why do we not see animals with minds? Most people do not understand the plain answers that have been available for thousands of years.

The argument can be summarized as the mind-body problem. It has been recognized that merely the physical characteristics of the human brain do not warrant the extreme creative and

processing power that defines human ingenuity. The difference must be caused by something else.

The answer is spiritual in nature—it can be explained no other way.

### **Unique to Humans**

Consider just a few of the qualities man possesses that are unique among

all living creatures. These attributes are so common and taken for granted that few give them much thought. Yet it should become clear how unique human beings really are.

Ask yourself: *Why does man have so many distinctive characteristics?*

**Humor:** No other creature can appreciate, create and express humor. Not only does this require creativity, but humor also requires the ability to detach oneself from their surroundings to see the odd, surreal or ironic.

**Appreciation of beauty:** Humans are able to appreciate all kinds of beauty. This can be as simple as a sunset, a work of art, or the intricate design of a flower.

For example, take someone to see New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art. They will likely feel emotionally moved by the seemingly limitless number of paintings and sculptures on display, dating back hundreds of years. Take a dog to the same museum, and it will be more excited about the ride and seeing a lot of people walking the halls than anything else.

**Self-consciousness:** Beyond a simple recognition of self, as exhibited by a few animals, man can step back and become a spectator, critic or admirer of the world around him. He can see his place in the greater picture and analyze what needs to be done to affect his role.

**Awareness of death:** While animals do have a survival instinct, a human being is able to consider that he will one day die. The awareness that his days will not last forever allows for a deep respect of his mortality. In fact, nearly all cultures perform some form of funeral ritual. This is not found in the animal world.

**Understanding time:** Animals are only able to relate time to themselves—they have no ability to relate time to third parties. People can wonder, speculate and search history for lessons and apply them to short, medium and long-term goals ranging far into the future.

**Connections between words:** While animals can understand simple words or tones, they do not comprehend syntax

or communicate in complex sentences. Human beings have created hundreds of languages and thousands of dialects, even though they are born without any way to communicate.

**Meaning of life:** The simple act of asking about life's meaning and purpose makes man unique. No animal contemplates its reason for living—nor would it be willing to live or die for specific values and ideals.

**Malleability:** Humanity adapts to its surroundings far beyond the ability of animals. We wear clothes, build shelters and modify our environment to suit our needs.

**Lack of harmony with nature:** When left alone, nature reaches balance and harmony. Only man disrupts that natural balance. Think of deforestation, changing the course of rivers, pollution, over-mining for resources, and more.

**A sense of morality:** Animals always take the path of least resistance. They do not have a sense of right and wrong—a conscience. On the other hand, man will go so far as to control his thoughts based on what he considers right or wrong.

**Character:** This is the ability to know right from wrong, and turn away from wrong to do what is right—even in the face of pressures and temptations. The desire to build character can only be found in human beings.

**Free moral agency:** Unlike animals, man can deviate from his course of thinking and living however he sees fit. Animals react through instinct—programming.

**Capacity for wisdom:** Without self-awareness, animals cannot weigh situations with previous experiences. While animals can develop behavioral patterns based on positive or negative stimulation, they are completely unable to analyze actions before they are performed. This ability, known as wisdom, is unique to human beings.

**Desire for worship:** No matter what part of the world or culture, man exhibits a desire to seek, follow and worship a higher power. Animals do not.

**Love:** While some animals do form lifelong relationships for the purpose of reproduction, none exhibit a parallel with the human characteristics of love, in which a couple shares experiences, goals, dreams, hopes and aspirations.

This array of differences between people and animals dramatically separates us from the animal world. More could have been cited. Think: There must be a *reason* for why the human mind is different from the animal brain.

### **Evolutionary Answer?**

Most evolutionists will not even attempt to explain what makes the human mind so special. Simply put, the physical differences between our brain and that of animals are insufficient to explain the differences in ability we looked at. Three aspects of the human brain demonstrate this point.

**Weight:** Human beings do not have the heaviest brains in overall weight, or even weight in proportion to their bodies.

**Anatomy:** Correlations differ between man's brain and that of animals.

**Cerebral Cortex:** The nerve center of the human brain is only *slightly* more complex than that of animals.

No physiological explanation exists for man's mind! Biologists have no irrefutable evolutionary evidence. Psychologists are stupefied by the human brain. And, if they are honest with themselves, evolutionists are left with only one conclusion: There is no scientific answer to the mind-body problem!

### **An Immortal Soul?**

If the differences between animals and human beings cannot be explained by physical means, we *must* look for a spiritual explanation. Most professing Christians would quickly agree there must be a spiritual component to the human condition. The most common explanation they offer is that the non-physical component is an immortal soul. Supporters of this approach even cite the Bible for proof.

Certainly, if man has an immortal soul, this would help explain the

immeasurable capacity of his mind. But what does the Bible really say?

The word “soul” appears in Scripture over 400 times. The first instance is during the account of man’s creation. Notice Genesis 2: “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and *man became a living soul*” (vs. 7).

The phrasing here is important. Note that man *became* a “living soul.” The Hebrew word from which “soul” was translated is *nephesh*, which means “a breathing creature.” This passage states that man *became* a living, breathing creature.

However, was the soul that man received different from that of animals, in that it was *immortal*?

Again, let’s allow the Bible to speak for itself: “The soul that sins, it shall die” (Ezek. 18:4, 20). If a soul dies, then it cannot be immortal! How can so many believe that people have immortal souls when just two passages from God’s Word prove this to be absurd?

If the immortal soul concept does not come from Scripture, what is its origin? Even the briefest look at the historical record makes this plain: “The belief that the soul continues its existence after the dissolution of the body is a matter of philosophical or theological speculation rather than of simple faith, and is accordingly nowhere expressly taught in Holy Scripture...The belief in the immortality of the soul came to the Jews from contact with Greek thought and chiefly through the philosophy of Plato, its principal exponent, who was led to it through Orphic and Eleusinian mysteries in which Babylonian and Egyptian views were strangely blended” (*The Jewish Encyclopedia*, “Immortality of the Soul”).

Early Catholic writer Tertullian (AD 155-220) details where the immortal soul doctrine has its roots: “For some things are known even by nature: the immortality of the soul, for instance, is held by many...I may use, therefore, the opinion of a Plato, when he declares, ‘Every soul is

immortal” (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Chapter III).

If the mind-body conundrum cannot be explained by the popular immortal soul doctrine, then what is the answer?

### **The Spirit in Man**

The Bible does provide the answer to the mind-body question, but this has been missed by the masses. It reveals there is a *spiritual component* to man that elevates him above the physical.

Notice a passage in the Old Testament: “The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, says the LORD, which stretches forth the heavens, and lays the foundation of the earth, and *forms the spirit of man within him*” (Zech. 12:1). This reveals that God created a spirit inside every human being—including you.

Proverbs 20:27 sheds light on the purpose for this spirit: “The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly.”

God uses the spirit in man as a way of interfacing with humanity. This is further expounded in the book of Job: “There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty gives them understanding” (Job 32:8).

Putting these passages together clarifies that God uses the “spirit in man” to impart understanding. Through this spirit, God can teach a physical human being a degree of spiritual knowledge. However, he is spiritually incomplete—he needs *another* spirit.

### **Physical and Spiritual**

Man is a physical being with a spiritual component. For centuries, mankind has reached awesome progress and advancement, but—at the same time—continues to suffer ever-worsening and appalling evils, troubles and ills. This is because society’s problems are *spiritual* in nature.

Great leaders have recognized the link between humanity’s problems and the need for spiritual answers. While attending the signing of imperial Japan’s surrender, General Douglas MacArthur said, “Men since

the beginning of time have sought peace...Military Alliances, Balances of Power, Leagues of Nations, all in turn failed leaving the only path to be by way of the crucible of war. The utter destructiveness of war now blots out this alternative. We have had our last chance. If we do not devise some greater and more equitable system Armageddon will be at our door. The problem basically is theological and involves a spiritual recrudescence and improvement of human character that will synchronize with our almost matchless advance in science, art, literature and all material and cultural developments of the past two thousand years. It must be of the spirit if we are to save the flesh” (*The Reports of General MacArthur*).

Over 70 years have passed since General MacArthur uttered these words, yet problems worsen. Man is desperate for spiritual knowledge—a real solution to his problems. But he can only achieve this by turning to God. Again, man is spiritually incomplete—he needs another spirit.

The apostle Paul wrote, “For what man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knows no man, but the Spirit of God” (I Cor. 2:11).

God’s Spirit, when combined with the spirit in man, enables us to know “the things of God”—and to build holy, righteous character.

The spirit in man also records the events, experiences and lessons of the life of each person, and returns to God at death: “Then shall the dust [man] return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it” (Ecc. 12:7).

God stores this most vital ingredient of man until the resurrection.

The human spirit allows man to reason, analyze and create. We are able to greatly exceed the capability of animals only because of this special, unique spiritual component.

If you would like to learn much more about humanity’s incredible future, read our free book *The Awesome Potential of Man* at [rcg.org/tapom](http://rcg.org/tapom). □



# Fixing Homelessness for Good

What is the root cause of homelessness in the United States?  
Finding the answer requires some digging...

BY EDWARD L. WINKFIELD

**A**FTER TAKING CONTROL of the most populous city in the United States in January 2022, New York City Mayor Eric Adams made addressing the problem of homelessness a top goal of his administration.

The mayor, who described the city as in crisis due to its homeless population, told residents, “We are going to have a city that is far better than the dysfunctional city that we’ve had for far too long.”

The homeless, many of them mentally ill, are a focal point in New York’s sharp rise in violence and random attacks on its streets and subways.

In a highly criticized move, Mr. Adams, a former New York City Police captain, directed police and city medics to be more aggressive in pulling severely mentally ill people off the streets, even if they refuse treatment. New York law allows for involuntary hospitalization when a person’s mental illness prevents them from providing for their own basic needs or they present a danger to themselves or others.

Opponents of the policy argue that it violates the federal Americans with Disabilities Act and could subject New Yorkers to “unlawful detention and involuntary hospitalization just for exhibiting behavior perceived by a police officer

to be unusual—whether the individual has a mental disability or not,” according to a court filing opposing the measure.

Meanwhile, 50,000-70,000 men, women and children in New York City sleep in city-run shelters each night, with 3,400 being unsheltered, meaning they live in tents, under bridges or in subways. In a city of 8.4 million, that is about 1 in 120 with no permanent residence.

On the West Coast, residents in Portland, Oregon, are debating whether the homeless living in tents should be required to dwell in designated campsite areas. Portland City Council members voted to consolidate the city’s roughly 700 encampments into three large, designated campsites. More than 3,000 people live without shelter in Portland, a 50 percent jump from 2019.

Texas and Missouri recently passed similar designated encampment laws, yet the proposal can be surprising from the progressive city of Portland, long known for its relaxed and often generous treatment of the homeless.

“As visible homelessness has increased, there is also an increase in pressure from the public and from others for elected officials and other folks in positions of authority to address that issue,” said Ann Oliva, CEO of the National Alliance to End Homelessness. “What’s starting to happen is that the way to immediately address an issue that is at its core an affordable housing problem is to try and remove people from public view.”

The Cicero Institute, which wrote the model legislation that inspired many of the recent camping ban policies, says creating designated camping areas with services for the homeless is a faster solution for cities compared to building affordable housing.

“One of the biggest problems that sanctioned camping is trying to address is just the unbelievable difficulty of getting more shovels in the ground to get shelter or other sorts or services available for the homeless,” said Judge Glock, the group’s senior director of policy and research. Mr.

Glock believes cities do not have “two or three decades” to build enough permanent housing as “tens of thousands” die over that period.

But many homeless advocates say that a policy of restricting the homeless to designated areas effectively criminalizes homelessness and fails to address its root causes. They believe that a “housing first” approach is the only way to address the underlying factors that cause homelessness.

“If you truly want to end homelessness, the only way forward is with housing first,” said Mark Guzman, founder of the food nonprofit MealsonUsPDX. Mr. Guzman, who previously experienced homelessness himself, called the Portland proposal cruel and impractical. “People need love, compassion and resources to escape a situation of homelessness.”

These stories illustrate the near-impossible difficulty in resolving homelessness. For every proposed solution to the longtime crisis, there is an opposing and “even better” solution. A big problem is that the many causes of homelessness are themselves difficult to resolve. As experts and advocates argue about how to move forward, the streets remain filled with those with no place to call home.

#### **Understanding Homelessness**

The U.S. Housing and Urban Development agency reported 580,466 total homeless in 2020. Though this total is down from a high of 759,101 in 2006, the number of homeless began trending back up in 2016.

The list of reasons for the latest increase in homelessness is long. Increases in mental illness, drug abuse, domestic violence, poverty, rising rents, and flat wages all contribute to the growing problem. The lingering economic and social effects of the coronavirus pandemic certainly cannot be ignored as a major contributor.

All homelessness is not the same. How long, how often, and how permanent the lack of permanent housing is all makes a difference. There are four basic categories of homeless-

ness—chronic, episodic, transitional and hidden. Understanding the type of homelessness a person is experiencing goes a long way toward helping them.

Chronic homelessness describes those homeless for a year or more, or someone experiencing four or more episodes of homelessness in a 12-month period. The chronically homeless are who people think of when they think of those with no permanent place to live.

In 2020, an estimated 110,528, or 27 percent of the total homeless population, fell into the chronic category. Sixty-six percent of chronically homeless people live on the street, in cars, parks, or other locations not meant to be inhabited, according to the National Alliance to End Homelessness. The chronically homeless tend to be older and have had long-term struggles with addiction, mental illness, and poverty.

Episodic homelessness describes those experiencing up to three episodes of homelessness in a year. This category often affects teenagers or young adults previously living with parents or in some other permanent housing situation but remove themselves or are removed from the home because of domestic disputes. Substance abuse and addiction and deteriorating relationships are common causes of the separation.

Transitional homelessness is the most common type, yet often misunderstood. This category of homelessness is usually very temporary and occurs because of a significant or life-changing event such as a sudden job loss, divorce, medical condition or eviction. Unlike the other categories, the circumstances that led to having no place to live are usually unforeseen and due to little or no fault of the person. These individuals often end up briefly staying in shelters until finding something permanent. Homelessness advocates believe it is less about preventing this category of homelessness and more about investing in transitional facilities and housing programs.

Hidden homelessness is the final category and is the most difficult to track as it is usually unreported and



undocumented. Those in this state live temporarily with others with no immediate prospects for permanent housing of their own. The hidden homeless survive by moving from one friend or relative's home to the next. They may stay a few days, weeks or months sleeping in whatever spare space is available before moving on to the next house. This "couch- or sofa-surfing" can put a strain on the relationships and resources of the hosts.

Cities or regions with high costs of living contain many of the hidden homeless. Despite having jobs, these people cannot afford to pay rent and other living expenses.

### Other Factors

Fifty-seven percent of the homeless population in the United States in 2020 was held in only five states, California, New York, Florida, Texas and Washington.

However, HUD reported that California had far and away the most homeless with 161,548. The other four states had a combined 168,910 homeless.

Total population, climate and generous social programs help explain some of the disparity in California's numbers, but not all of it, said Pete White, founder of the LA Community Action Network. Mr. White believes outsiders moving to the Golden State in search of success and achievement, failing, then becoming homeless, is a myth. Instead, he believes the homelessness problem in California is homegrown and is a result of poor governance.

"Eighty percent of those who are homeless in Los Angeles come from Los Angeles. Los Angeles manufactures its own houseless crisis. Many folks houseless in Los Angeles now are houseless in the communities that they used to be housed in," said Mr. White.

The high cost of living in California affects transplants and locals all the same.

Nearly a quarter of the residents in Los Angeles County live in poverty. Many of the homeless there work full-time jobs yet still live in tents and shelters because housing is



Top, a homeless person and her dog watch during a street cleaning from the Los Angeles Sanitation service in Hollywood, California (Feb. 8, 2021). Bottom, members of the New York City police speak with homeless encampment member Johnny Grima, 37, as they work with the Department of Sanitation to clear a homeless encampment near Tompkins Square Park in the Manhattan borough in New York City (Apr. 6, 2022).

VALERIE MACON/AFP/GETTY IMAGES (TOP); STEPHANIE KEITH/GETTY IMAGES (BOTTOM)



simply too expensive. In an episode titled "America's Homeless Crisis," *Fox News* documentary series *Left Behind* reported renters needing to earn \$47.52 per hour to afford the median monthly rent in Los Angeles. This reality forces large swaths of Los Angelinos to live on the streets, in shelters or with others.

But available housing is not always enough to address the problem.

Despite tens of thousands of New Yorkers being homeless, 2,600 supportive housing apartments in the city remain vacant, according to *The New York Times*. Supportive housing is housing with social resources and support attached such as programs to assist the mentally ill and the chronically homeless.

Mr. Adams, who recently announced the opening of two more supportive housing projects, blames bureaucratic complications for the problem.

"How do you have a vacant apartment, when you need people to be in the apartment, and you have so much

paperwork that they can't get in the apartment?" the mayor said.

The same *New York Times* article described the application process for supportive housing as "onerous, requiring extensive documentation many homeless people find hard to marshal, along with multiple rounds of mental health evaluations." Over a 12-month period beginning in July 2021, according to the news outlet, 7,400 applicants had their paperwork approved, yet only 1,200 of them received housing. And not all of those who received housing actually moved in.

During the same period, data shows that a quarter of chronically homeless applicants never received a housing interview and only 16 unsheltered applicants moved into housing. Many eligible homeless wait years for approval having to reapply for housing multiple times due to lapsing documentation.

One New York homeless woman lamented, "New York is one of the richest states in America, and the fact

that the needs of the most vulnerable citizens are not being met is frustrating, it's angering."

### Complex Problems

A big problem with permanently fixing the homelessness crisis is the requirement to fix all the problems that contribute to it. Many of these causes are themselves seemingly impossible to resolve.

Consider poverty, a major problem leading to homelessness. Poverty, which is the state of being extremely poor, has several causes. Some include income inequality, lack of education, rising costs and poor health.

The national poverty rate—those living below the poverty level—in the United States was 11.6 percent or 37.9 million people in 2021, the U.S. Census showed. According to *Bloomberg*, this is nearly 4 million more than in 2019. According to U.S. guidelines, individuals making less than \$13,590 annually are in poverty. For a family of four, it is making less than \$27,750 per year, reported the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Poverty and homelessness share many of the same solutions. Higher incomes, more affordable cost of living, more government funding and better-educated citizens are all major factors in addressing both and are not easy to address.

Rising costs due to inflation and other factors does not just affect the poverty-stricken. Low- to mid-income Americans are also feeling the squeeze.

*Pew Research* found a rising share of Americans say the availability of affordable housing is a major problem where they live. In October 2021, 49 percent of Americans said it was a problem, up 10 percentage points from 2018. In the same 2021 survey, 70 percent of Americans said young adults today have a harder time buying a home than their parents' generation did.

In 2020, 46 percent of American renters spent 30 percent or more of their income on housing, including 23 percent who spent at least 50 percent of their income this way, according to the

most recent data available from the U.S. Census Bureau. Once again, problems with no easy fixes.

Drug abuse and addiction are also closely related to homelessness and can be what causes it in the first place.

Since 1999, over 932,000 people in the U.S. died from drug overdoses, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In 2020, there were 37 million current illegal drug users among Americans aged 12 years and older, the National Center for Drug Abuse Statistics reported. As more illicit drugs become legal and officials relax the consequences of selling and using prohibited substances, these numbers will continue to be problematic.

In 2020, 9.5 million adults over the age of 18 have both a substance use disorder and a mental illness—what experts call co-occurring disorders or dual diagnoses. *CNN* reported that 90 percent of American adults believe there is a mental health crisis in the U.S.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health in 2020, nearly one in five U.S. adults, or 52.9 million people, live with a mental illness. Mental illness can range from mild to severe. NIMH defines serious mental illness as “mental, behavioral, and emotional disorder resulting in serious functional impairment, which substantially interferes with or limits one or more major life activities.” Keeping and maintaining a home certainly fall in the category of major life activities.

Several factors are blamed for increased mental illness. They include social media use, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, increased loneliness and isolation, and difficulty in getting treatment. Solutions to these individual complications elude even the most dedicated experts.

Yet another problem often tied to homelessness is domestic abuse. This especially affects the most vulnerable such as women and children.

According to a 2012 Status Report on Hunger and Homelessness from the U.S. Conference of Mayors, domestic violence was the third leading cause

of homelessness among families in the country. National estimates are that 80 percent of homeless mothers with children have previously experienced domestic violence, the Institute for Children, Poverty & Homelessness reported. Many homeless shelters have a designation for women and children suffering abuse, however, demand far outpaces availability.

All these problems tied to homelessness are themselves difficult to resolve. Leaders and experts continue to grapple with solutions for all these issues. They propose solutions such as more funding, more punishment for crimes, more drug programs, more housing, cheaper housing, and more social programs. But none of these solutions seem to be working.

In his booklet *Why Man Cannot Solve His Problems, Real Truth* Editor-in-Chief David C. Pack explained mankind's inability to resolve fundamental challenges despite his sincere and best efforts.

“Men have created many amazing technological inventions, but they cannot create solutions to their problems. Mankind has harnessed the power of computers to help process vast amounts of information, but human beings cannot correctly process their personal problems. Scientists have discovered much about the size, magnificence and precision of the universe, but they cannot discover the way to peace. Astronomers can find majestic, beautiful new galaxies throughout the universe, but they cannot find a way to preserve the beauty and majesty of Earth. Scientists have also unleashed the power of the atom, but they are powerless to unleash answers to life's greatest questions. Educators have taught millions how to earn a living, but not how to live.”

In the end, permanently fixing the problem of homelessness is much bigger than any of us. To do so requires fixing all the world's problems.

This is not as impossible as it sounds. To learn more, read the rest of *Why Man Cannot Solve His Problems* at [rcg.org/uun](http://rcg.org/uun). □

## PERSONAL

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and sees itself as vile and fleshly, not worthy of God's marvelous grace and mercy. Repentance is an ongoing, continuous attitude of wanting to change, of wanting to do better—to *grow, overcome* and become more like Christ on a daily basis.

The repentant mind “hungers and thirsts” after God's righteousness (Matt. 5:6). It believes, through the practice of using *Christ's own faith* (Eph. 2:8; Rev. 14:12), that Jesus is his personal Savior and that He has paid the death penalty (Rom. 6:23) for the new child of God, now no longer condemned.

The one who has just received God's Spirit has been given a tiny bit of the mind of Christ and the *power* and *nature* of God. Peter wrote that Christians are “partakers of the divine nature” (II Pet. 1:4), which is God's. Human nature, once the sole custodian of the mind, is to be slowly *replaced* by God's *divine nature* through the presence and growth of the Holy Spirit within us. Receiving God's Spirit does not mean that one has suddenly lost human nature. That nature remains *present* and active—in opposition to God's nature. It is critical that we come to understand this ongoing battle within the converted mind—and how some misunderstand it and fall into believing that they can no longer be forgiven. (Read my free booklet *Did God Create Human Nature?*)

### Willful Sin

A key to understanding the unpardonable sin is knowing the difference between *willing* and *willful* sin. We must not confuse the two. Some, believing they have committed the unpardonable sin, exclaim, “But I *willingly* sinned.” Certainly it is true that every time a person sins, they were *willing* to do it. The Bible does not warn specifically about “willing” sin, but rather against “willful” sin. Of

course, it does warn against *all* forms of sin.

Let's now examine Hebrews 10:26-29 to begin understanding *willful* sin: “For if we sin willfully after that we have received the *knowledge of the truth*, there remains no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose you, shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden under foot the Son of God, and has counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and has *done despite unto the Spirit of grace?*”

Willful sin has to do with ignoring important knowledge—truth.

People quench the Holy Spirit by overriding the way it guides them over a long period of time! Some become “*hardened* through the deceitfulness of sin” (Heb. 3:13). But this hardening process does not occur overnight. It takes time. People must persistently *choke* God's Spirit. Eventually, this ongoing action becomes “willful,” or premeditated, deliberate. Chapter 10, verse 29 explains that those who practice sin have “trodden [Christ] under foot.” They have counted His “blood” as “unholy.” This leads to the all-important statement that they “have done despite unto the Spirit of grace.” The key is they have committed *willful* sin—meaning *full of will!*

Let's consider the attitude of the Pharisees. First some setup: “As He spoke these words, many believed on Him [Jesus]. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, *If you continue in My word*, then are you My disciples indeed” (John 8:30-31). This is basic Christian instruction. Christians believe in Christ's sacrifice, and then practice—continue in—His word!

Some stop at the “believe on” stage. They do not go on to *practise* Christianity. They do not actively *copy* the life of Christ. Their

thinking—and Christianity—comes from entirely different motives.

Six verses later, Jesus confronted the very ones who just “believed on Him.” Notice how quickly their attitudes became hostile and murderous: “You seek to kill Me, because *My word* has no place in you...you seek to kill Me, a man that has told you *the truth*, which I have heard of God...If I say *the truth*, why do you not believe Me?” (vs. 37, 40, 46).

These are extraordinary statements! They reflect the attitudes of so many today. Many who claim to love Jesus do not obey His words. These are deceived and unconverted. They have been seduced into believing in a false conversion. On the other hand, the few truly converted Christians today are seen as un-Christian by the world because they reject popular, but false, doctrines.

The Pharisees and certain others *appeared* to want to follow Jesus Christ—maybe even initially thought themselves sincere—while holding deceitful, murderous thoughts below the surface.

To intentionally plot, act or move against God's Spirit is also to consciously *know* what you are doing in attributing the power of God to the devil. Jesus was warning the Pharisees that this is what they were in danger of doing. When one deliberately—with knowledge—ignores, squelches or quenches the warning pricks coming from the Holy Spirit within a converted mind, they are passing the threshold of the unpardonable sin. They are making a “willful” decision not to respond to God's Spirit. This blasphemes the work of His Spirit.

Therefore, any sin that is continued—practiced—and remains unrepented of—by willful choice—becomes unpardonable. God will not forgive it because it has not been repented of!

Much more is written about this topic. To *fully* understand the question of whether one has committed the unforgivable sin, read my booklet *Just What Is “The Unpardonable Sin?”* at [rcg.org/jwitus](http://rcg.org/jwitus). □



# “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.

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